

Why did Muslim-majority Syria & Afghanistan fall

ABOUT two weeks ago, Syrian rebel groups captured Damascus, ending more than half a century of rule by Hafez al-Assad and his son Bashar al-Assad, whose regime was long supported by Russia and Iran. Similarly, in mid-August 2021, Taliban insurgents toppled Ashraf Ghani's government, bringing a sudden end to two decades of US-backed administration in Afghanistan. The collapse of both regimes was strikingly swift — just 11 days in Syria and only 10 days in Afghanistan — catching many by surprise. These sudden downfalls marked the fall of two Muslim-majority countries in Asia within a span of just three years. What unfolded in these nations? What forces drove such rapid regime collapses?

Global powers played a decisive role in both cases, not only in sustaining the governments, but also inadvertently contributing to their collapses. In Syria, Assad's government heavily relied on military, political and diplomatic backing from Russia and Iran. Russia's war in Ukraine, coupled with the escalating Israel-Iran tensions, forced both Russia and Iran to divert attention away from Syria. As rebels intensified their offensive last month, Russia's focus on Ukraine limited its ability to respond effectively.

Similarly, Iran's support for Assad weakened amid rising tensions with Israel. Iran's allied militias suffered significant losses, reducing their operational capacity in Syria. Since 2013, Hezbollah had deployed thousands of fighters to aid Assad but later shifted many to southern Lebanon due to increased Israeli pressure, diminishing its military presence in Syria.

In Afghanistan, the US withdrawal strategy and direct talks with the Taliban sidelined the Republic, eroding its political legitimacy and military strength, paving the way for the government's swift collapse in August 2021. Following the US-Taliban Doha Agreement in February 2020, US military support to the Afghan forces dropped sharply, with airstrikes falling by 78 per cent — from 7,243 in 2019 to 1,631 in 2020 — nearly half occurring just before the agreement. The loss of US air support enabled the Taliban to encircle major cities in the country. These downfalls were not solely driven by the influence of global major powers. Both countries had long grappled with state fragility marked by protracted conflicts, pervasive corruption, expanding illicit economies and overly centralised, exclusionary governments.

Despite the differences in their political systems, both governments were exclusionary and highly centralised. The Assad regime, led by a minority Alawite-dominated government, an offshoot of Shia Islam, was predominantly secular but deeply authoritarian. It maintained a highly centralised, militaristic structure, marked by systemic brutality, repression, entrenched nepotism and sectarian favouritism. These oppressive policies fuelled persistent religious-based militant opposition, ultimately contributing to the regime's fall. Afghanistan, as a fragile state, has long suffered from the authoritarian, exclusionary and centralised nature of governance. Every ruler who centralised power by excluding others has paved his own demise, with Ghani being the most recent example. While Ghani did not employ brutality and repression in his governance like Assad did, he overly centralised power and pursued exclusionary policies, keeping a tight, close circle and relying on a narrow support base.

While the Doha Agreement arguably triggered the state's collapse, Ghani's exclusionary governance approach exacerbated the structural weaknesses that ultimately led to his government's downfall.

Widespread, systematic corruption in both cases inevitably contributed to their collapse. In Syria, corruption existed at both the political 'macro' and administrative 'micro' levels. Transparency International's 2019 Corruption Perceptions Index placed Syria at rank 178 out of 180 countries, indicating that the civil war further exacerbated the country's already severe corruption problem. The broader ineptitude, brutality and systematic corruption within the army and other public institutions fuelled the government's downfall.

Christmas is about caring & sharing

TRYSTS AND TURNS: There is no greater reward than being loved by the men you had the honour of leading

THREE retired head constables invited me to participate in puja to mark Dattatreya Jayanti last week. On arrival at the venue in the Police Lines, I was met by retired and serving cops, who were genuinely pleased that I had come. It was easily the best Christmas gift I could have expected. There is no greater reward than being remembered and loved by the men whom you had at some stage of your career the honour of leading. That particular temple in the Police Lines had been inaugurated by me in 1982 when I was the city's Police Commissioner. That fact had escaped my memory. A plaque recording the event had been affixed to the temple wall. The men insisted on photographs being taken in front of the plaque that bore my name. Without a wife to help me deal with the pressure of touching base with family and friends, I am learning to cope with the Xmas season. There is a constant demand for my presence at gatherings planned for the last month of the year. At my age, it is extremely challenging to venture out of the house in the evenings even once a week, but in this season, the demand is for almost every day of the week. This year will be my 96th Xmas celebration. I have no recollection of the first seven. My father was the Superintendent of Posts in Baroda when I was born in 1929. He was transferred to Poona (now Pune) as Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service in 1930.

In 1964, I was appointed Superintendent of Police, Pune City. A Hindu priest dressed in a saffron robe strode into my office and introduced himself as "someone who knew me when I was two years old". He said his father had been my father's head clerk in the postal superintendent's office. He introduced himself by the name he had adopted after taking his vow of chastity and commitment to a religious discipline. Thirty years later, on my way to Rajgurunagar from Mumbai by car, I stopped at Lonavala. On learning of my arrival at the wayside restaurant, two or three men working in an ashram run by the same holy man came over to the table where my wife and I were sitting and greeted us. They told me that the baba had taken samadhi. Since the baba had mentioned me to them more than once, they were delighted to meet me.

That meeting remains etched in my memory, as do the baba's visits to my office in Pune. During one of those visits, he had talked of taking samadhi and I remember trying to dissuade him from doing so.

What I regret is that I just cannot remember his name after all these years. Two Christmases I do remember — one in 1956 and the other in 1989. In 1956, I was the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Nasik division. Deolali was under my jurisdiction. The Artillery Regimental Centre was located there. A young Christian officer named Valladares hitched a ride in my car from Nasik to Mumbai. Both of us were on leave for a week and since our respective parents were from Mumbai, we planned the trip for Xmas.

The young Army officer was from Bandra. I decided to drop him off at his residence. I had never seen a place so brightly illuminated and decorated as I did

neighbours and close friends will visit. With them I will share cake and wine.

Around Christmas every year, my friend, Leena Gandhi Tewari, observes an annual day for children from the Vakola slums whom she has literally adopted. In the beginning, she began with girls only, but recently she has been admitting boys to her centre, which she has named after her grandmother. These children of domestic help and drivers and the like are taught classical dancing, acting in plays and other forms of art and culture that helps them gain self-confidence, poise and knowledge. Tutors proficient in subjects taught to them in school are employed by the centre to encourage the girls and boys to excel in scholastics.

The results of her efforts over the years have been a source of great satisfaction to the children as well as their parents and also to Leena, her husband Prashant and the staff they have employed in the venture. Leena has spent not only her own money and her time but also her energy with a single-minded devotion to bettering the standards of living of the needy and the dispossessed. This year, two girls cleared the MBA (Finance) exams, three got through the Bachelor of Management Studies course and two in BAF (Bachelor of Accounting and Finance). Their skills are being developed to enable them to compete in the job market. The country needs many more Leenas who are willing to part with slices of their wealth for those less fortunate than them. Both my own daughters, now into their sixties, mentor girls entrusted to their care by a Delhi-based NGO, the Udayan Shalini Foundation, which has opened a branch in Mumbai. They spend quality time with the mentees, introducing them to polite society and inculcating in them a feeling of self-confidence and pride in their own worth.

Two Muslim ladies I know, Mumtaz and Shameem, run the Botawala Trust established by their late father. The trust shelters 50 Muslim girls orphaned at a young age. They house the girls in a building constructed on their own property, feed them and generally attend to their emotional needs. The quality of life in Mumbai has improved for these unfortunate children because the city boasts of such compassionate women.



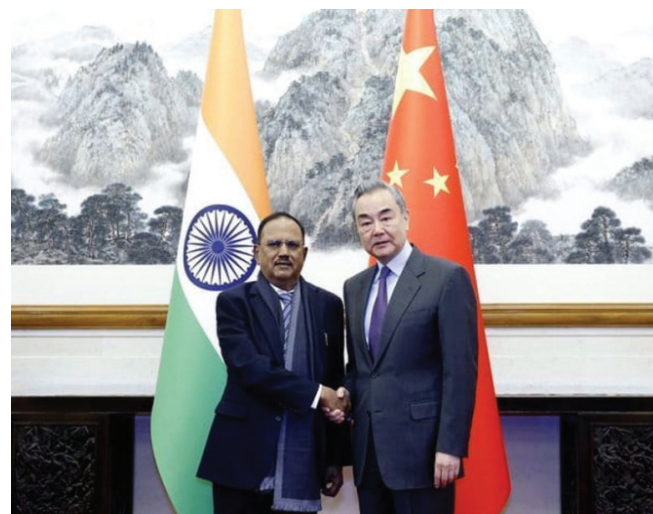
on that memorable Xmas eve in 1956. Bandra was almost entirely a Christian enclave in the 1950s. Today, it is only partly so, but the Christians of Bandra still continue to display bright lights.

In 1989, I was posted in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. That was the only year I failed to attend Mass in a church on Xmas Day. Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu had just been deposed. He and his wife Elena were executed by a firing squad that day after a cursory trial. A mini revolution against his dictatorship was at its peak at that time. We could not step out of the ambassador's residence. We spent the day watching armed men move menacingly on the road outside. This year, I will celebrate the festival in Mumbai in the traditional manner — go to Mass, greeting priests and the congregation, and having Xmas lunch with the family. Some

India-China talks

A step forward in bilateral relations

THE recent Special Representatives' meeting in Beijing between India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi marks a pivotal moment in bilateral diplomacy. This first dialogue in nearly five years, following the 2020 Galwan valley clash, reflects a cautious yet significant shift toward normalising ties between the two Asian giants. Central to the discussions was the implementation of the October 2024 disengagement agreement in Ladakh. Both sides committed to maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control, a critical step to prevent future conflicts. The meeting also underscored a six-point consensus aimed at deepening cooperation in areas such as border trade, data sharing on trans-border rivers and the resumption of the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra. While the agreements signal progress, challenges persist. The border dispute remains a complex and sensitive issue, compounded by historical grievances and mutual mistrust. The emphasis on confidence-building measures



and 'step-by-step' resolutions demonstrates pragmatic

diplomacy. However, translating these commitments into actionable change will require sustained political will and vigilance. The broader implications of this meeting cannot be overlooked. As both nations grapple with shifting global power dynamics, their engagement holds the potential to influence the multipolar world order. Collaborative initiatives in trade, technology and multilateral platforms like BRICS could pave the way for a more stable and prosperous region.

Yet, peace is only the starting point. Both nations must seize this opportunity to redefine their relationship through people-to-people exchanges, eased trade barriers and cultural cooperation. These steps are essential to build trust and overcome the lingering shadows of conflict. The path to reconciliation is long, but this dialogue offers hope for a more harmonious future. For India and China, peace is not just an ideal but a necessity.

The alarm over widening trade deficit is misplaced

The govt would rather sustain the narrative of corruption under the UPA than design new PPP policies for large, broad-based private investment in infrastructure.

INDIA'S September quarter (Q2) growth came in at a disappointing 5.4 per cent. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lowered its growth projection for this year to 6.6 per cent, from its earlier forecast of 7.2 per cent. SBI economists put the likely growth rate for the year at 6.3 per cent. These estimates combine with ordinary folks' lived experience of high prices and persistent unemployment and news flashes of a surge in the trade deficit to record highs, with the official narrative still clamouring that India remains the fastest growing large economy. The economic news is both worse than it looks in some ways and better than it looks in some other ways. The unexpected spike in the trade deficit in November is no big deal, for example. It was caused by a surge in the import of gold. As global gold prices came down, importers more than doubled the imports of the precious metal — from \$7.13 billion in October to \$14.8 billion in November. The RBI has, of late, been shoring up gold reserves in the country's overall foreign exchange reserves as well. What really matters is not so much the trade balance as a broader measure, the current account balance, which takes into account not just the balance in merchandise trade, but also the balance in export and import of services (computer-related services matter a lot), and inflows and outflows of income from the factors of production, labour and capital, comprising remittances, profits, royalties, interest. The current account balance determines whether a country is a net supplier of savings to the rest of the world, running up a current account surplus, or a net drawer of external savings, running up a current account deficit. When the current account is in deficit, we end up owing foreigners money. How does that draw external savings into the economy? Let us consider savings and investment in real, rather than monetary, form. Everything an economy produces in a year is either consumed, invested or exported. Yet, when we

add up consumption, investment and exports, we do not get GDP, the value of everything produced in a year. That is because there is an element of imports in the things we consume, invest and even export — we import crude and export refined products, such as petrol and diesel, for example. So, GDP is the sum of consumption, investment and exports net of imports, exports and imports being seen comprehensively, including all services, covering factor services, apart from goods. Savings are that part of the output that is not consumed. In other words, savings are equal to GDP less consumption, meaning that savings are equal to investment plus net exports. If net exports, that is, the current account balance, is zero, that is, exports exactly match imports, savings would equal investment.

In a closed economy, what the economy can invest is necessarily what it saves, neither bigger, nor smaller.

If exports are less than imports, the current account balance (next exports) would be negative. Savings, remember, are the sum of investment and net exports. When the net exports element is negative, domestic savings are smaller than domestic investment by that element of net exports. In other words, domestic investment is greater than domestic savings, thanks to that current account deficit (CAD).

With a CAD, you either run down past reserves of foreign exchange or owe foreigners money. That is, foreigners must be willing to finance your CAD. The amount of foreign savings your economy ingests is measured by your CAD, not by capital inflows, classified as foreign



direct investments or foreign portfolio investments. These inflows remain as cash balances till they are absorbed into the real economy via financing a CAD.

This is why alarm over a trade deficit is misplaced. India's CAD for 2023-24 was 0.7 per cent of GDP and has nudged up to 1.1 per cent of GDP in the April-June quarter this year. A current account deficit up to 3 per cent is not only sustainable but also desirable, so that the economy can augment domestic savings to invest more and grow faster.

So, worry over a widening trade deficit is wholly misplaced. The only alarm on the external front is that

we are unable to run up a current account deficit large enough to accelerate domestic investment and growth.

Slowing growth is indeed a concern, as is the government's contradictory policy response. While the Budget did announce a massive capital outlay, spending has been deficient. At the end of October, while total receipts have been 53.7 per cent of the budget estimate (BE), capital expenditure has been just 42 per cent of BE, even as revenue expenditure has been 54.1 per cent of BE. Nor has there been any coherent policy to boost private investment. A quarter of the manufacturing capacity has been lying underutilised since 2015-16. This dissuades capacity expansion. The government would rather sustain the narrative of corruption under the UPA than design new public-private-partnership policies for large, broad-based private investment in infrastructure. Yet another dampener is the regressive tax reform. The latest is the proposal to create a sixth slab for GST, beyond the existing range of zero, 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. Now, a 35 per cent rate has been proposed, purportedly, for sin goods. More goods and services are liable to turn sinful over time. The net result would be loss of revenue and reinforcement of a culture of tax complexity, avoidance and evasion. Higher import duties on gold and higher excise duties on cigarettes have both encouraged largescale smuggling. Higher rates on luxury goods would drive their purchases totally abroad. The goal in GST reform is convergence of rates and fewer slabs, not rate creep or retrospective levies.

GST Council delays decision on lowering tax for health, life insurance premiums

NEW DELHI. The GST Council has postponed its decision on reducing tax rates for life and health insurance premiums, officials told news agency PTI. During the 55th meeting held on Saturday, technical considerations led to the deferral, with the Group of Ministers (GoM) tasked to conduct further deliberations. Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chaired the meeting, which concluded that additional discussions were needed before finalising any changes. Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Chaudhary, who leads the GoM on insurance, stated that more time is required to resolve outstanding issues, particularly regarding the taxation of group policies, individual policies, and senior citizens' plans. A subsequent GoM meeting is scheduled for January to finalise these discussions. In November, the GoM recommended certain reforms, including exempting premiums paid for term life insurance policies from GST. Similarly, health insurance premiums paid by senior citizens were proposed for exemption, alongside those up to Rs 5 lakh for non-senior citizens. However, premiums exceeding Rs 5 lakh will continue to be taxed at 18%. The delay reflects the need for further technical assessment, as there are varying opinions among states about these proposed changes. With most states supporting the notion of reducing the tax burden, a positive resolution remains a likely outcome, albeit requiring additional time for consensus.

6,700 employees leave unicorns between August 2023-24, attrition rate 4.5 per cent

BENGALURU. Over 6,700 employees left unicorn start-ups between August 2023 to August 2024, and on average, unicorns had an attrition rate of 4.5% during the period, an analysis by market intelligence platform PrivateCircle Research found. As many as 116 unicorns (including newer additions such as Moneyview, Ather and Rapido) in the country employed 4,10,829 people in August 2024 as compared to 4,17,561 employees recorded in the same month previous year. The analysis includes employees of whom provident fund contributions were done. However, unicorns continue to be large employers in the country. Murali Loganathan, Director of Research at PrivateCircle said, "We find that the compounded revenue growth among most unicorns has been in high double digits over two years and yet these unicorns have maintained stable employee numbers." "This signals efficient usage of human capital even during periods of high growth. The monthly net change in unicorn workforce has stayed between -0.9% and 2.5% during the selected time period," he added. Across all major startup hubs, Delhi NCR saw the maximum additions in the total number of employees between August 2023 and August 2024. It hired 18,554 employees and some of the mass recruiters from Delhi-NCR included PolicyBazaar, Blinkit, and Zomato. The second-highest employee additions were recorded in Chennai-based unicorns (4,785). Bengaluru-based unicorns during the period recruited only 2,384 employees. Mumbai unicorns saw a net decrease of 7,024 employees from the cumulative workforce. Pune (-643) and Hyderabad (-66) have recorded a fall in their overall workforce numbers, as per the platform's research.

Drafting of DPDP Act rules nearly complete

NEW DELHI. Drafting of the rules for the Digital Personal Data Protection Act (DPDP Act), 2023, is in its final stage, said Minister of state Electronics and Information Technology, Jitendra Prasad on Friday. Prasad, in response to a question in the Rajya Sabha, also said that further consultations on the DPDP Rules will take place after the publication of the Draft Rules. "Drafting of the Rules is in the final stage. Further consultation on the Rules will be done after publication of the Draft Rules. The provisions of DPDP Act are in addition to and not in derogation of any other law for the time being in force," he said. The Act, received the President's assent on August 11, 2023, has yet to see release of its detailed regulations. The Act prohibits any entity, public or private, from using an individual's data without explicit consent, emphasising the importance of safeguarding personal information. It contains provisions allowing data usage in contexts like national security and judicial processes.

States ask for higher borrowing ceiling, interest-free loans

JAISALMER. States have demanded that the Union government must increase their borrowing limits to support fiscal activities. In a pre-budget meeting on Friday with Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman in Jaisalmer, state finance ministers demanded an increased allocation of 50-year interest-free loans to states for their capital expenditure needs. The meeting took place on Friday in Jaisalmer, where the 55th GST Council meeting will be held. During the meeting, several states have expressed concern over lack of funds for running the states due to existing borrowing limits of 3% of gross state domestic product (GSDP). The states have also asked for more flexibility in the assistance given to states by the Centre for their capex needs. A part of this assistance is either linked to a set of reforms or are for sector specific projects. Some states have asked the central government to bear a larger share of land acquisition costs for projects. States have also highlighted the need for state-specific road development projects and railway projects. Some of the representatives of the states have also emphasized the need for additional funding for disaster relief. They requested more allocation for the State Disaster Response Fund (SDRF).

Funds Devolved To States Under 15th Finance Commission Higher: FM Sitharaman

Sitharaman stated that the Centre has allocated an additional amount of approximately Rs 30,000 crore as 'Untied Funds' under the SASCI-2024-25.

New Delhi. Union Minister for Finance and Corporate Affairs Nirmala Sitharaman on Friday chaired the pre-budget consultations with Finance Ministers of States and Union Territories (with Legislature) at Jaisalmer in Rajasthan. The participants gave several valuable suggestions to the Union Finance Minister for consideration in the Union Budget for FY 2025-26.

Sitharaman remarked that because of the healthy macroeconomic environment, buoyancy and efficiency in the tax collections, the funds devolved to the states in the last 45 months (April 2021 to December 2024) under the 15th Finance Commission is more than what was devolved in 60 months under the 14th Finance Commission (2015-20). The Union Finance Minister also referred to the Scheme for Special Assistance to States for Capital Investment (SASCI), which was first announced in the Union Budget 2020-21, and acknowledged that it had received a very good response from the states. The states have been requesting the Central Government to enhance the outlay under the scheme as it is leading to the construction of crucial capital assets in the states.

Sitharaman stated that the Centre has allocated an additional amount of approximately Rs 30,000 crore as 'Untied Funds' under the SASCI-2024-25. This allocation may be used by the State



Governments in any sector to further increase expenditure on creation of capital assets. In addition to this, the Union Finance Minister stated that the Centre has created an additional dispensation under SASCI for the states affected by disasters of a severe nature as assessed by the Inter-Ministerial Central Team (IMCT), deputed by the Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). This will aid the states in their efforts for reconstruction of the damaged infrastructure, like roads and bridges, water supply lines, electricity poles, and

culverts etc. The states which suffered a natural disaster of severe nature (as assessed by IMCT) in FY 2024-25 may be eligible for up to 50 per cent of their allocation under Part-1 (Untied) of the SASCI scheme. Sitharaman added that this amount will be in addition to the funds provided under the National Disaster Response and Mitigation Fund (NDRMF). The meeting was attended by Union Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary, Chief Ministers of Goa, Haryana, Jammu and Kashmir, Meghalaya and Odisha; Deputy Chief Ministers of Arunachal Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Telangana; Finance Ministers, Ministers, Secretaries of Departments of Economic Affairs and Expenditure, Ministry of Finance and senior officers from the States/Union Territories and the Union Government. Sitharaman thanked the dignitaries for their valuable inputs and ideas which will be given due consideration in the preparation of budget for the ensuing Financial Year.

Cabinet Hikes MSP For Copra To Rs 12,100 Per Quintal

The farmers have the option to sell their produce to the FCI/state agencies at MSP or in the open market as is advantageous to them.



New Delhi. The Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs on Friday hiked the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for fair average quality of milling copra to Rs 11,582 per quintal and for ball copra to Rs 12,100 per quintal for the 2025 marketing season, according to an official statement.

The MSP has been increased in accordance with the government's decision that mandates the MSP for crops will be fixed at levels of at least 1.5 times the all-India weighted average cost of production, the statement said. "The Government has increased MSP for milling copra and ball copra from Rs 5,250 per quintal

and Rs 5,500 per quintal for the marketing season 2014 to Rs 11,582 per quintal and Rs 12,100 per quintal for the marketing season 2025, registering a growth of 121 per cent and 120 per cent, respectively," the statement said. A higher MSP will not only ensure better remunerative returns to the coconut growers but also incentivise farmers to expand copra production to meet the growing demand for coconut products both domestically and internationally, it added.

The National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India Ltd (NAFED) and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation

(NCCF) will continue to act as Central Nodal Agencies (CNAs) for procurement of copra and de-husked coconut under the Price Support Scheme (PSS), the statement added. The main objective of the Centre's procurement is to assure farmers get remunerative prices and distribution to consumers, particularly the vulnerable sections of society takes place at affordable prices. The Centre maintains a buffer stock for food security and price stability. Similarly, the Central government extends price support to paddy, coarse grains and wheat through the FCI and state agencies.

All the food grains (wheat and paddy) conforming to the prescribed specifications offered for sale at specified centres are bought by the public procurement agencies at the Minimum Support Price (MSP), inclusive of the bonus announced, if any. The farmers have the option to sell their produce to the FCI/state agencies at MSP or in the open market as is advantageous to them.

Aligning inflation to RBI's 4 per cent target key to ensuring growth: MPC minutes

MUMBAI. The members of the Reserve Bank rate-setting panel in the minutes of its December meeting released on Friday said high prices are the cause for demand slowdown, and aligning inflation to the central bank's 4% target is the key to ensuring sustained economic growth. "The monetary policy stance is open to support growth, but it must await the ebbing of inflation on a durable basis or else the uneven progress made so far in disinflation will get dissipated," deputy governor Michael Patra wrote. Inflation is likely to remain contained as the disinflationary effect of past monetary policy actions continues to play out. Headline inflation is expected to ease to 4.5% in Q4 and further to 4% by Q1

of next fiscal, said ex-RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das. External member Saugata Bhattacharya said both growth and inflation have worsened, and the risk of making a "policy error" was higher now compared to the October policy. "The policy priority at this juncture has to be on restoring inflation growth balance," Das underlined in his last monetary policy committee meeting. Lower inflation will enhance households' disposable income and increase their purchasing power, and this approach would support consumption and investment demand, Das added.

Nagesh Kumar called for a 25 basis points reduction in policy, saying "I

believe a rate cut would help in reviving economic growth without worsening the inflationary situation, which may soften with seasonal correction in prices." Kumar said the limited impact monetary policy has on food inflation alongside the sharp slowdown in growth as reasons to shift policy gears. Lower inflation to enhance disposable income. Lower inflation will enhance disposable income and increase purchasing power, and this would support consumption and investment demand, Das said. Nagesh Kumar called for a 25 basis points reduction in policy, saying "I believe a rate cut would help in reviving economic growth without worsening the inflationary situation."



dollar stabilises, but near-term flows remain under pressure. Besides the chances of fewer rate cuts, concerns related to India's macroeconomic health have added to the pressure. The country's trade deficit widened to an all-time high in November and the second quarter GDP came to the lowest in nearly two years.

All major sectoral indices on the NSE suffered losses on Friday. Nifty Realty fell 4 per cent, while PSU Bank and IT indices plunged almost 3 per cent each. On weekly basis, the IT index fell 4.4 per cent, Capital Goods declined 5 per cent, and Power plunged 5.2 per cent.

In the broader market, the mid and small stocks fell sharper than the blue chips. The BSE Midcap and Smallcap indices dropped 2.43 per cent and 2.11 per cent, respectively, on Friday.

Amazon and Starbucks workers are on strike. Trump might have something to do with it

New Delhi Amazon delivery drivers and Starbucks baristas are on strike in a handful of US cities as they seek to exert pressure on the two major companies to recognize them as unionized employees or to meet demands for an inaugural labor contract.

The strikes that started Thursday and Friday followed other recent standoffs between corporate America and organized labor. Large and established labor unions secured meaningful employer concessions this year following strikes by Boeing factory workers, dockworkers at East and Gulf coast ports, video game performers, and hotel and casino workers on the Las Vegas Strip. But workers at Starbucks, Amazon and some other prominent consumer brands still are fighting for their first contracts. Amazon refuses to acknowledge the organizing efforts of drivers and warehouse workers — many of whom have voted to unionize — even though the powerful Teamsters union says it represents them. Starbucks long resisted the unionization of its stores, but had agreed to negotiate a contract by the end of the year.

Why are the strikes happening now?

Strikes — particularly ones that happen during the holidays, a time of high economic activity — can help unions exercise leverage during negotiations or flex their muscles by garnering support from workers and sympathetic consumers. Both Amazon and Starbucks saw a wave of organizing efforts following the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic focused attention on front-line workers and the impact of economic inequality on the lives of wage-earning Americans. Employees organized at bookstores, where unions are rare, and were successful with campaigns at some stores run by Apple, Trader Joe's and the outdoor equipment company REI.

But turning those wins into contracts can be a challenge. At Amazon and Starbucks, which were not unionized before the pandemic, workers have yet to secure an agreement with the e-commerce and coffee giants, which both have their headquarters in Seattle. John Logan, director of labor and employment studies at San Francisco State University, said he thinks the Amazon and Starbucks workers are "desperate" to make progress before President-elect Donald Trump gets to appoint a Republican majority to the



National Labor Relations Board, which is expected to be less friendly to unions during his administration.

"The unions want to make these disputes public and bring political pressures on the companies," Logan said in a written statement. "If these disputes drag on until next year, and if they are fought largely through the labor board and the courts, the unions and workers will almost certainly lose. This might be their last, best chance to pressure the companies in public before Trump comes into office." However, Trump has also given some signs that he might be friendlier to labor during his second term compared to his first term. Last month, he picked Oregon Rep. Lori

Chavez-DeRemer to lead the Department of Labor in his new administration, elevating a Republican congresswoman who has strong support from unions, including the Teamsters. Teamsters President Sean O'Brien also spoke at the Republican National Convention this past summer. Teamster-led strikes at Amazon

The Teamsters say workers at Amazon are striking at seven delivery stations in Southern California, San Francisco, New York City, Atlanta and Skokie,

Illinois, because the company ignored a Sunday deadline the union had set for contract negotiations. At midnight on Saturday, the Teamsters say workers will also strike at a prominent warehouse in New York, which voted to join the fledgling Amazon Labor Union in 2022 and have since elected to affiliate with the Teamsters. The prominent labor group says it's fighting for higher wages, better benefits and safer working conditions for Amazon employees, many of whom experience economic insecurity while working for a company worth \$2.3 trillion. It has not said how many Amazon warehouse workers or drivers are joining the striking.

Delhi: How bomb squads respond to threat calls and declare them hoax

NEW DELHI. Another day and at least four schools in Delhi woke up to bomb threats, which later turned out to be hoaxes, the sixth such incident in 11 days. Barring an incident where a minor boy was apprehended for sending a bomb threat because he did not want to appear for an exam, none of the other hoax cases have been cracked so far. The police have found it difficult to track down the culprits due to their usage of VPNs to keep their location and IP addresses hidden. Coupled with ProtonMail, an email service that provides end-to-end encryption, it becomes virtually impossible for the police authorities to track down the perpetrators. What's left for the Delhi Police to do is manually check each bomb threat and declare them as hoaxes. Naturally, the Bomb Disposal Squad (BDS) and BDT of the Delhi Police have been on their toes with a slew of hoax bomb threats being reported from schools across Delhi NCR.



The movement from control rooms to district BDT units has been fast and frequent. For the Bomb Squad personnel, it all starts with the first call to the police control room on the dial of 112. "As soon as the control room gets information about a bomb threat...BDT inspectors in the concerned district are alerted within 60 seconds through wireless communication. Within five to 10 minutes of the call, a seven-member BDT reaches the spot in an ROV

(Remote Operation Vehicle)," a BDS officer said.

The team, the officer said, consists of an inspector-level officer, two sub-inspectors, three head constables, a dog handler, and a dog to sniff out the explosive.

The team then starts the process to verify whether the call is a hoax or not. "Multiple devices are deployed to detect the presence of explosives. Non Linear Junction Detector (NLJD) and M-ION (Explosive Weapon Detector) are first used to see if any visible explosive is present. DSMD (Deep Search Metal Detectors) are used to search metal items.

RTVS, a portable X-ray machine, is used to check for wires and switches inside closed items. Since bomb suits don't guarantee 100 per cent protection, robotic hands called Telescopic Manipulators are used to pick up suspicious items. These hands are 10-foot-long and are controlled by remotes," the BDS officer said. If no bombs

are found, which has been the case with all bomb hoax calls in Delhi schools this year, the BDT declares the same.

If any suspicious or probable explosive is found, BDT calls the BDS team of the concerned range to swing into action. "As the BDS team arrives, BDT covers the explosive with a 'bomb blanket' to turn down the effect of a probable blast. These blankets are made of a special material that controls the spread of splinters," the officer explained.

The officer added that BDS (Crime), the nodal agency, is in constant touch with the National Security Guard (NSG) and Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO) to work on the latest technology and state-of-the-art bomb defusal machinery. "From suits to safety equipment, guidelines are constantly revised by MHA (Ministry of Home Affairs) when it comes to machinery involved. We visit NSG labs to collaborate with them on more elaborate and efficient bomb disposal techniques," the officer said.

Parliament session ends, discord doesn't



NEW DELHI. The winter session of Parliament, which saw unprecedented clashes between the Opposition and the ruling BJP, came to a close on Friday with Lok Sabha Speaker Om Birla and Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar cautioning the members to maintain dignity and decorum of the Houses. Both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were adjourned sine die amid protests by the Opposition and treasury benches over the alleged insult to B R Ambedkar and directions by Speaker Om Birla to members against holding protests at any gate of Parliament.

While Lok Sabha's productivity was 57.87% in 20 days, passing four bills, the corresponding figure for the Rajya Sabha was 40.03% in 19 days and the passage of three bills.

The session may perhaps go down in parliamentary history for setting a grim record for several reasons — from an ugly scuffle and a no-trust motion against Dhankhar to a bitter discourse on Constitution and daily disruption of proceedings by both sides.

The highlight of the session — a two-day debate on the 75th year of Constitution — snowballed into a major confrontation between the BJP and the Congress over Union home minister Amit Shah's comment on Ambedkar. During his speech on the Constitution, he said, "It has become the new fashion to say 'Ambedkar, Ambedkar, Ambedkar'. Had they chanted God's name as many times, they would have found a place in heaven."

The scuffle outside Parliament led to an FIR against Rahul Gandhi after the BJP filed assault charges against him. With both the Congress and the BJP escalating the issue outside Parliament, it is bound to gain more traction and dominate the narrative in the forthcoming Delhi and Bihar assembly elections.

Special police team for rahul case
A special team of the Delhi Police is expected to take over the probe into the FIR filed against Rahul Gandhi for allegedly 'assaulting' BJP MPs, sources said. Given the conflicting claims, the team plans to call MPs present during the scuffle to piece together the sequence of events. The police will examine CCTV footage and

Delhi Man Stabbed To Death, Had Threatened Accused To Return Friend's Money

New Delhi. A 26-year-old man was stabbed to death in his apartment over an alleged financial dispute in Delhi's Narela area on Friday. The victim, identified as Himanshu, was living with his friend, Sumit Kaushik, at the time of the incident, officials said. According to a preliminary investigation, one of the accused, Ravi, had allegedly borrowed ₹ 45,000 from the victim's friend, Sumit. He, however, failed to return the money. Following this, the victim visited Ravi's house in Safiyabad and threatened his family with "consequences" if he failed to repay his friend. Hours later, Ravi, along with his three accomplices, reached the victim's residence around 6 pm and stabbed him. They immediately fled the scene.

"A PCR call regarding the incident was received at 6.28 pm. According to preliminary investigations, Himanshu was attacked and stabbed by four individuals," a senior police official said.

The victim had been living with Sumit for the past four months, officials said. Three people have been arrested in the case - Ravi (30), Sahil (24) and Ashish (26). The fourth accused, Akshay Khatri, is reportedly on the run. A case of murder has been registered against them. "The motive behind the murder appears to be linked to a financial dispute...We are questioning the accused," the official added. Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) Chief Arvind Kejriwal hit out at the Centre over the rising crimes in the national capital.

Another painful murder. Delhi is bleeding and the BJP government at the Centre is sitting idle. How long will the people of Delhi tolerate such conditions?" he wrote in a post on X.

SC dismisses NTBCL plea; scraps toll collection on DND flyway

The apex court said if a governmental action disproportionately favours a private entity at the expense of public welfare, it is liable to be struck down as invalid.

NEW DELHI. In a major relief to commuters on the Delhi-Noida-Direct (DND) flyway, the Supreme Court on Friday rejected the appeal of Noida Toll Bridge Company Ltd (NTBCL) against an order of the Allahabad High Court, which scrapped user fee collection for it. The SC slammed Noida's authority for allowing an agreement to perpetually fleece the commuters. Observing that NTBCL has recovered the project costs and substantial profits, eliminating any justification for the



continued imposition of tolls, a two-judge bench comprising Justices Surya Kant and Ujjal Bhuyan said, "No tax will be levied on the DND flyway for commuters. We dismiss the appeal of NTBCL against the Allahabad High Court order." The top court said if a governmental action disproportionately favours a private entity at the expense of public welfare, it is liable to be struck down as invalid.

NTBCL had approached the SC against an Allahabad High Court order quashing user fee collection from vehicles on the 9.2-km DND flyway. The HC had in its 2016 order passed after hearing a PIL filed by the Federation of Noida Resident Welfare Association, also struck down the concessionaire agreement. The bench also said that Noida "overstepped its authority" by delegating its power to levy toll to NTBCL.

Delhi schools receive orders to identify illegal Bangladeshi migrant students

New Delhi. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) has directed schools to identify illegal Bangladeshi migrant children and ensure that they are not issued birth certificates. The directive comes days after the Delhi L-G Secretariat ordered a crackdown on illegal immigrants from Bangladesh, with the issue becoming the latest flashpoint between the ruling AAP and the BJP ahead of Assembly polls. The civic body has also directed all MCD zones to remove encroachments by illegal Bangladeshi migrants. An action taken report has been sought by the MCD deputy commissioner by December 31. "The education department will take appropriate preventive measures to identify illegal Bangladeshi migrants while giving admission in municipal schools. It is also requested that proper identification and verification drives may also be undertaken to identify the illegal Bangladeshi migrant children



in schools," the order by the deputy commissioner said. Reacting to the directive, AAP MP Sanjay Singh said the order by the MCD was a bid to humiliate and disrespect the Purvanchali community in the name of illegal migrants. Singh also accused BJP national president JP Nadda of equating Purvanchalis with "Rohingya infiltrators" and "Bangladeshis". Rohingyas are a Muslim minority group from Myanmar. "They want to humiliate the

poor from Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. Through this order, they want to threaten Purvanchalis, their kids and bulldoze their shops and houses in jhuggis," the Rajya Sabha MP said.

Purvanchalis -- migrants from eastern Uttar Pradesh and Bihar -- make up roughly 42 per cent of Delhi's electorate. The community wields influence in nearly half of Delhi's 70 Assembly constituencies, including key areas such as Burari, Laxmi Nagar, and Dwarka.

Mumbai ferry crash: Parents tried to throw children into sea, stopped by rescuers

New Delhi. The panic-stricken parents onboard an ill-fated tourist ferry were thinking of tossing their children into the seawater as a desperate measure after their boat started sinking off Mumbai, but a team of CISF marine commandos stopped them with an assurance that everyone will be saved. CISF constable Amol Savant (36) and his two colleagues became the "first responders" after the December 18 accident. Their patrol boat reached the accident site off the Mumbai coast around 4 pm, and they decided to utilise the "golden hour" for first saving the most vulnerable, including the children. Fourteen people were killed after a Navy boat rammed into the tourist ferry -- 'Neel Kamal' -- on a way to Elephanta Island from the Gateway of India in Mumbai late on Wednesday



afternoon. We were on routine patrol at some distance off the shore when our walkie-talkie crackled to inform us that a passenger ferry was sinking. I asked the pilot (speed boat driver) to go full throttle, and we reached the accident site about 3-4 kms away in no time," Savant told PTI here.

He said he was "astounded to see the accident site. But being a trained soldier, I understood what was to be done and

how." "We saw people were ready to throw their children in the ocean water thinking that they would be saved from the sinking ship. I asked them not to panic and not attempt this. We took charge of the situation soon," said the jawan, who is posted with the CISF unit that guards the Jawaharlal Nehru Port Trust (JNPT), Navi Mumbai. Savant said he too was "shaken initially when he reached the site, but then when I saw the children hanging dangerously from whatever was left of the sinking ferry and their helpless parents, I and my colleagues just caught hold of the children and brought them in our boat."

The jawan says they rescued about 6-7 children in the first go followed by women and men. "There were many hands raised towards us, some screaming, some just requesting to save

them. We don't know how many exactly but we were able to help and rescue as many as 50-60 people who were onboard that ill-fated ferry," Savant, who joined the CISF in 2010, said. Sub Inspector (SI) Khejoka Sema (38), posted with the CISF unit that provides counterterrorist security cover to the JNPA, was in the second patrol boat that reached the spot. "I saw a lady who was in the water wearing a life jacket but she had raised her hands in anticipation that she would be rescued. We rushed to her and gently asked her to put her hands down else the jacket would slip and she would start drowning," Sema said. She was saved, he said.

SI Sema, who joined the paramilitary force in 2018, said they administered cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) to maybe 10-12 persons to bring them back to senses and drain out the water they had swallowed.

Winter Session Ends, Lok Sabha Sees 57% Productivity, Rajya Sabha At 40%

New Delhi. Parliament was adjourned sine die on Friday, capping off a tumultuous session that saw a robust debate on the country's constitutional journey and the introduction of two landmark bills on simultaneous elections before plunging to a new low of political animosity over alleged insult of B R Ambedkar.

As Parliament met on the last day of Winter Session, the overhang of mutual bitterness involving the ruling National Democratic Alliance and opposition parties following Thursday's spat persisted, forcing Speaker Om Birla in Lok Sabha to adjourn the House within three minutes without even the customary summing up of the Session's highlights. It was only a little better in Rajya Sabha as opposition parties, which have been protesting against Home Minister Amit Shah's alleged insulting comments for Ambedkar, agreed to let Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar read out his valedictory remarks before adjourning the House sine die.

The Lok Sabha's productivity was nearly 58 per cent, according to its secretariat, a far cry from days when it hovered around 100 per cent and even beyond. In his concluding remarks, Dhankhar called upon parties to rise above political differences and restore the sanctity of parliamentary discourse, striking a note of balance amid opposition's charge that he has often been partisan.

He said the House effectively functioned for just 43 hours and 27 minutes with a productivity of merely 40.03 per cent during the Winter Session that began on November 25. At a press conference, Parliamentary Affairs Minister Kiren Rijju laid the blame on the door of opposition, especially the Congress, saying their continuous protest despite an earlier agreement to allow Parliament to run was the principal reason behind the low productivity. He said all parties must reflect on what is a matter of great concern, adding that as the minister in-



charge of parliamentary affairs he will continue to reach out to opposition leaders. During the Session, five bills were introduced in Lok Sabha, which passed four of them. The Rajya Sabha passed three bills. A special session was also held in the 'Samvidhan Sadan' to commemorate the Constitution Day on November 26.

If Thursday's pushing and shoving involving MPs of rival parties, which left two BJP members hospitalised and led to a police case against Leader of the

Opposition in Lok Sabha Rahul Gandhi, was the low point of the Session, a spirited discussion on the "Glorious journey of 75 years of the Constitution of India" for two days in each House reflected the best of parliamentary debate.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's sharp denunciation of the Congress, especially the Nehru-Gandhi family, for its "mutilation" of constitutional values was heard by opposition benches in the Lok Sabha without any serious disruption, and so was Home Minister Amit Shah's reply to the debate in Rajya Sabha. However, opposition parties seized on a couple of sentences of Shah's reply to accuse him of insulting B R Ambedkar, the architect of India's Constitution, and launch protests inside and outside Parliament. The BJP-led NDA MPs led counter protests, accusing the Congress of slighting Ambedkar and ignoring his legacy during its long decades in power.

NEWS BOX

House approves funding bill, sends to Senate hours before government shutdown deadline

WASHINGTON. Hours before a midnight government shutdown, the House approved a new plan late Friday from Speaker Mike Johnson that would temporarily fund federal operations and disaster aid, but drops President-elect Donald Trump's demands for a debt limit increase into the new year.

Johnson insisted Congress would "meet our obligations" and not allow federal operations to shutter ahead of the Christmas holiday season. However, the day's outcome was uncertain after Trump doubled down on his insistence that a debt ceiling increase be included in any deal — if not, he said in an early morning post, let the closures "start now." The bill was approved 366-34, and now goes to the Senate, for expected quick passage.

"We're excited about this outcome," Johnson said afterward, adding he had spoken with Trump and the president-elect "was certainly happy about this outcome, as well." It was the third attempt from Johnson, the beleaguered House speaker, to achieve one of the basic requirements of the federal government — keeping it open. And it raised stark questions about whether Johnson will be able to keep his job, in the face of angry GOP colleagues, and work alongside Trump and billionaire ally Elon Musk, who have called the legislative plays this time.

Trump's last-minute demand was almost an impossible ask, and Johnson had almost no choice but to work around his pressure for a debt ceiling increase. The speaker knew there wouldn't be enough support within the GOP majority to pass any funding package, since many Republicans prefer to slash federal government and certainly wouldn't allow more debt.

Instead, the Republicans, who will have full control of the White House, House and Senate next year, with big plans for tax cuts and other priorities, are showing they must routinely rely on Democrats for the votes needed to keep up with the routine operations of governing. "So is this a Republican bill or a Democrat bill?" scoffed Musk on social media ahead of the vote.

House GOP floats new plans to prevent government shutdown with just hours to go

WASHINGTON. Veering toward a midnight Friday government shutdown, House Speaker Mike Johnson is proposing a new plan that would temporarily fund federal operations and disaster aid, but punts President-elect Donald Trump demands for a debt limit increase into the new year.

House Republicans are meeting behind closed doors on next steps after Trump doubled-down on his insistence that a debt ceiling increase be included in any deal — and if not, he said in an early morning post, let the closures "start now." But it is almost impossible to meet Trump's last minute pressure. Johnson knows there won't be enough support within the GOP majority to pass any package, since many Republicans prefer to slash federal government rather than fund it, and won't allow more debt. Some three dozen Republicans helped sink Trump's bill with its two-year debt limit increase in a spectacular Thursday evening flop.

Instead, Johnson has been in talks Friday with Democratic Leader Hakeem Jeffries whose party's support will be needed to ensure passage of any deal. Votes are possible Friday afternoon.

he new plan being floated would fund the government at current levels through March and adds USD 100 billion in disaster aid and \$10 billion in agricultural assistance to farmers. Gone would be Trump's demand for a debt ceiling, which GOP leaders are telling lawmakers would be debated as part of their tax and border packages in the new year.

"They haven't made any decisions about what they're going to bring forward yet," said Rep. Matt Rosendale, a Montana Republican, as he exited the basement meeting. Trump, who has not yet been sworn into office, is showing the power and limits of his sway with Congress, as he intervenes and orchestrates affairs from Mar-a-Lago, alongside his billionaire ally Elon Musk, who is heading up the incoming administration's new Department of Government Efficiency.

Ukraine drones hit multiple buildings in Russia's Kazan, flights cancelled

Kyiv. Ukraine brought the war into the heart of Russia Saturday morning with drone attacks that local authorities said damaged residential buildings in the city of Kazan in the Tatarstan region, over 1,000 kilometres from the front line.

The press service of Tatarstan's governor, Rustam Minnikhanov, said that eight drones attacked the city. Six hit residential buildings, one hit an industrial facility and one was shot down over a river, the statement said. A video posted on local Telegram news channel Astra, verified by The Associated Press, shows a drone flying into the upper floors of a high-rise building.

Local authorities said there were no casualties. Flights were halted at Kazan's airport and all mass gatherings were cancelled on Saturday and Sunday. The attacks, which Ukraine didn't acknowledge in keeping with its security policy, come after a Ukrainian attack on Friday on a town in Russia's Kursk border region using US-supplied missiles killed six people, including a child.

Moscow sent 113 drones into Ukraine overnight into Saturday, Ukrainian officials said. According to Ukraine's Air Force, 57 drones were shot down during the attacks. A further 56 drones were "lost," likely having been electronically jammed. The governor of Ukraine's Kharkiv region, Oleh Syniehubov, said eight people were wounded Friday night in drone attacks on the regional capital, also called Kharkiv.

At least two dead, 60 injured after car drives into German Christmas market, Saudi man arrested

MAGDEBURG. A car plowed into a busy outdoor Christmas market in the eastern German city of Magdeburg on Friday, killing at least two people and injuring at least 60 others in what authorities called a deliberate attack. The driver was arrested at the scene shortly after the car barreled into the market at around 7 p.m., when it was teeming with holiday shoppers looking forward to the weekend. Verified bystander footage distributed by the German news agency dpa showed the suspect's arrest on a walkway in the middle of the road. A nearby police officer pointing a handgun at the man shouted at him as he lay prone. Other officers soon arrived to take the man into custody.

The two people confirmed dead were an adult and a toddler, but officials said additional deaths couldn't be ruled out because 15 people had been seriously injured. The violence shocked the city, bringing its mayor to the verge of tears and marring a festive event that's part of a centuries-old German tradition. It also prompted several other German towns to

cancel their weekend Christmas markets as a precaution and out of solidarity with Magdeburg's loss.

The suspect is a 50-year-old Saudi doctor who moved to Germany in 2006, Tamara Zieschang, the interior minister for the state of Saxony-Anhalt, said at a news conference. He has been practicing medicine in Bernburg, about 40 kilometers (25 miles) south of Magdeburg, she said.

"As things stand, he is a lone perpetrator, so that as far as we know there is no further danger to the city," Saxony-Anhalt's governor, Reiner Haseloff, told reporters. "Every human life that has fallen victim to this attack is a terrible tragedy and one human life too many." The violence occurred in Magdeburg, a city of about 240,000 people west of Berlin that serves as Saxony-Anhalt's capital. Friday's attack came eight years after an Islamic extremist drove a truck into crowded Christmas market in Berlin, killing 13 people and injuring many others. The attacker was killed days later in



a shootout in Italy. Christmas markets are a huge part of German culture as an annual holiday tradition cherished since the Middle Ages and successfully exported to much of the Western world. In Berlin alone, more than 100 markets opened late last month and brought the smells of mulled wine, roasted almonds and bratwurst to the capital. Other markets abound across the country.

German Interior Minister Nancy Faeser said late last month that there were no concrete indications of a danger to Christmas

markets this year, but that it was wise to be vigilant. Hours after Friday's tragedy, the wail of sirens clashed with the market's festive ornaments, stars and leafy garlands.

Magdeburg resident Dorin Steffen told dpa that she was at a concert in a nearby church when she heard the sirens. The cacophony was so loud "you had to assume that something terrible had happened." She called the attack "a dark day" for the city.

"We are shaking," Steffen said. "Full of sympathy for the relatives, also in the hope that nothing has happened to our relatives, friends and acquaintances." The attack reverberated far beyond Magdeburg, with Haseloff calling it a catastrophe for the city, state and country. He said flags would be lowered to half-staff in Saxony-Anhalt and that the federal government planned to do the same. "It is really one of the worst things one can imagine, particularly in connection with what a Christmas market should bring," the governor said.

Germany Christmas Attack: Dramatic Arrest Of Saudi Doctor Caught On Camera

Germany Christmas Market Attack.

In a tragic incident in Germany, at least two people lost their lives while 68 others are injured as a car ploughed through the outdoor Christmas market in Magdeburg on Friday. The authorities believe it to be an attack and have arrested the prime suspect of the deadly car rampage, named Tamara Zieschang, a Saudi Arabian man. Several footages have emerged on social media showing the dramatic moment when the police finally captured the man behind the wheels of the SUV. The suspected attacker sped through the crowd in a car, leaving a path of destruction and bloodshed. The driver was arrested shortly after the car crashed into the market at around 7 p.m., when it was crowded with holiday shoppers preparing for the weekend. Verified footage shared by German news agency dpa showed the

suspect being arrested on a walkway. A police officer pointed a handgun at the man and ordered him to stay down. Other officers quickly arrived and detained him. Authorities in Magdeburg, 130 km southwest of



Berlin, confirmed two deaths, including a young child, and 68 injuries in a tragic incident. Officials said 15 of the injured are in serious condition, and more fatalities cannot be ruled out, as reported by AFP. Who Is Prime

Suspect Tamara Zieschang The suspect is a 50-year-old Saudi national who moved to Germany in 2006, according to Tamara Zieschang, Saxony-Anhalt's interior minister. Speaking at a news conference, she stated that the man has been practicing medicine in Bernburg, located 36 kilometers south of Magdeburg. "As things stand, he is a lone perpetrator, so that as far as we know there is no further danger to the city," Saxony-Anhalt's governor, Reiner Haseloff, told reporters. The suspected attack in Magdeburg, a city of around 240,000 people west of Berlin, happened eight years after a similar incident where an Islamic extremist drove a truck into a busy Christmas market in Berlin, killing 13 people and injuring many more. The attacker was killed in a shootout in Italy days later.

Anger after Musk backs German far right

GERMANY. A post from Elon Musk on his platform X claiming that only the far-right AfD party can "save Germany" sparked accusations Friday that he was seeking to interfere in the country's upcoming election. The billionaire, set to play a key role in US President-elect Donald Trump's administration as "efficiency czar", posted the message over a video commentary about the leader of Germany's centre-right CDU party Friedrich Merz. The video criticised Merz — who polls say is on course to become the next chancellor after February elections — for his refusal to work with the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD), currently polling in second place.

Following a deadly car-ramming attack on a Christmas market late Friday in the eastern city of Magdeburg — blamed on a Saudi man — Musk called the assault a "DIRECT RESULT of mass unchecked immigration". The German government has avoided strong comment, but lawmakers from across mainstream parties, which have all ruled out cooperating with the AfD, reacted with outrage to Musk's comment about the party. He doubled down later in the day, saying AfD is "Obviously NOT 'far-right'! Just common sense policies." Dennis Radtke, an MEP for the centre-right CDU, spoke out

forcefully. "It is threatening, irritating and unacceptable for a key figure in the future US government to interfere in



the German election campaign," he told the Handelsblatt daily. Germans are set to go to the polls on February 23 after the collapse of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition last month in a row over the budget. Radtke called Musk a "threat to democracy in the Western world", accusing the world's richest man of turning X, previously called Twitter, into a "disinformation slingshot".

Alex Schaefer, a lawmaker from Scholz's centre-left Social Democrats, said Musk's post was "completely unacceptable". "We are very close to the Americans, but now bravery is required towards our friend. We object to interference in our election campaign," Schaefer told the Tagesspiegel daily. Former finance minister Christian Lindner, from the pro-business FDP

party, said that some of Musk's ideas had "inspired" him but urged the Tesla boss not to "rush to conclusions from afar". "While migration control is crucial for Germany, the AfD stands against freedom, business — and it's a far-right extremist party," tweeted the politician, whose fallout with Scholz triggered the coalition's implosion. Scholz himself was restrained when asked about Musk's comments, noting: "We have freedom of expression, which also applies to multi-billionaires". He added that this "means that you can say things that are not right and do not contain good political advice".

Musk meddling concerns

For its part, the AfD warmly welcomed Musk's praise, with co-leader Alice Weidel thanking him in a video message and saying her party was "the one and only alternative for our country". At a regular press conference in Berlin, a government spokesman avoided commenting directly on Musk's post, reiterating Scholz's point that Germany respects freedom of expression. But she added the government was worried about "how X has developed in recent years, especially since Elon Musk took over". Despite such concerns, the government had decided not to close its accounts on the platform as it remained.

Google counters bid by US to force sale of Chrome

The US Department of Justice urged a shake-up of Google's business that includes banning deals for Google to be the default search engine on devices and preventing it from exploiting its Android mobile operating system.

SAN FRANCISCO. Google late Friday countered a US call to sell its Chrome browser, suggesting a judge address antitrust concerns by barring the firm from making favorable treatment of its software a condition of licensing. Google filed a 12-page proposed order banning the internet giant from requiring favorable distribution or treatment of its software on mobile devices as a condition of licensing popular apps like Chrome, Play or Gemini. In



contrast, the US government in November asked a judge to order the dismantling of Google by selling its widely used Chrome browser in a major antitrust crackdown on the company. The US Department of Justice urged a shake-up of Google's business that includes banning deals for Google to be the default search engine on smartphones and preventing it from exploiting its Android mobile operating system. Determining how to address Google's wrongs is the next stage of the landmark antitrust trial that saw the

company in August ruled a monopoly by US District Court Judge Amit Mehta.

Google has proposed that Mehta bar it from using the licensing desirability of its applications to compel mobile device makers to pre-install its search software or make it the default offering, a court filing showed. "Nothing in this Final Judgment shall otherwise prohibit Google from providing consideration to a mobile device manufacturer or wireless carrier with respect to any Google product or service in

exchange for such entity's distribution, placement on any access point, promotion, or licensing of that Google product or service," the proposed order stipulates. Calling for the breakup of Google marks a profound change by the US government's regulators, which have largely left tech giants alone since failing to break up Microsoft two decades ago. Regardless of Judge Mehta's eventual decision, Google is expected to appeal the ruling, prolonging the process for years and potentially leaving the final say to the US Supreme Court. The case could also be upended by the arrival of President-elect Donald Trump to the White House in January. His administration will likely replace the current team in charge of the Justice Department's antitrust division. The newcomers could choose to carry on with the case, ask for a settlement with Google or abandon the case altogether. The trial, which concluded last year, scrutinised Google's confidential agreements with smartphone manufacturers, including Apple.

NEWS BOX

Ravindra Jadeja explains how missing the first two BGT Tests helped him in Gabba

New Delhi. India's spin-bowling all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja credited his improved performance in the third Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy to the time he spent out of the squad during the first two matches. Although Jadeja did not make a significant impact with the ball at the Gabba, his batting contributions proved to be crucial for India in getting a hard-fought draw to keep the series level. Jadeja played a key role with the bat in the first innings, scoring a vital 77 runs off 123 balls while batting at No.7. His 67-run partnership with KL Rahul helped stabilise India's innings and ensured a competitive total, which played a significant part in securing a draw against Australia. Speaking at the pre-match press conference ahead of the Boxing Day Test, he explained how he had prepared for the Gabba Test even better after not being named in the India eleven for Perth and Adelaide. "The first two Tests I didn't play, but it gave me an opportunity to practice and get used to the conditions. All the time, I got to understand the conditions, bowl on these pitches and bat on these pitches, it made me familiar with



these conditions. All the hard work in the nets helped me in the match," Jadeja added. With his long-time spin-bowling partner Ravichandran Ashwin announcing his retirement after the Gabba Test, Jadeja now shoulders the primary spin-bowling duties for the team. Jadeja's role will also be pivotal in the Sydney Test, which traditionally offers assistance to spinners. His vast experience in similar conditions makes him a key player for skipper Rohit Sharma as India looks to build on the momentum gained from the Gabba Test draw. Heading into the Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, India is likely to depend heavily on Jadeja's all-round abilities. His experience with both bat and ball will be crucial in maintaining balance within the team, particularly with Washington Sundar being the only other full-time spin option available.

Pep Guardiola backs Erling Haaland to perform if Manchester City 'play better'

New Delhi. Pep Guardiola has thrown his support behind star striker Erling Haaland, highlighting the need for Manchester City to improve their overall play to maximize the Norwegian's impact. This comes as City navigate a challenging spell of form, with only one win in their last 11 matches across all competitions - a stark contrast to the dominance typically associated with Guardiola's tenure. Haaland, who has been a goal-scoring machine since joining City, has struggled recently, scoring just once in his last five games. The lack of service has left him isolated against opposing defenders. However, Guardiola dismissed any suggestion of reverting to a false nine system, which had previously brought him success. "I prefer to play with Erling,"



Guardiola said ahead of City's Premier League clash with Aston Villa. "I don't think in this situation that I should not let Erling play - absolutely not. We have to adapt to the qualities he brings." Guardiola acknowledged that Haaland's reduced goal tally is a symptom of the team's struggles rather than a reflection of the player's form. "The reason he's not been as productive is the way we're playing," Guardiola explained. "We're not creating the volume of chances we did in the past. When he's surrounded by two, three, or four defenders, it's tough for him. We need to play better as a team to create the spaces he needs."

Amid City's current struggles, Guardiola hinted at the possibility of January reinforcements, a departure from the club's usual reluctance to engage heavily in the winter transfer market. "We've spoken about doing something," Guardiola revealed. "But it has to be for the long term, not just for four or five months."

The Tennis academy that created Australian superstar Ashleigh Barty is now the home of a car dealership in West Brisbane

BRISBANE: 227 Archerfield Road, Richlands, Brisbane, Queensland. It is an address that holds significance not just in Australian tennis, but the country's sporting history. Once a house to the West Brisbane Tennis Centre, it is where former World No 1 and Australian tennis legend Ashleigh Barty first hit a tennis ball on the court.

Away from all the hassle of Brisbane city, Barty, with her long-time coach and friend Jim Joyce, spent almost two decades at the once buzzing facility, honing her tennis while also spending time with kids, who just like her, aspired to take up the sport she loved. Today, however, 227 Archerfield Road is unrecognisable. About two years ago, the 20189 sq.m property, previously owned by the Joyce family, was sold to Kingsmede, an investment company.

However, before locking it down for one last time Joyce, three-time Grand Slam winner Barty, who had retired in March 2022, and others who were associated with the centre had a get together and partied at the facility. "That afternoon will mean as much to me as a lot of her big wins," Joyce was quoted saying to the Courier Mail. "It was just bloody wonderful. There were no seats there because it was all gone. We just stood and chatted about her life and mine, had a bit of a hug and off she went and I pushed the locks across the gate," he had added in June 2022.

When this writer visited the address on Friday, the only evidence of any connection to tennis was the old board that was left untouched. West Brisbane Tennis Centre, it read, with a phone number that doesn't work anymore. Looking over from the street, all one could see beyond the old damaged board were hundreds of cars parked and stacked one over another. Having been converted into an industrial complex, the address now leads to Wheel Pros — a company that designs, markets and distributes branded aftermarket wheels. Besides that is another company called Auto Car Removals, which offers solutions to steel, remove and wrecking four-wheelers. Barty is now a retired tennis legend, she has been for a while now. She plays golf, had played cricket in the past, but has ruled out any sort of comeback to sports



for the foreseeable future. With a young family to take care of, Barty, who does commentary occasionally, already has her hands full. Joyce, meanwhile, is spending time with family as well. Even as the duo has moved on, everyone, including this writer,

who passes through the Archerfield road cannot help but pause, take note of the West Brisbane Tennis Centre board amidst a pile of cars and reminiscence about the role it had played in one of the Australian sporting legends.

Pep Guardiola reveals potential verdict time for Manchester City's 115 charges

New Delhi. Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola has revealed that the verdict on the club's 115 alleged breaches of Premier League regulations could be announced between February and March 2025. The hearing, considered one of the most significant cases in sports law, concluded on December 9, leaving the footballing world awaiting the outcome. The backdrop to these allegations comes during a season of growing unease amongst Manchester City fans. The club's inconsistent form across all competitions has raised concerns, and the impending verdict adds further uncertainty to their future. Guardiola, speaking at the pre-match press conference ahead of their December 21 clash with Aston Villa, acknowledged the looming decision but emphasised that it remains external to his team's immediate focus. "It's going to happen in the winter time. I don't know what's going to happen. I know people are expecting that but I don't know. In February, March, [maybe] will be the sentence," Guardiola said. "We're in a difficult situation, but we will continue to focus on what we can control - our performance on the field... Our priority

remains winning matches and maintaining our standards, regardless of the external pressures we face," he added. City's 115 charges include 80 alleged breaches



related to financial misrepresentation and 35 for failing to cooperate with investigations. These allegations span the period from 2009 to 2018, accusing the club of providing inaccurate financial disclosures regarding sponsorship revenues and salaries. If found guilty, the reigning Premier League champions could face severe repercussions, including points deductions or even relegation to the Championship. Manchester City has consistently denied the

allegations and is committed to defending its reputation. The club argues that its rise to prominence over the past decade was built on robust management, innovative strategies, and substantial investment from its ownership group. However, if the independent panel finds City guilty, it could severely tarnish the club's legacy.

City's case aligns with a broader trend of financial scrutiny in English football. Recently, Everton faced a points deduction for breaching financial sustainability rules, while Nottingham Forest also came under investigation for irregularities. The Premier League's increased vigilance reflects its commitment to ensuring financial fairness within its framework. As the footballing world anticipates the verdict, the implications could redefine City's standing in the sport. From their meteoric rise to being a dominant European powerhouse under Guardiola, their legacy now hangs in the balance. Regardless of the outcome, this case serves as a critical moment in the history of financial governance within football.

Jasprit Bumrah will do a very good job: Border backs pacer to flourish as skipper

AUS vs IND: Allan Border heaped praise on Jasprit Bumrah saying that the Indian fast bowler has the skills to succeed as captain. Under Bumrah, India had won the Perth Test by 295 runs.

New Delhi. Legendary Australian cricketer Allan Border said that Jasprit Bumrah has the potential to shine as the Indian captain. Bumrah captained India for the first time in the rescheduled Test against England, which India lost at the Edgbaston in 2022. But he tasted his first win as skipper after India defeated the Aussies by 295 runs in the opening Test of the ongoing Test series at the Optus Stadium in Perth. Bumrah had become the first overseas skipper to win a Test at the Perth Stadium. Moreover, he won the Player of

the Match award for picking up eight wickets, which included a five-wicket haul in the first innings. Border said that



Bumrah knew when to introduce himself into the attack and also set fields with a lot of precision. He'll (Bumrah) do a very good job. In Perth, he used himself properly. Captaincy-wise, the way he set the fields, you couldn't fault him," Border was quoted

as saying by The Times of India (TOI). 'Different level of difficulty'

Border, one of the three Australian batters to score more than 10,000 Test runs, talked about the qualities which make Bumrah stand apart from the rest.

"Bumrah, these days, is on that pedestal. His wrists, his release points are different to other bowlers. Because of that hyperextension, he's releasing the ball a foot further down than other bowlers. He's got a unique shuffling run-up, and then the snap of these wrists, he's amazing. Being different, plus having that skill, it's a whole different level of difficulty for the batsman," Border added. Bumrah is currently the top wicket-taker of the five-match Test series. In three Tests, he has taken 21 wickets at an economy rate of 2.60. He also took a six-wicket haul and helped India draw the third Test at The Gabba in Brisbane.



now is on the Boxing Day Test. It's a crucial game for us," Jadeja said. The third Test in Brisbane saw Australia dominate the first two days. Batting first, they posted an imposing total of 445, driven by centuries from Travis Head and Steve Smith. India, on the back foot with the bat, appeared set for a potential defeat. However, rain interruptions and a valiant lower-order effort ensured the match ended in a draw. The stage is now set for the fourth Test, starting on Boxing Day (December 26). Both teams will look to seize the advantage in what promises to be another gripping contest. This match holds added significance as it could potentially determine the series winner and play a pivotal role in shaping the teams' paths to the ICC World Test Championship final. India will aim to capitalise on their resilience, while Australia will look to regain momentum. With the series on the line, fans can expect high-octane action as these cricketing giants clash once again at the MCG.

I got to know R Ashwin was retiring 5 minutes before he announced it: Ravindra Jadeja

Border-Gavaskar Trophy: Ravindra Jadeja revealed that R Ashwin did not give him the slightest hint about his retirement, even though the two shared adjacent seats in the Indian dressing room at the Gabba on the final day of the third Test.

Melbourne. All-rounder Ravindra Jadeja said he was as surprised as the rest of the cricketing world when he learnt about R Ashwin's retirement on Day 5 of the third Test between India and Australia. Jadeja revealed that Ashwin and he had been sitting together throughout the final day's play, but his former spin partner did not give the

slightest hint about the significant decision that followed. Speaking to the press on Saturday, December 21, after India's first training session in Melbourne, Ravindra Jadeja addressed Ashwin's announcement, which had made headlines last week. "I got to know about it only in the last moment. Just before when he came to address the press. I think it was 5 minutes before the press conference, people told me that this was going to happen. Obviously, I was surprised because we both were sitting together throughout that day. He didn't even give a hint. I got to know in the last minute. Yes, we all know Ashwin's mind and how it works," Jadeja said. Ashwin made an unforeseen announcement minutes after the third Test in Brisbane ended in a draw on 18 December. The veteran off-spinner stated that he was retiring with immediate effect. Ashwin left the team at the conclusion of the third Test and reached Chennai the following day. The timing of R Ashwin's retirement has left the



cricketing world divided. However, Jadeja emphasised that it was time for the team to move on and ensure the youngster stepping in for Ashwin gains as much experience and exposure as possible in the days ahead. "We have to move on. In India, it's not like you won't get someone who can replace him. Everybody knows we will get someone. "It's a good opportunity for a youngster who comes into the team and to prove himself at this level," Jadeja added. India have fielded

as many as three spinners across the first three Tests. Washington Sundar played as the lone spinner in the series opener in Perth, while Ashwin featured in the pink-ball Test in Adelaide, which was his final match. For the third Test in Brisbane, India replaced Ashwin with Ravindra Jadeja in the playing XI.

JADEJA ON NOT PLAYING FIRST TWO TESTS

While Jadeja could not make a significant impact with the ball, he stepped up with the bat when his team needed him the most. Jadeja scored a crucial 77 runs in the first innings of the rain-affected Brisbane Test, ensuring that India avoided a follow-on. India were struggling at 74 for 5 after losing key players, including Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli, cheaply in response to Australia's first innings total of 445. However, KL Rahul and Jadeja stitched together a vital 67-run partnership to steer the team out of trouble.

Suhana Khan's

Tea Break And Sun-Kissed Glow Are A Perfect Combo

Suhana Khan is making our heads turn with one stylish look after another on Instagram. The actress has now shared a series of sun-kissed pictures that show her in a relaxed mood. In her latest photos, she seems to be sitting on a balcony and enjoying some me-time with a cup of tea. Suhana is wearing a loose-fit grey casual top with a pair of off-white pants. She looks radiant in a no-makeup look with flushed pink cheeks. Not just fans but Bhavana Pandey and Maheep Kapoor too couldn't stop themselves from dropping a comment under the post.

This casual look of Suhana Khan has come just after her extra glam traditional avatar. In her previous photos, Suhana stunned in a golden saree and sleeveless blouse.

While hundreds of fans flooded the comments with compliments, it was her girl gang that stole the show. Khushi Kapoor dropped three heart emojis, expressing her admiration for Suhana's stunning appearance.



Meanwhile, Navya Naveli Nanda couldn't help but express her affection by writing, "Pretty pretty Sue." Shanaya Kapoor, ever the supportive friend, didn't hold back either and left a string of heart-eye emojis, fully embracing Suhana's dazzling look.

Beyond her social media charm, Suhana Khan's career is blossoming as well. After impressing audiences with her role in The Archies, she is now gearing up for her much-anticipated Bollywood debut. She will star in Sujoy Ghosh's upcoming action-packed drama King, where she shares the screen with her father, Shah Rukh Khan. Abhishek Bachchan will also reportedly play a pivotal role as the antagonist in the movie, which is slated to begin filming in January 2025. With all the excitement surrounding her career, it's clear that Suhana Khan is just getting started, and we can't wait to see what she has in store for the future!

Aishwarya Rai

Abhishek Bachchan Arrive Together For Aaradhya's School Annual Day Amid Divorce Rumours

Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan were spotted together on the second day of daughter Aaradhya's school annual day. The couple, who have been grabbing headlines for their divorce rumours, looked stylish as they made an appearance. For today, Aishwarya's mother has also joined them. The video is going viral on social media. In the video, shared by



Filmgyan, we can see Aishwarya opted for a black colour outfit with a sling bag. While Abhishek looked handsome in a green colour casual look. Both shared smiles as they headed towards the gate. Aishwarya was seen holding her mother's hand. Fans dropped heart emojis in the comment section. On the first day, Amitabh Bachchan also joined to watch granddaughter's

performance. Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai were seen dancing together at Aaradhya's school annual day, amid divorce rumours. Stars gathered at the Dhirubhai Ambani International School in Mumbai on Thursday evening for the much-awaited annual day function. Fans were happy to see Aishwarya and Abhishek's happy moments together.

The annual day festivities brought together Bollywood's finest, who were all there to cheer for their little ones. Videos from the event quickly surfaced online, showing doting parents like Aishwarya Rai and Abhishek Bachchan cheering for their kids. In one such video, Abhishek and Aishwarya could be seen dancing to the Deewangi Deewangi song in a crowd. Meanwhile, the divorce rumours surrounding Aishwarya and Abhishek have been making rounds for months, sparking concern among fans of the power couple. However, a blog post by Amitabh Bachchan last month indirectly addressed these speculations. In his cryptic yet profound writing, Big B spoke about the importance of privacy and dismissed unverified claims. He wrote, "Speculations are speculations... they are speculated untruths, without verifications... Verifications are sought by the

seekers to authenticate their business and commercials of the profession they be in.

"Aishwarya and Abhishek, who tied the knot in April 2007, remain one of Bollywood's most celebrated couples.



Sreeleela Thanks Fans For Showering Love On Kissik Song, Praises Allu Arjun, Rashmika Mandanna



Pushpa 2 starring Allu Arjun has created history at the box office. The film has crossed Rs 1300 mark and is still going strong. Amid this, Sreeleela has also been grabbing attention with her item number Kissik song. With her bold performance in the song, the actress has truly left everyone grooving to it in no. Recently, Sreeleela has expressed her gratitude to the entire team of Pushpa and fans. She took to her Instagram handle and shared some stunning stills from the Kissik song. "KISSIKS for you, The full video is out now on YouTube !!!!!!! Loads of love to the entire Pushpa team @aryasukku sir for being soooooo sweeeeeett and wanting me to do thisssss!!! @alluarjunonline sir you gave me this one ! That tonic of confidence ! Our Chat GPT @rashmika_mandanna My glucose between shots Nothing like a girl being there for another @thisisdsp garu thank youuu for these high notes ! @chandraboselyricist garu this is probably the first special song with a social message :p @kubabrozok for capturing or should I saw for kissiking our moments And the entreeeeeeee teammm And ofc my lovely audience for showering me with all your love. This special one is especially for you. (Mee andhariki No debbalu Only Muddhulu) PUSHPA Won't stop firing. @mythrioofficial."

According to Sacnilk, Pushpa 2 collected Rs 75.00 Cr on Sunday, day 11. The film has recorded higher box office collection in the Hindi circuits as compared to the Telugu version. As per the report, Pushpa 2's Hindi version collected Rs 55 Cr on Sunday while the Telugu version collected Rs 16 Cr. The Sunday collections are higher than the Saturday collections too. On Saturday, Pushpa 2 collected Rs 63.3 Cr. If the film continues to go at this pace, Pushpa 2 could swiftly surpass Rs 1000 Cr mark in India.

Karisma Kapoor Vibes To The Holiday Spirit At Terence Lewis' Christmas Party



The countdown for Christmas has finally started! While the festival is a few weeks away, the scent of pine, the aroma of freshly baked cookies, and the blissful melodies of carols have begun teasing the senses. Everyone is in the merry spirit, and Bollywood's festive spirit is no exception. Following a string of star-studded Christmas bashes, renowned choreographer Terence Lewis threw a lavish Christmas party last evening. As expected, celebs from the industry flocked to join the festive celebrations with the dance maestro. Karisma Kapoor, too, graced the party in style, and fans couldn't stop staring at the beauty. In an Instagram clip shared by Instant Bollywood, Karisma Kapoor effortlessly turned heads in a full-length dress. She rocked the violet attire with black heels and a handbag. Adding a touch of drama was her glam makeup and fuss-free wavy tresses that were left open in a middle parting.

The clip also showed the diva pausing graciously for the paparazzi. She waved at them and flashed her signature smile, spreading happiness all around. The actress didn't miss to give some striking poses for the lenses.

In no time, fans and followers thronged the comments section to praise her stylish avatar. "90s gorgeous," read a comment. Another added, "Woow!!! Very nice year. TOO GOOD." "Respect for our Old Queen," said another. "So beautiful," commented a user. A fan said, "What a natural beauty." "She looks bubbly even today," praised an individual.

The glamorous guest list of the dazzling affair also included Rithvik Dhanjani, Ronit Roy, Sonali Bendre, Remo D'Souza, Alvira Khan Agnihotri, Arjun Bijlani, Lizelle D'Souza, Ravi Dubey, Sargun Mehta, Mandira Bedi, Manish Paul, Rahul Shetty, Geeta Kapur, among others. Before attending Terence Lewis's Christmas party, Karisma Kapoor visited Dhirubhai Ambani International School in Mumbai to attend her nephew's annual day. The star-studded event brought together numerous A-list celebrities, who were all there to cheer for their little ones.

Among the doting parents who attended the school event were Abhishek Bachchan and Aishwarya Rai, Shah Rukh Khan and Gauri Khan, Kareena Kapoor and Saif Ali Khan, Shahid Kapoor, and others.

