

Why mainstream discourse needs dissent

WHILE recently addressing a sporting event called 'Bastar Olympics' in Chhattisgarh's Jagdalpur, Home Minister Amit Shah warned the 'Maoists/Naxalites of severe consequences if they refused to surrender, give up arms and join the 'mainstream'. With his characteristic discourse of power, he reminded us that the State, with its security forces, is determined to eradicate the 'Maoists' from the country by March 31, 2026. After all, one should not forget, as he asserted with a sense of pride, that only in the last one year, 287 Naxalites had been killed, 992 arrested and 836 surrendered. If Naxalism ended in Bastar, as Shah promised with his mantra of 'development', it would attract more tourists than Kashmir due to its natural beauty. Well, let it be clear — I do not approve of the strategy of political violence, even if it aims at eradicating social and economic inequality and creating a just and egalitarian society. The reason is that it is infectious, and we are likely to be trapped in the vicious cycle of violence and counter-violence. Moreover, the roots of militarised authoritarianism, as many episodes of 'revolution' in the name of Stalinism or Maoism have demonstrated, lie in a political culture that romanticises violence.

Yet, I have no hesitation in problematising the Home Minister's orientation to the entire issue — his ways of handling the Naxalites. In fact, as alert and awakened citizens, you and I ought to trace yet another kind of violence — no less dangerous than what the 'Maoists' are alleged to be indulging in — Amit Shah's discourse of power seeks to hide. In fact, the 'mainstream' Shah is glorifying tales of greed, exploitation and violence.

Think of, for instance, the social cost of the Rs 7,465-crore coalmine project in Raigarh district of Chhattisgarh. This Adani Group project will affect 14 villages; it is likely to cause water and food contamination, loss of soil fertility and disruption of local ecosystems. Yet, the environmental clearance has been granted, despite studies highlighting serious concerns about the project's impact on the socioeconomic and health conditions of villagers. In fact, it will cause a severe harm to traditional livelihoods, especially among the SC and ST women, who previously relied on forest resources for crafts like bamboo baskets and leaf plates. But then, this 'mainstream' culture privileges crony capitalism, and its 'development' discourse causes severe violence to the mental, cultural and economic fabric of the downtrodden. Open your eyes and see the same violence in Jharkhand's Godda district. For the Adani Group's 1,600-MW power plant, it seems normal to justify police brutality and forceful acquisition of around 551 hectares of land, spread across 10 villages in two blocks of Godda district in the Santhal Pargana region.

And it is the same story of violence that we see in the lease of forestland in Odisha to Vedanta and the Adani Group for bauxite mining. Is it, therefore, surprising that — as the insightful report, 'Homeless in Your Own Homeland' by the late Stan Swamy, reveals — during the past 50 years, approximately 20 million people have been displaced in India due to mines, dams, industries, wildlife sanctuaries and field-firing ranges?

Yes, this is what the 'mainstream' discourse of 'development' does to the poor and the marginalised. Apart from the violence of 'development', this 'mainstream' politics causes yet another form of violence: the violence against the religious minorities or the violence sanctified in the name of 'bulldozer justice'. Indeed, while Shah wants to transform Bastar into a tourism hub, he safely forgets that the violence implicit in the alliance of the neoliberal market fundamentalism and majoritarian nationalism has already caused a lot of unrest in our society. And unless the state engages in an act of collective healing, what Shah loathes as 'Naxalism' might not end so easily, despite the recurrence of 'encounter deaths' in Chhattisgarh or Jharkhand.

In fact, we need creative and nonviolent dissenters to debunk what Shah regards as the 'mainstream', and fight for a humane, ecologically sensitive and egalitarian society.

Now, Punjab aims for a 'green energy revolution'

With automatic approvals given after 15 days if no action is taken, a digital platform guarantees prompt and transparent processing of applications for green energy.

WITH the 10th Amendment to Punjab's intra-state open access regulations, 2011, introduced by the Punjab State Electricity Regulatory Commission (PSERC), the state has made a significant stride towards sustainability. Published on June 5, 2023, this policy on solar energy aims to address longstanding electricity challenges and advance Punjab's alignment with national and global sustainability goals. One of the most visible results of the state's solar energy programmes has been the reduction in the electricity bills in the state. Prior to the implementation of solar reforms, its energy sector strongly relied on fossil fuels, requiring significant energy imports. Solar energy has considerably alleviated this burden. The total solar energy production increased from 1,493 million units (MUs) in 2021-22 to 2,729 MUs in 2022-23 and is expected to reach 3,629 MUs by 2024-25. Solar energy costs are expected to drop to Rs 4.24 per unit by 2024-25 from Rs 6.59 per unit in 2021-22. This highlights the economic benefits of transitioning to renewable sources. The state's solar capacity has also grown at an astonishing rate. From March 2022 to October 2024, rooftop solar installation capacity increased from 157 MW to 419 MW, while the total installed capacity, including from outside-state contributions, increased from 1,556 MW to 2,574 MW. This growth has enabled Punjab to drastically cut its electricity costs and reliance on traditional energy sources. The agricultural and industrial sectors, in particular, have benefited. Farmers using solar energy for irrigation not only save money on electricity, but also earn an additional income by selling surplus power back to the grid. The surge in Punjab's renewable energy has also had a profound impact on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Transitioning from fossil fuels to solar energy has decreased carbon-dioxide emissions, with early estimates suggesting a reduction in the annual greenhouse gas output of over one million tonnes. This has improved air quality, particularly in urban and industrial areas, where air pollution has long been a critical health concern. Cleaner energy sources have been linked to lower rates of respiratory illnesses, offering both public health benefits and reduced healthcare costs. The state government's proactive approach to renewable energy has made it easier for consumers to adopt solar power. Simplified procedures for access to green energy are now available to commercial and industrial customers with approved demands of 100 kVA or higher. With automatic approvals given after 15 days if no action is taken, a centralised digital platform guarantees prompt and transparent processing of applications. This consumer-centric model, which eliminates bureaucratic delays, encourages a wider adoption of green energy. The policy's financial incentives have further bolstered the use of renewable energy. For 12 years after the



commissioning of a project, cross-subsidy surcharges for users of green energy have been limited to 50 per cent of their original levels. Entry barriers for innovative renewable energy technologies have been lowered by additional fee waivers for offshore wind projects, waste-to-energy facilities and green hydrogen production. In addition to easing affordability, these programmes make Punjab an attractive location for investment in the renewable energy industry. The state has incorporated solar energy into agriculture to promote sustainability across industries. It allows farmers to lower the operating expenses and investigate new revenue opportunities. The programme even makes it easier to sell surplus electricity to the grid and promotes solar-powered irrigation. The government aims to promote environmental stewardship and fortify Punjab's agricultural foundation by empowering rural people. However, despite these achievements, challenges remain. For small enterprises and rural households, the upfront costs of switching to renewable energy sources are a major obstacle. Recognising this, the government has started technical assistance initiatives and awareness campaigns to educate stakeholders about the long-term

advantages of green energy. Infrastructure-readiness is another area of concern. Integrating renewable energy into Punjab's existing electricity infrastructure requires a transition to transmission and distribution networks. The government is collaborating with private partners and central agencies to improve the state's energy infrastructure so that it can meet the rising demand for renewable energy. The government's attempts to boost green hydrogen and ammonia production underscore its forward-thinking approach. They demonstrate its determination to establish itself as a leader in the renewable energy sector. By aligning its policies with the Central government's Green Energy Open Access Rules, 2022, and global climate agreements like the Paris Accord, Punjab is exhibiting its commitment to sustainable development. The Amendment also supports the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 7, which aims to ensure access to sustainable, affordable, reliable and modern energy for all. By reducing the entry barriers for consumers and prioritising renewable energy adoption, the administration has established a policy framework that benefits all stakeholders — from industrialists and farmers to ordinary citizens.

Safety compromised

Mohali building collapse exposes lapses

A three-storey building came down like a house of cards in Mohali on Saturday, claiming two young lives. Far from being quake-resistant, the structure could not even withstand digging — apparently unauthorised, for that matter — in the adjacent plot belonging to one of the owners of the building. The tragedy has turned the spotlight on the pitfalls of unregulated construction and urbanisation in Mohali. Long regarded as Chandigarh's poor cousin, this satellite city is witnessing a realty boom, with all kinds of property developers looking to grab a share of the pie. Residential and commercial complexes are coming up overnight, even as strict enforcement of the bylaws remains elusive. The use of substandard construction material and unskilled labour or contractors are among the other factors that are making buildings unsafe. There is a worrying tendency among builders to cut corners so as to expedite work and



maximise profits. This problem, however, is not confined to Mohali. It is also afflicting cities across Punjab and neighbouring Haryana.

'Millennium City' Gurugram's Chintels Paradiso Group Housing Society is a prime example of unscrupulous developers putting lives of residents at risk. In February 2022, two women were killed after the ceiling of a flat in a high-rise tower caved in; such was the cascade effect that portions of flats on lower floors also crumbled. One tower after another of this premises has been declared unsafe for habitation by technical experts, necessitating the evacuation of its occupants. At the receiving end are the hapless homebuyers who put their life savings into dubious projects, while the offenders simply wait for the dust to settle before resuming their operations. Regular inspections and audits are a must to ensure that builders do not circumvent bylaws at any stage. Officials who allow violations right under their nose should also be taken to task. Brazen negligence and greed that reduce unsuspecting people to sitting ducks at home, in offices or in the marketplace should not go unpunished.

Being evasive in the name of secrecy

Poll rule tweak is in keeping with stonewalling by the ECI over the past few years

ADDRESSING a press conference on March 13 this year, Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar asserted: "Hamare teen hee pillar hain — disclosure, disclosure, disclosure... Disclose everything to the public, to the voter, the voter have (sic) right to know everything what we are doing, how we are doing..."

Nearly nine months later, a civil writ petition titled Mehmood Pracha vs Election Commission of India and others was decided by the Punjab and Haryana High Court on December 9. The petitioner had sought directions to the respondents to supply videography as well as CCTV footage and copies of Form 17-C Parts I and II pertaining to the 2024 Haryana Assembly elections. The HC ordered the respondents to provide copies of the requisite documents under provisions of the Conduct of Election Rules, 1961, within six weeks of submission of an application by the petitioner.

Even as the Winter Session of Parliament came to a bitter end, the Union Ministry of Law and Justice (Legislative Department) issued a notification on December 20, saying that "In the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961, in Rule 93, sub-rule (2), clause (a), after the word 'papers', the words 'as specified in these rules' shall be inserted."

Originally, Rule 93(2)(a) read: "Production and inspection of election papers — Subject to such conditions and to the payment of such fee as the Election Commission may direct,—(a) all other papers relating to the elections shall be open to public inspection; ... "This rule, after the December 20 notification, will read: "...all other papers, as specified in these rules, relating to the election shall be open to public inspection; ... "In the absence of any 'official' and authentic information about the real reason(s) behind the issuance of the notification, one can only speculate.



Given the temporal relationship between the developments of December 9 and 20, it can be speculated that the first may well have caused the second. In simple terms, the notification might well have been issued to block the action ordered by the high court. In even simpler terms, the government — it is important to remember that the notification has been, and can be, issued only by the Government of India — does not want that videography as well as CCTV footage and copies of Form 17-C Parts I and II

pertaining to the 2024 Haryana Assembly elections and all future elections should be accessible to the people at large (notably, the ECI does not have the power to amend the Conduct of Election Rules). It is important to note that the ECI not only seems to but actually agrees with the government in this regard. The notification itself makes it abundantly clear because it says, "In exercise of the powers conferred by Section 169 of the Representation of the People Act, 1951..., the Central Government, after consulting the Election Commission

of India, hereby makes the following rules further to amend the Conduct of Elections Rules, 1961." If the above has any merit, a few questions arise. The first and most critical is about the CEC's statement quoted at the beginning of this piece. Does the CEC, as an independent constitutional authority responsible for the conduct of free and fair elections, agree with the government that information should be withheld from voters, or does he stand by that statement? As an authority accountable to the people of India through the Constitution, he owes it to the people and to his constitutional position to clarify this matter. If this clarification does not come publicly, the people will have to make up their own minds about "saying vs doing". The notification also raises a number of other questions, such as what happens if a citizen asks for this information under the Right to Information Act? Can the Central Government override a law passed unanimously by Parliament, merely by way of a gazette notification? This would amount to a case of the government of the day defying Parliament. The legal question is about the fate of the request made by the petitioner. The request for videography & CCTV footage and copies of Form 17-C Parts I and II pertaining to the Haryana elections was obviously made before December 9, when the high court judgment was delivered. Would a notification issued by the Union Government overrule a prior decision of a constitutional court? The notification clarifies that the amendment "shall come into force on the date of publication in the Official Gazette", which is December 20. Based on this, the Haryana-specific information would have to be given to the petitioner. The entire saga is in keeping with the stonewalling that the ECI has been engaged in.

Indian Markets To Deliver Positive Returns For 9th Year In A Row, Outperform US

New Delhi. Driven by strong fundamental and robust economic growth, the domestic benchmark indices are set to give positive returns in 2024 for the ninth consecutive year. As per a report by Standard Chartered bank, 2024 was a year of two distinct halves for Indian equities and bonds. While the first half saw strong growth, supported by robust economic activity and corporate earnings, second half was marked by volatility amid consolidation.

"2024 was a year of two halves with H1 seeing strong performance of Indian equities and bonds on strong economic growth and corporate earnings delivery. However, H2 witnessed a surge in volatility," according to the report. Despite this, Nifty 50 index has gained 9.21 per cent while the Sensex index rose by 8.62 per cent. Another report by Motilal Oswal said that Indian equities have outperformed US markets over the past 35 years, as investments in the Indian equity markets growing by nearly 95 times since 1990. If someone had invested Rs 100 in Indian stock markets in 1990, it would have grown to Rs 9,500 by November 2024. In comparison, Rs 100 invested in US stock markets during the same period would have grown to Rs 8,400, according to the report. Moreover, gold delivered a return of 32 times during the same period. According to another report by Motilal Oswal Wealth Management, after a subdued earnings performance in the first half of FY25, earnings are expected to recover in H2, driven by increased rural spending, a buoyant wedding season, and pickup in government spending. "We further expect earnings to gain momentum, delivering a 16 per cent CAGR over FY25-27E. Moreover, the recent market correction and the moderation in valuations offer an opportunity to add selective bottom-up stock ideas," it mentioned. "We remain optimistic about the long-term trend, given the strength of corporate India's balance sheets and the prospects for robust, profitable growth," the report noted.

PM Modi meets economists ahead of Budget

New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday interacted with a group of economists and thought leaders in preparation for the Union Budget at NITI Aayog. The theme of the meeting was "Maintaining India's growth momentum at a time of Global uncertainty". During the meeting, Modi emphasised that Viksit Bharat can be achieved through a fundamental change in mindset, which is focused towards making India developed by 2047. Those in the meeting shared their views on issues like navigating challenges posed by global economic uncertainties and geopolitical tensions, strategies to enhance employment particularly among youth and create job opportunities across sectors. The participants discussed strategies to align education and training programmes with the needs of the job market, enhancing agricultural productivity and creating rural employment opportunities, attracting private investment and mobilising public funds for infra projects to boost growth and create jobs and promoting financial inclusion and boosting exports and attracting foreign investment.

Fresher hirings see rise: Job applications surge 27% to 2 crore in 2024

BENGALURU. The country's fresher job market has bounced back in 2024 as the year saw significant fresher hiring across sectors.

Apna.co's India at Work 2024 report reveals that there has been a 27% y-o-y growth in job applications and it crossed 2 crore in 2024. It said high-growth sectors such as IT, Mobility, Retail, BFSI, and Services are driving the demand. While Chennai, Bengaluru, and Hyderabad contributed 60 lakh applications, regions like Punjab, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Bihar added 82 lakh. Notably, 45% of the 37 lakh new



fresher users on Apna came from Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities. As per the report, women contributed 2.8 crore job applications—20% higher than 2023—out of a total 7 crore. Tier 1 cities such as Delhi-NCR, Bengaluru, and Mumbai led this surge with 1.52 crore applications, while Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities like Jaipur, Lucknow, and Bhopal contributed 1.28 crore. About 5,000 new women joined Apna every day in 2024.

Nirmal Parikh, CEO & founder, Apna, said, "The availability of tools like AI-driven hiring solutions adopted by 45% of SMBs and resume optimization features used by 77% of job seekers reflects a transformative shift in recruitment."

Job postings on the platform surged by 20% YoY with over 12 lakh openings in 2024. Enterprise job market saw unprecedented growth in 2024, with job postings on Apna.co rising by 32%, surpassing 3.5 lakh across 100+ categories in over 500 cities. Experts also pointed out that the hiring landscape in the country is undergoing a transformative shift. Ankit Aggarwal, Founder and CEO of Unstop said companies are increasingly embracing skill-based hiring, recognising that 77% of Gen Zs prioritise roles or brands over stipends.

Year-ender 2024: Telecom sector sees tariff hikes, user losses, Vi fundraising

The move led to subscriber losses but helped improve their average revenue per user (ARPU).

NEW DELHI: Indian telecom sector had a mixed bag in 2024, marked by tariff hikes, subscriber losses, and fundraising by loss-making telecom service provider Vodafone Idea. Despite these challenges, state-owned Bharat Sanchar Nigam Limited (BSNL) emerged as the surprise winner, gaining users for the first time in recent years. In July, all major private telcos, including Reliance Jio, Bharti Airtel, and Vodafone Idea raised their tariff plans by 25%. The move led to subscriber losses but helped improve their average revenue per user (ARPU). Following the hikes, these telcos saw major subscriber attrition. Jio lost 758,463



subscribers in July 2024, 4 million in August, and 7.9 million in September 2024. Airtel lost 1.6 million subscribers in July, 2.4 million in August, and 1.4 million in September. Vi, India's third-telco, lost 1.4 million subscribers in July, 1.87 million in August, and 1.5 million in September. However, Airtel rebounded in October, adding 0.9 million subscribers. BSNL experienced steady growth, gaining 2.94 million subscribers in July, 2.5 million in August, 800,000 in September, and 500,000 in October.

A major development this year was face-off between Indian telecom service providers and foreign satellite players like Starlink and Amazon. While Indian telcos such as Airtel and Jio favoured an

auction route for satellite communication, foreign players preferred an allocation route, to start satellite services in the country. Interestingly,

HFCL defence equipment mfg unit in Hosur

NEW DELHI. HFCL Limited, a leading telecom equipment maker, on Tuesday inaugurated a state-of-the-art defence equipment manufacturing facility in Hosur, Tamil Nadu. The facility is designed to produce cutting-edge defence technologies, including thermal weapon sights, electronic fuzes, high capacity radio relay systems, and surveillance radars.

"This facility will allow us to deliver world-class defense technologies to armed forces, enabling them to operate with greater efficiency and

confidence in critical missions," said Mahendra Nahata, managing director, HFCL. These advanced systems are tailored to meet the evolving needs of the country's armed forces. With a production capacity of up to 5,000 thermal weapon sights, 250,000 electronic fuzes, and 1,000 units each of high capacity radio relay systems and ground surveillance radars annually, this facility will address the critical requirements of India's armed forces and contribute to the country's expanding defence export portfolio.

GST on popcorn: Know how much tax your movie-time snack will attract



New Delhi. Popcorn has always been the go-to companion for movie lovers, but now, it's grabbing attention for a different reason—taxes. The announcement by the GST Council on Saturday regarding GST on it has sparked lively debates, with memes flooding social media and consumers questioning if their movie nights just got more expensive. So, how does this impact your popcorn cravings? Let's break it down. Popcorn sold loose in

cinemas will continue to be taxed at a 5% GST rate, the same as restaurant services, reported news agency PTI citing government sources. However, if popcorn is bundled with a movie ticket, it will be treated as a composite supply. In such cases, the applicable tax rate will be based on the principal item, which is the movie ticket. During its 55th meeting, the GST Council clarified the tax treatment for popcorn after a request from Uttar Pradesh to specify the GST rate for popcorn seasoned with salt and spices. There has been no change in

the GST rate for popcorn. Popcorn served in cinemas as a standalone item is considered part of restaurant service and remains taxed at 5%. When mixed with salt and spices, popcorn is classified as namkeen under GST and also attracts a 5% rate. However, if it is pre-packed and labelled, the tax increases to 12%.

Caramelised popcorn falls into the category of sugar confectionery, which typically attracts an 18% GST rate. To address disputes over the classification of ready-to-eat popcorn with added salt or spices, the GST Council has recommended issuing a clarification. Under GST rules, the classification of goods, including food items, is guided by the Harmonised System (HS) classification. Developed by the World Customs Organisation (WCO), this system is used by over 200 countries and accounts for more than 98% of global trade. GST rates are determined by the specific classification of a product within the HS framework.

Dabur moves HC against Patanjali over Chyawanprash ad campaign

NEW DELHI. FMCG segment leader Dabur approached the Delhi High Court on Tuesday, alleging that Patanjali Ayurved has been running advertisements that disparage its Chyawanprash products. Dabur urged the court to immediately restrain Patanjali from continuing with these ads, which they claim harm their reputation and mislead consumers.

Justice Mini Pushkarna, presiding over the case, issued a notice to Patanjali and scheduled the matter for hearing in the last week of January. Initially, the court considered referring the dispute to mediation, but after Dabur pressed for urgent relief, Justice Pushkarna decided to proceed with hearing the case directly. Dabur's grievance centered on an advertisement featuring Patanjali founder Swami Ramdev. In the ad, Ramdev questioned the



authenticity of other Chyawanprash brands, stating, "How can those without knowledge of Ayurveda and Vedic traditions create an 'original' Chyawanprash?" This statement, Dabur claims, implies that only Patanjali's Chyawanprash is authentic, while other brands, including Dabur's, are "ordinary" and inauthentic. Senior

Advocate Akhil Sibal, representing Dabur, argued that Patanjali has a history of making such claims, citing a Supreme Court contempt petition filed against the company earlier this year. He emphasised that labelling other Chyawanprash as "ordinary" not only misleads consumers but also undermines the credibility of the entire category of Ayurvedic Chyawanprash products.

Sibal referred to the Drugs and Cosmetics Act, which mandates that all Chyawanprash formulations adhere to ancient Ayurvedic texts. He said the advertisement creates a false narrative, misleading consumers about the safety and efficacy of non-Patanjali brands. The ad raises public health concerns by insinuating that alternative brands may not meet the required standards.

inflation could push stock-bond correlation higher, reducing the effectiveness of bonds as a buffer against volatility in risk assets," the report said. The report suggested that real assets, cash, and gold could serve as effective hedges against inflation. Adding further, defensive sectors like consumer staples and high-quality stocks could provide stability during inflationary periods. Despite these challenges, the RBI is expected to initiate a rate-cutting cycle in 2025, potentially reducing rates by 50-75 basis points as inflation moves closer to its medium-term target of 4 per cent. However, the pace of rate cuts may be restrained by persistently high inflation and a cyclical uptick in economic growth. The report highlights the complexity of the current economic environment, where global and domestic factors interplay to influence monetary policy decisions. Investors and policymakers alike will need to carefully navigate these challenges to balance growth and stability in the economy.

No GST on sale of used car at loss

As per sources, GST is payable only on the value representing the margin of the seller.

NEW DELHI. Even as the social media is abuzz with memes and outrage over GST on sale of used cars, government sources said unlike the popular perception, GST would not be levied if the "margin" of sale is negative. The government had earlier clarified that no GST would be levied if the transaction is between two unregistered persons. It has also been clarified that no new tax has been levied, and that the rate has been increased from 12% to 18% on some passenger vehicles.

As per the sources, GST is payable only on the value representing the margin of the seller—the difference between sale amount and the depreciated value of a passenger vehicle. GST would be leviable only if this margin is positive, says a source. To illustrate it, he cites the example of a registered person who is selling an old and used vehicle to any



person at '10 lakh, where the purchase price of the vehicle was '20 lakh. If the seller—being a registered person—has claimed depreciation of '8 lakh on the same under Income Tax Act, then he is not required to pay any GST as the selling price ('10 lakh) and the depreciated value ('12 lakh) of the car is negative. However, if the depreciated value in the above example remains the same at '12 lakh and the selling price is '15 lakh, then GST will be payable on the margin—18% of '3 lakh.

It must be reminded that the GST Council recommended a uniform rate of GST on

sale of all old and used vehicles including EVs at 18%. Currently, 18% GST is levied only on sale of old and used petrol vehicles of engine capacity of 1200 cc or more & of length of 4000 mm or more; diesel vehicles of engine capacity of 1500 cc or more & of length of 4000 mm or more; and SUVs. Tax experts have also reiterated that only registered persons such as businesses involved in purchase and selling of old and used vehicles, etc, are liable to pay GST.

Fullscreen After the GST Council announcement on

Saturday, social media was full of posts indicating that the GST would be levied on losses incurred in selling of used cars. Meanwhile, on the need for clarification on GST rates of popcorn, sources have said that the Council's clarification comes after request was received from Uttar Pradesh to clarify the classification and GST rate applicable on popcorn mixed with salt and spices. This issue was taken to the 55th GST Council and the Council recommended to clarify the same.

Bumpy ride ahead GST would be leviable only if this margin is positive, says a govt source. The govt clarified that no GST would be levied if the transaction is between two unregistered persons. GST Council recommended a uniform rate of GST on sale of all old and used vehicles including EVs at 18%. Currently, 18% GST is levied only on sale of old and used petrol vehicles of engine capacity of 1200 cc or more & of length of 4000 mm or more; diesel vehicles of engine capacity of 1500 cc or more & of length of 4000 mm or more; and SUVs. As per sources, only registered persons such as businesses involved in purchase and selling of old and used vehicles are liable to pay GST.

Probe Agency Investigates Role Of Canadian Colleges, Indian Entities In Human Trafficking

New Delhi. The Enforcement Directorate is investigating the alleged involvement of some Canadian colleges and a few Indian entities in a money laundering case linked to the trafficking of Indians into the US from the Canada border. The investigation is linked to the death of a four-member Indian family, hailing from Dingucha village in Gujarat. The four died of extreme cold while trying to cross the Canada-US border illegally on January 19, 2022.



The Enforcement Directorate said it took cognisance of an Ahmedabad Police FIR against Bhavesh Ashokbhai Patel, who emerged as the main accused in the matter, and a few others, to file a complaint under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Patel and others are alleged to have "hatched a well-

planned conspiracy to send people (Indians) to the USA through Canada via illegal channels thereby committing the offence of human trafficking," it said. The agency had earlier found that as part of the racket, the accused "arranged" admission for people, desirous to go to the US illegally, in colleges and universities based in Canada. A Canadian student visa was applied for such

people and once they reached that country, instead of joining the college, they "illegally" crossed the US-Canada border, the agency said in a statement on Tuesday.

"In view of this, the fee received by colleges based in Canada was remitted back to the individuals' account," the Enforcement Directorate alleged. Indians were "lured" into the racket and charged between Rs 55 and Rs 60 lakh per person, according to the Enforcement Directorate. The agency said it undertook fresh searches in this case on December 10 and December 19 at eight locations in Mumbai, Nagpur, Gandhinagar and Vadodara. It was found, the Enforcement Directorate said, two "entities", one based in Mumbai and the other in Nagpur, entered into an "agreement" for admission of Indians in universities based in foreign countries on a commission basis. The agency said the latest searches found that

about 25,000 students are being referred by one entity and more than 10,000 students by the other to various colleges based outside India every year.

"Further, it is gathered that there are around 1,700 agents/partners based in Gujarat and around 3,500 agents/partners of other entities all over India out of which around 800 are active." It is further revealed that around 112 colleges based in Canada have entered into an agreement with one entity and more than 150 with another entity. Their involvement in the instant case is under investigation," the Enforcement Directorate said. The agency suspects that out of the total 262 such colleges in Canada, a few, which are geographically located near the Canada-US border, are involved in the trafficking of Indian nationals. The Enforcement Directorate said it froze Rs 19 lakh in bank deposits, some "incriminating" documents and digital devices, and seized two vehicles in connection with its probe.

Gang involved in illegal entry of Bangladeshi nationals busted in Delhi

NEW DELHI. Delhi Police have arrested four Bangladeshi nationals and seven Indians for their involvement in a racket that facilitated the creation of fake Aadhaar cards, police said on Tuesday. The arrests come amidst ongoing political debates between the BJP and AAP over the issue of illegal immigration in Delhi ahead of the assembly polls.

DCP (South) Ankit Chauhan revealed that the gang was exposed during a probe into the murder of Sentu Seikh alias Raja in Sangam Vihar on October 21. Among those arrested are Bangladeshi nationals Midul Miyan (alias Akash Ahmed), Fardeen Ahmed (alias Abhi Ahmed), and their wives. During questioning, the accused admitted to entering India illegally and residing in



Sangam Vihar for years. They disclosed that the victim, Sentu, had been harassing them over trivial disputes. "Police recovered Bangladeshi ID cards, birth certificates, and an assortment of Indian documents, including 21 Aadhaar cards, from the victim's residence," said the DCP.

Further investigation led to the arrest of Sahil Sehgal, the owner of "Poonam Online Computer Centre" in Rohini. "Sehgal confessed to creating fake Aadhaar cards using fraudulent documents. He had been approached by illegal Bangladeshi immigrants through Sentu Seikh," said the officer. The officer said "Jantaprints.site," was used to generate counterfeit birth certificates, which were then processed into Aadhaar cards by Sehgal's associate Ranjit and Afroz, an authorised Aadhaar operator in Rohini. Both Ranjit and Afroz were held and revealed that the website offered a variety of fake documents.

Police also traced the payments for these fake documents to Mohammad Chand, who facilitated transactions using a digital payment platform and retained a 2% commission before transferring the funds to Saddam Hussain. "Both Chand and Hussain were arrested, and further questioning revealed that Jantaprints.site was managed by Deepak Mishra, another accused. Mishra admitted to running the operation alongside his brother-in-law, Sonu Kumar," said the DCP. Kumar was arrested in Noida and admitted to his role in creating counterfeit IDs.

Fake doctors who studied till Class 10, 12 treat patients in Gujarat, arrested

NEW DELHI. Gujarat's Surat police have arrested two individuals posing as doctors and treating patients without valid qualifications. The arrests are part of a campaign to crack down on fake doctors in the city. Among the accused, the woman, identified as Lalita Kripa Shankar Singh, studied up to Class 12, while the man, Prayag Ramchandra Prasad, studied only up to Class 10. According to DCP Vijay Singh Gurjar, the duo was running a clinic and prescribing allopathic



medicines to patients. Upon investigation, the police found no valid medical degrees or certifications in their possession. Medicines and other documents were seized from the clinic for further examination.

The arrests were carried out by the Umra Police Station in collaboration with the health department. Authorities are now probing the extent of their practice and how long they have been operating as fake doctors in Surat. Further legal action is underway against both individuals.

20 Trains Delayed Due To Fog And Poor Visibility On Christmas In Delhi

New Delhi. Dense fog and poor visibility in New Delhi caused major disruptions on Christmas morning, with 20 trains departing from the city delayed, including major services like the Mumbai Central Rajdhani Express and Dakshin Express.

The fog, coupled with the persisting cold temperature and poor visibility, added to the problems. The trains delayed included the Mumbai Central Rajdhani express running from New Delhi to Mumbai, Durg-Hazrat Nizamuddin express running from Durg to Delhi, Dakshin express running from Delhi to Hyderabad, Duronto express and the Jabalpur-Hazrat Nizamuddin Gondwana Express running from Jabalpur to Delhi among other trains. The temperature recorded in the city



was 10 degrees Celsius, according to the Indian Meteorological Department. Visibility in the city was recorded at 100 meters due to dense fog at 5:30 am. "The temperature have dropped down a lot due to the rain that took place yesterday. We have to use bonfires to keep ourselves warm..", a local said speaking to .

Another local complained about the lack of visibility due to the fog. Meanwhile, the AQI in the city was recorded at 333, falling under the 'very poor' category, as per the Central Pollution Control Board at 8 am.

The AQI measured in other areas also remained in the 'very poor' category. AQI in Anand Vihar was 360, 372 at Ashok Vihar, 362 at Bayana, and 324 at the CRRM Mathura Road. An AQI between 0-50 is considered good, 51-100 is satisfactory, 101-200 is moderate, 201-300 is poor, 301-400 is very poor, and 401-500 is severe. "The pollution and the winters both have become very harsh. It is taking a toll on people as they are suffering from breathing difficulties..." said another local. Meanwhile, on December 24, moderate rain lashed the city further amplifying the winter chill.

AAP Helps Illegal Rohingyas, Bangladeshis Settle In Delhi For Vote Bank: BJP

The former MP, who is gearing up to contest the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls from New Delhi seat, said he has identified some places in the constituency with concentration of such people and filed a complaint with the district magistrate to take appropriate action.



New Delhi. The BJP attacked the ruling AAP on Tuesday accusing it of helping illegal Rohingyas and Bangladeshis in Delhi settle down by providing them official documents, and then use them as its vote bank. No immediate reaction was available from the AAP over BJP's allegation. Former BJP MP Parvesh Verma told PTI "We all know they do

not vote for the BJP... they are AAP's vote bank." Mr Verma alleged once illegal immigrants laid Jhuggis (tenements) in the city, AAP leaders provided them with help and official documents like ration cards to settle them down so that they could get their votes in the elections. The former MP, who is gearing up to contest the upcoming Delhi Assembly polls from New Delhi seat, said he has identified some places in the constituency with concentration of such people and filed a complaint with the district magistrate to take appropriate action. AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal is sitting MLA from the New Delhi seat. In a

post on X, Mr Kejriwal without naming anyone, alleged "They have have started buying votes in my constituency. Openly giving Rs 1,000 cash per vote." Mr Kejriwal has said in the past that voters should take money from the BJP but vote for the AAP. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva charged that ever since the BJP demanded an investigation into illegal Bangladeshi and Rohingya voters in Delhi, Mr Kejriwal was flustered because these "illegal infiltrators were perhaps the foundation of AAP's victory in Delhi elections". A BJP delegation recently met Election Commission officials, alleging illegal Rohingya and Bangladeshis were registered as voters in Delhi at the behest of the AAP. Delhi Police on Tuesday arrested 11 persons, claiming to have unearthed a gang involved in illegal immigration of Bangladeshi nationals. Among those arrested, four are Bangladeshi citizens and the rest were allegedly.

'Flights That Are Not CAT III Compliant Might Get Affected': Delhi Airport Issues Advisory

The authorities also requested passengers to contact the concerned airline for updated flight information.

New Delhi. Delhi Airport authorities issued an advisory on Wednesday, warning passengers that flights not compliant with CAT III standards could experience potential disruptions due to low visibility conditions.

In a post on social media platform X, the authorities stated, "While landings and take-offs continue at Delhi airport, flights that are not CAT III compliant may be affected."

The authorities also requested passengers to contact the concerned airline for updated flight information.

"Passengers are requested to contact the airlines for updated flight information. Any inconvenience caused is deeply regretted," the post added. CAT III, or Category III, is an approach system that allows flights to land safely during poor visibility conditions and ensures operational functionality for compliant flights. Visibility in the city was recorded at 100 meters due to dense fog at



5:30 am. Meanwhile, Indigo airlines also issued an advisory for the passengers travelling from Delhi and stated that the low visibility and fog like conditions could impact the flight schedules.

"#6TravelAdvisory : A blanket of fog wraps Delhi's cold winter morning and may impact flight schedules. If you or your loved ones

are travelling, we recommend checking the flight status before heading to the airport. Safe travels," the post read. The airline advised passenger to keep an eye on their flight status and plan their journeys to the airport with extra time to ensure smooth travel. "We recommend keeping a close eye on your flight status and planning your journey to the airport with additional time to ensure smooth travels," the post said. This comes after the national capital witnessed moderate rainfall and a severe cold wave, further intensifying the winter chill.

On December 19, authorities had also issued an advisory, urging passengers to contact their concerned airlines for updated flight information before traveling.

"Low visibility procedures are still in progress at Delhi Airport. However, there has been no impact on flight operations. Passengers are requested to contact the airline concerned for updated flight information," a post said.

Centre's air quality panel revokes curbs under GRAP Stage IV in Delhi-NCR

The air quality situation is predicted to improve further, owing to favourable meteorological conditions.

which was 36 points below the limits decided by the Supreme Court for invoking Stage-4. Curbs under Stages 1, 2 and 3, however, will remain in force to prevent any further worsening of the air quality, said the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM)

"Actions under Stage I, II, and III of the revised GRAP shall remain invoked and be implemented, monitored, and reviewed by all the agencies concerned in the entire NCR to ensure that the AQI levels do not slip further," the commission said in its order. Stage-IV curbs under the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP) were reimposed, nearly 10 days after the measures were eased to Stage-2, in the national capital and its adjoining areas last week (December 16) when it breached the 400 mark.

Meanwhile, moderate rainfall lashed several parts of Delhi on Tuesday bringing sudden weather changes and an improvement in the overall air quality. Delhi residents woke up to a foggy



morning as the minimum temperature was recorded to be 7 degrees, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD). The downpour led to traffic disruptions in many parts including Kasturba Gandhi Marg. The IMD has forecast a further drop in temperatures over the next two days due to western disturbance. As per the met department, hailstorm and thunderstorms is expected in northwestern and central India on December 26. On Tuesday morning, Delhi had woken up to a foggy morning as the minimum temperature was recorded to be 7 degrees, according to the

IMD. According to forecasts from the IMD and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the air quality situation in the city is likely to improve further due to favourable meteorological conditions.

AQI was 36 points below the limits set by SC

At 5 pm, the AQI was 'very poor' at 364, which was 36 points below the limits decided by the Supreme Court for invoking Stage-4. Curbs under Stages 1, 2 and 3, however, will remain in force to prevent any further worsening of the air quality, said the Commission for Air Quality Management (CAQM). The IMD has forecast a further drop in temperatures over the next two days due to western disturbance. As per the met department, hailstorm and thunderstorms is expected in northwestern and central India on December 26. According to forecasts from the IMD and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology, the air quality situation in the city is likely to improve further

NEWS BOX

King Charles Holds Private Meeting With Kate Middleton After Prince William's Succession Plans: Report

World King Charles reportedly held a private meeting with his daughter-in-law, Kate Middleton, as the palace initiated plans for Prince William's future ascension to the throne, the New York Post reported.

The 76-year-old monarch gained a renewed outlook after navigating a difficult year, which included his cancer diagnosis in February. In March, Middleton also disclosed her cancer diagnosis, drawing attention as her health struggles closely followed those of the king. The duo is said to have grown closer while facing their respective health challenges, the media outlet reported. A source told Radar Online, "She and Charles had a private discussion about her stepping into her role sooner than anticipated."

The source added, "The bond between them is incredibly strong, as they've been a source of immense support to one another during their parallel battles with cancer." "This is also why Charles has made a conscious effort to give her the space she needs to recover in preparation for the inevitable moment when he and Camilla pass the baton," the insider added. According to the source, palace officials are focused on ensuring "Kate and William experience a seamless transition to power."

This report comes amidst growing speculation that the Prince and Princess of Wales are already preparing for William's eventual ascension to the throne.

"While the king continues to fulfil his duties with characteristic determination, his cancer treatment has required him to acknowledge certain limitations," royal biographer Sally Bedell Smith previously told People. "As a result, William has taken on additional responsibilities, and both he and Kate have been preparing for their future roles sooner than they originally anticipated."

17,000-Year-Old Remains Reveal Ancient Baby Likely Had Blue Eyes And Heart Disease

World. Scientists have discovered new details about an Ice Age baby who lived in southern Italy about 17,000 years ago. The remains, which were discovered by archaeologist Mauro Calattini in the Grotta delle Mura cave in Monopoli in 1998, indicate that the child probably died from congenital heart disease.

DNA analysis determined that the baby, who was male, likely had blue eyes, dark skin, and curly dark brown to nearly black hair. The small remains also manifested symptoms of poor development and inbreeding. No grave goods were found within the child's grave, which was discovered beneath two rock slabs. This burial remains the only one uncovered within the cave. A paper, published on 20 September in Nature Communications, gives insight into this ancient child's life and appearance, yielding valuable clues about the early human population of southern Europe. "Genetic analysis highlighted a close relationship between the child's parents, suggesting that they were probably first cousins," explains University of Florence molecular anthropologist Alessandra Modi, "a phenomenon rarely found in the Paleolithic, but more common during the Neolithic."

"Our work is a crucial piece in the understanding of the early stages of life in the Upper Palaeolithic," says Stefano Benazzi, Professor of Physical Anthropology at the University of Bologna. "This pioneering study, which combines different techniques of analysis of skeletal remains, has provided an unprecedented insight into the growth and living conditions of a child who lived in a key period for the settlement of the Italian peninsula, also allowing us to gather information about the mother and the hunter-gatherer groups of the time. Our research represents a significant advance, demonstrating the importance of interdisciplinarity to deepen our knowledge of prehistoric populations." Anthropological analyses conducted by the University of Siena have provided the basis for understanding the child's physical development. "The combination of these different methodologies has allowed us to reconstruct with unprecedented precision the life and death of this child," says Stefano Ricci of the University of Siena.

Donald Trump Vows Death Penalty For 'Rapists, Murderers, Monsters'

Washington, United States. Donald Trump hit out Tuesday at Joe Biden for commuting the sentences of almost every American federal prisoner on death row, as the president-elect prepares to replace the Democrat in the White House. President Biden, in his final month in office, announced Monday he was converting the sentences of 37 of the 40 federal inmates awaiting execution to life without the possibility of parole. They included nine people convicted of murdering fellow prisoners, four for murders committed during bank robberies and one who killed a prison guard. "Joe Biden just commuted the Death Sentence on 37 of the worst killers in our Country," Trump posted on Truth Social, his social media platform. "When you hear the acts of each, you won't believe that he did this. Makes no sense. Relatives and friends are further devastated. They can't believe this is happening!" Biden had imposed a moratorium on the federal death penalty but was under pressure to act further before leaving the White House on January 20, amid signals from Republican Trump that he would resume the practice. Biden rebuked the inmates he had spared and "their despicable acts," but said he had been guided by "my conscience and my experience" to prevent the incoming Trump administration from resuming executions. He excluded three men from his order, however -- one of the 2013 Boston Marathon bombers, a gunman who murdered 11 Jewish worshippers in 2018 and a white supremacist who shot nine Black churchgoers dead in 2015.

Protect Rights Of All Faiths": America's Tough Talk To Bangladesh Amid Attacks On Hindus

San Francisco, US. Amid growing violence against minority Hindus in Bangladesh, the United Nations has asked Dhaka to ensure the protection of the human rights of all Bangladeshi citizens, irrespective of religion. During a phone conversation with US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan, Bangladesh's interim government chief Muhammad Yunus expressed commitment to protect human rights in the troubled South Asian nation. "Both leaders expressed their commitment to respecting and protecting the human rights of all people, regardless of religion," the White House said in a statement about the call between Mr Sullivan and Mr Yunus.

The call comes less than a month before the Biden administration is set to pass on the power to Donald Trump, who would be sworn in as the 47th President of the United States on January 20 next year. It also came at the backdrop of attacks on Bangladesh's Hindu minority and their places of worship. Mr Sullivan during the call thanked Yunus for his leadership of Bangladesh during a challenging period, the White House said. "Sullivan re-iterated the United States'

support for a prosperous, stable, and democratic Bangladesh, and offered the United States' continued support in meeting the challenges Bangladesh faces," said the readout of the call.

Outrage Of Killing of Hindus In Bangladesh

There have been a spate of incidents of violence against Hindus and other minorities, as well as attacks on temples in Bangladesh after the fall of the Hasina government. On December 13, the White House said that President Joe Biden is closely monitoring the situation in Bangladesh and the US will hold the country's interim government accountable for ensuring the protection of religious and ethnic minorities.

The conversation between Mr Sullivan and Mr Yunus comes days after Indian American Democratic Congressman Shri Thanedar urged the White House to strongly raise the issue of the killing of Hindus and destruction of their temples in Bangladesh with the head of the country's



interim government. "The United States has a storied history of championing the oppressed and this issue should be no different. When we receive a global call for help, we must respond appropriately as the world's bellwether of human rights. We must urge Prime Minister Muhammad Yunus to fulfil his promise of restoring peace and rebuilding the nation on principles of equality and justice," Thanedar said last week.

Advocacy group HinduAction said that disturbing reports of brutal attacks against

the Hindus continue to surface, particularly over the past two weeks, as desperate pleas for help pour in from those affected on the ground. HinduAction executive director Utsav Chakrabarti said what has happened in the last five and half months in Bangladesh clearly reflects that "Muhammad Yunus has failed to contain" his allies in the Jamaat-e-Islami who are now running around the country, burning temples, killing people, raping women and indulging in atrocities against priests and leaders from the Hindu community by incarcerating them.

"It is incumbent upon our current administration as well as the upcoming administration to put sanctions on Bangladesh, as Congressman Thanedar has pointed out," Chakrabarti said. It is important that we clearly chart out a path for safe autonomous zones for the Hindus, all 15 million of them, along with the Buddhists and Christians within the boundaries of Bangladesh," he added.

Iran Eases Internet Blockades, Lifts Ban On Whatsapp And Google Play

Tehran. Iranian authorities have officially lifted the ban on WhatsApp and the Google Play Store, signalling a significant shift in the country's internet restrictions, the Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) reported. The decision, which comes after a meeting with top government officials, marks a new phase in the easing of internet blockades that have restricted access to major global platforms for some time. On Tuesday, a meeting was convened with the participation of heads of all three branches of government, ministers, and members of the Supreme Council, where discussions focused on reviewing and adjusting policies surrounding internet governance and restrictions. Following the presentation of assessments from relevant authorities, the council approved changes to the existing internet restrictions. Sattar Hashemi, Iran's



Minister of Information and Communications Technology, later took to X (formerly Twitter) to announce the development, stating, "Today, we took the first step towards lifting internet restrictions with unity and collaboration. I extend my gratitude to the President, media, and activists for their efforts. We need this solidarity more than ever. This path continues." The move to lift the ban aligns with the Iranian government's broader approach to managing its

digital landscape, emphasising the importance of regulated cyberspace governance while also stressing the need to support domestic platforms, reported the IRNA.

The lifting of internet restrictions was one of the key promises made by President Masoud Pezeshkian during his presidential campaign, and this decision marks an early fulfilment of that commitment. However, despite the progress, the government has emphasised that its approach will continue to prioritise the development and use of local platforms alongside the reintroduction of global services like WhatsApp and Google Play, the IRNA reported.

As these changes unfold, the broader impact on both local businesses and individual users is still to be fully assessed, but the easing of restrictions is a significant step forward for internet freedom in Iran.

Denmark Strengthens Greenland Security and Deploys Sled Dogs After Trump's US Takeover Threat

US President-elect Donald Trump's renewed proposal to buy Greenland has drawn sharp international criticism.

World US President-elect Donald Trump once again caused international controversy through provocative comments about acquiring Greenland, reclaiming the Panama Canal, and jokingly suggesting annexation of Canada. Trump has reignited his earlier, unsuccessful calls to buy Greenland from Denmark, further intensifying tensions with allied nations even before officially taking office on January 20. The Danish government has reacted by promising the largest defense spending boost to Greenland since Trump's revived push for the Arctic region. Danish Defence Minister Troels Lund Poulsen told BBC, the package was a "double digit billion amount" in kroner, or at least \$1.5bn. He described the timing of the announcement as an "irony of fate". On Monday Trump said ownership and

control of the huge island was an "absolute necessity" for the US. Poulsen said the package would allow for the purchase of two new inspection ships, two new long-range



drones and two extra dog sled teams. It would also include funding for increased staffing at Arctic Command in the capital Nuuk and an upgrade for one of Greenland's three main civilian airports to handle F-35 supersonic fighter aircraft. "We have not invested enough in the Arctic for many years, now we are planning a stronger presence," he said.

The defence minister did not give an exact figure for the package, but Danish media estimated it would be around 12-15bn kroner. The announcement came a

day after Trump said on his social media platform Truth Social: "For purposes of National Security and Freedom throughout the World, the United States of America feels that the ownership and control of Greenland is an absolute necessity." Greenland's Prime Minister Mute Egede responded to Trump's comments, saying "we are not for sale". What is Greenland and what is its territorial status?

Greenland, the world's largest island, is an autonomous territory within the Kingdom of Denmark. This means it has its own government and manages most of its internal affairs, but Denmark handles defense and foreign policy. Located between the Arctic and Atlantic Oceans, Greenland holds significant geopolitical importance, particularly for the United States due to its strategic location on the shortest air route between North America and Europe. The island is also home to Thule Air Base, a crucial US military installation. Greenland possesses vast natural resources, including substantial mineral deposits and a growing interest in renewable energy sources due to its abundant wind and hydropower potential.

All About Pakistan Taliban, Terror Group Islamabad Attacked Inside Afghanistan Border

Peshawar, Pakistan. In rare airstrikes, Pakistan on Tuesday targeted multiple suspected hideouts of the Pakistani Taliban inside neighbouring Afghanistan, resulting in the death of at least 15 people, including women and children. The strikes were carried out in a mountainous area in Paktika province bordering Pakistan, where the local authorities said the number of deaths is expected to rise. The strike also dismantled a training facility and killed some insurgents, Pakistani security officials told the Associated Press (AP) on the condition of anonymity. It was reportedly the second such Pakistani attack on alleged hideouts of the Pakistani Taliban, known as Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), since March in the border regions inside Afghanistan. Islamabad often claims that the TTP use Afghan soil to launch attacks in Pakistan, a charge Kabul has denied.

About Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan

Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) was formed in 2007 as an umbrella organisation of various hardline Sunni Islamist groups operating individually in Pakistan,

following Pakistan military operations against Al-Qaida-related terrorists in the Federally Administered Tribal Areas (FATA)-- a semi-autonomous region in the northwest region of the country that was made up of seven tribal agencies and six frontier regions. Formed under the leadership of Baitullah Mehsud, who has since died, TTP is rooted along the Afghanistan/Pakistan border. Some estimates suggest TTP has between 30,000 and 35,000 members. According to the United Nations, its stated objective is the overthrow of the elected government of Pakistan to establish an emirate based on its interpretation of Islamic law. To that end, TTP has worked to destabilize Pakistan by directly attacking the Pakistani army and assassinating politicians. Its attacks, which have included multiple suicide bombings, have killed hundreds of members of the Pakistan defence forces, law enforcement personnel and civilians. The terrorist group is responsible for some of the bloodiest attacks in Pakistan, including on churches, schools and the shooting of Malala Yousafzai, who



survived the 2012 attack after she was targeted for her campaign against the Taliban's efforts to deny women education. After the Afghan Taliban seized power in Afghanistan in 2021, it emboldened the TTP, whose leaders and fighters are hiding in Afghanistan. The terrorist organisation has stepped up attacks on Pakistani soldiers and police since November 2022, when it unilaterally ended a cease-fire with the government after the failure of months of talks hosted by Afghanistan's government in Kabul. The TTP in recent months has killed and wounded dozens of soldiers in attacks inside the country.

Kabul's Reaction

In Kabul, the Afghan Defence Ministry condemned the Pakistani airstrikes, saying the bombing targeted civilians, including women and children. It said that most of the victims were refugees from the Waziristan region. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers this a brutal act against all international principles and blatant aggression and strongly condemns it," the ministry said.

In a post on the X platform, the Afghan defence ministry said the Pakistani side should know that such unilateral measures are not a solution to any problem. "The Islamic Emirate will not leave this cowardly act unanswered but rather considers the defence of its territory and territory to be its inalienable right," it said.

Syed Muhammad Ali, an Islamabad-based security expert told AP that Tuesday's airstrike "represents a clear and blunt warning to Pakistani Taliban that Pakistan will use all the available means against the terrorist outfit both inside and outside its borders."

Pakistan's Big Airstrike On Taliban Bases In Afghanistan; Over 25 Dead - Details Inside

World Pakistan launched airstrikes on Taliban bases in Afghanistan on Tuesday. The strikes killed an estimated 25-30 people and destroyed training centers, according to officials. The operation targeted a mountainous region in Barmal district of Paktika province near the Pakistan border.

Pakistani jets were responsible for the bombing, ANI reported citing local sources. According to media reports, Murg Bazaar village came under fire, causing severe civilian casualties and widespread destruction. However, Pakistani officials have not confirmed the strikes. Security sources linked to the military, said the operation targeted Taliban bases near the border. Reports from Khaama Press said the strikes on December 24 hit seven villages, including Laman. Five members of one family were reportedly killed. Recovery efforts are ongoing, and further investigation is needed to confirm details and assign responsibility, the report added.

Afghanistan Vows Retaliation Against Pakistan The Taliban's Ministry of Defence has pledged to respond to the airstrike in Barmal, Paktika. The ministry condemned the attack and called it their "legitimate right" to defend their land and sovereignty. The ministry further claimed 'Waziristani refugees' were among the victims. "The Islamic Emirate will not leave this cowardly act unanswered but rather considers the defense of its territory and territory to be its inalienable right," the statement said.

The airstrikes came hours after Mohammad Sadiq Pakistan's special representative for Afghanistan travelled to Kabul to discuss various matters, including strengthening bilateral trade and improving relations. In Kabul, Afghanistan's Defence Ministry also criticised Pakistan's airstrikes. They stated the bombing targeted civilians, including women and children. "The Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan considers this a brutal act against all international principles and blatant aggression and strongly condemns it," the ministry said.

Pakistan-Afghanistan Tensions Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have been rising. Pakistan has blamed the Afghan Taliban for sheltering Pakistani militants. Recent months have seen a surge in attacks by Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) on Pakistani forces. Taliban defense ministry spokesperson Inayatullah Khwarazmi denied Pakistan's claims. He stated on X (formerly Twitter) that the airstrikes killed civilians, mainly Waziristani refugees. He mentioned that "several children and other civilians were martyred and injured," but did not give official casualty numbers. Sources said at least 25-30 bodies, including women and children, have been recovered. Search operations are ongoing. Waziristani refugees are civilians displaced by military operations in Pakistan's tribal regions. Pakistan claims that TTP commanders fled to Afghanistan and are sheltered in border areas by the Afghan Taliban. The Taliban deny aiding the TTP and reject accusations of collaboration.

NEWS BOX

Jasprit Bumrah like Malcolm Marshall in reading batters and conditions: Ravi Shastri

New Delhi Former India head coach Ravi Shastri heaped praise on Jasprit Bumrah's ability to quickly read an opposition batter's strengths and weaknesses as well as the playing conditions, likening the fast bowler to the legendary Malcolm Marshall. Bumrah has been leading India's charge in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, breaking records at will in Australia. Bumrah has taken 21 wickets in three Tests at a staggering average of 10.90. No other bowler in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy has managed to claim more than 15 wickets so far after three Tests. The Indian pace-bowling spearhead has been head and shoulders above the rest with his remarkable ability to adapt to the conditions in Australia. Bumrah also stood in for Rohit Sharma in the series opener, leading the team to a commanding 295-run victory in Perth. "He's a terrific reader of the game when it comes to batsmen. I thought when I played the best bowler I played against was Malcolm Marshall, because of his ability to suss out conditions, read batsmen's strengths and weaknesses. So I think Bumrah is in that category. He's so quick to suss the strengths and



weaknesses of a player," Ravi Shastri told Fox Cricket. "He's taken close to 200 wickets and close to a hundred in India, and he's taken those at 17. In India, you must realise the ball starts reversing, because of the rough conditions. So if he doesn't take wickets with the new ball, he's dangerous at the end."

Bumrah, with 53 wickets, is already the leading wicket-taker for India in Australia in Test cricket, going past Kapil Dev's tally of 51 in the third Test in Brisbane. The Indian fast bowler needs one more wicket to become the most successful in the country at Melbourne Cricket Ground in Tests. With 15 wickets, he is currently tied with Anil Kumble. Bumrah will be key to India's success in the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne. With Mohammed Shami ruled out, Bumrah will hope for better support from fellow pacers.

Great occasion for Pakistan: Mohammad Rizwan praises Champions Trophy scheduling

New Delhi. Pakistan's white-ball captain Mohammad Rizwan and PCB Chairman Mohsin Naqvi praised the Champions Trophy schedule, describing the ICC's decision to hold the 50-over tournament in a hybrid model as a "significant milestone" for the country. Pakistan will host an ICC event after 28 years, with the last global tournament held here being the 1996 World Cup. "As a cricket-loving country, we are all very excited to host the ICC Champions Trophy 2025. It is a great occasion as Pakistan welcomes the first ICC event to its shores in 28 years, especially as we are the defending champions," Rizwan said in a



PCB media release. The eight-team tournament will feature 15 matches, played across Pakistan and Dubai. In Pakistan, Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi will serve as the three venues hosting tournament matches. Each venue in Pakistan will host three group games, with Lahore also hosting the second semi-final.

Lahore is set to host the final on March 9, unless India qualifies, in which case the final will be held in Dubai. Both semi-finals and the final will have reserve days. The three group matches involving India, along with the first semi-final, will be played in Dubai. The Dubai leg of the tournament begins the following day, with India taking on Bangladesh. Naqvi expressed his delight at Pakistan hosting a part of the tournament under the hybrid system. We are pleased that an agreement has been reached based on the principles of equality and respect, showcasing the spirit of cooperation and collaboration that defines our sport," Naqvi stated in the release. The tournament opener will take place in Karachi on February 19, with Pakistan facing New Zealand, and the final is scheduled for March 9. Rawalpindi, Lahore, and Karachi will serve as the three hosting venues in Pakistan.

Premier League set for decisive Boxing Day feat Liverpool, Chelsea, Manchester United

Boxing Day in the Premier League is about to bring thrilling action as Liverpool extended their lead, Chelsea stumbled, and Manchester City regained momentum, reshaping the race for the title and European spots.



fixtures could prove decisive. A Decisive Premier League Boxing Day

The Race to the Top

The battle between Liverpool and Chelsea takes centre stage. The Reds, with a four-point cushion over Chelsea, will look to consolidate their position when they face Leicester City. Meanwhile, Chelsea must overcome Fulham to keep the pressure on Liverpool. A Chelsea victory, coupled with a Liverpool loss, would narrow the gap at the top to a single point, though Liverpool still

have a game in hand. Conversely, a Liverpool win and a Chelsea defeat could see the gap widen to seven points—likely an unassailable lead heading into the New Year. Manchester United's Resurgence Manchester United, under Ruben Amorim, have shown flashes of brilliance, particularly in their victory over rivals Manchester City. However, their momentum was disrupted by a shock 0-3 loss to Bournemouth. Amorim's side will now face Wolves, who are undergoing a transition. A win is imperative

for United to maintain their upward trajectory and establish themselves firmly in the top-four conversation. A Boxing Day victory would also restore confidence as the second half of the season approaches.

Manchester City's Fight for Redemption

Defending champions Manchester City find themselves in unfamiliar territory, sitting seventh on the table. Pep Guardiola's men have struggled for form, leading to their decision to train even on Christmas Day.

City's clash against struggling Everton presents an opportunity to regain momentum. With just 29 points from 17 games, Guardiola will hope his side can secure a much-needed win and begin their climb back up the table.

The Nottingham Forest Revival

Nuno Espirito Santo's Nottingham Forest have been a revelation this season, climbing to fourth place and aiming for European competition qualification. Their Boxing Day fixture against Tottenham Hotspur is crucial in maintaining their impressive run. A win could solidify their position in the top four, keeping them ahead in the race for a European spot. With these high-stakes matchups, Boxing Day promises to be a turning point in the Premier League season. Each fixture carries weight, making it a day no football fan can afford to miss.

Ruben Amorim vows to revive Manchester United: One of lowest moments in our club

New Delhi. Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim said that addressing the Premier League club's issues is frustrating, but he remains confident in his ability to overcome them. United will visit Wolverhampton Wanderers on Boxing Day, aiming to bounce back from two consecutive defeats. Amorim has overseen six Premier League matches since taking over as Manchester United manager, managing just two wins alongside three losses and a draw. This inconsistency left United in 13th place on Christmas Day—their lowest position at this point of the season since 1986. A dramatic comeback victory against rivals Manchester City was overshadowed by consecutive defeats—a 3-0 loss to Bournemouth in the league and a 4-3 exit to Tottenham in the League Cup quarter-finals.

PREMIER LEAGUE: BOXING DAY PREVIEW

Marcus Rashford's absence from United's last three games has intensified scrutiny. Rashford, now 27, hinted at a possible departure, stating he was "ready for a new challenge" in a recent interview. Amorim, however, made it clear that his stance



remained unchanged. "Some guys have a big responsibility here because they have been here for a long time," Amorim said, emphasising the need for key players like Rashford to step up. "If you have big talent, we need big performance, big responsibility, big engagement to push everybody forward in this moment." Acknowledging the gravity of United's situation, Amorim described the current period as "one of the lowest moments in our club." Yet, he remains confident in his ability to guide the team through these challenges. I know what I am going to do. That is so clear for me," Amorim told reporters. "I will not say I am feeling relaxed because I am really frustrated. It is a very difficult moment, but we will solve problems step by step and find answers for everything." Looking ahead to the Boxing Day clash with Wolverhampton Wanderers, Amorim stressed the importance of securing a win to lift the spirits. "I just want to win. I don't care about Christmas. I'm just focused on what we need to do for the next match," he said. The Portuguese manager also confirmed ongoing injury issues, with Matthijs de Ligt and Victor Lindelof remaining sidelined.

Boxing Day Test: Australian stars celebrate Christmas with their families at MCG

New Delhi. The festive spirit was in full swing at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) as Australia's cricket team enjoyed a relaxed Christmas Day with family ahead of the much-anticipated Boxing Day Test. The players, alongside their families, took to the iconic pitch, creating a heartwarming scene of camaraderie and joy.

All-rounder Mitch Marsh, accompanied by his wife Greta and newborn daughter Olive, shared a touching moment as they strolled on the hallowed turf. Fellow players Marnus Labuschagne, Usman Khawaja, Nathan Lyon, and Alex Carey also made the most of the day, playing with their children on the field. Josh Inglis, who remains on the sidelines with Travis Head cleared to play, spent quality time with his partner Megan and son Oscar. Meanwhile, Perth Scorchers pacer Jhye Richardson, a surprise reserve bowler inclusion after his side's Big Bash League loss to the Renegades, remained in Melbourne to join the celebrations. Adding to the family atmosphere, Steve Smith was seen inspecting the MCG wicket alongside his father, Peter. Young sensation Sam Konstas, set to become the fourth-youngest Australian to play Test cricket, also enjoyed the day with his family, soaking in the



special moment. Assistant coach Andrew McDonald's son, Ollie, took part in the cricketing action, donning pads and facing throwdowns alongside Travis Head, who successfully passed a fitness test after

recovering from a quad injury.

Meanwhile, Indian star Virat Kohli enjoyed breakfast on Christmas with his wife Anushka and family at a local cafe in Melbourne. Australian captain Pat Cummins highlighted the unique camaraderie within the squad, describing the Christmas gathering as a cherished tradition.

"It's great, we spend probably more time on the road than we do at home, so this is kind of the big extended family. At the moment, it's chaos—there are probably two kids per person on average, so about 30 or 40 kids are running around between the staff and players," Cummins added. "It is great fun. All the partners get on so well. This year we haven't had as many partners traveling because everyone has young ones at home, but they all come together for the Melbourne and Sydney Tests. It's always a great time of year." The festivities included Christmas presents for the kids, followed by a team lunch, as families enjoyed a rare chance to unite during the gruelling cricketing calendar. While the Australian camp celebrated in high spirits, their opponents, India, opted for a rest day ahead of the big clash.

Virat Kohli, Anushka Sharma enjoy Christmas breakfast in Melbourne ahead of MCG Test

Melbourne. Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma enjoyed a Christmas breakfast at a cafe in Melbourne on Wednesday, 25 December. On the eve of the much-anticipated Boxing Day Test, the former India captain and his wife were spotted soaking up the festive atmosphere and enjoying their meal at a local restaurant.

Virat Kohli, dressed in a pink oversized T-shirt and grey jeans, appeared content after a hearty breakfast on the festive day. The Melbourne café expressed gratitude to Virat Kohli and shared how the Indian cricket superstar stepped into the kitchen to personally thank the chefs and pose for photos with them. The café revealed that they were not sure of whether to remain open on a public holiday, but were pleasantly surprised by the visit of the star couple. "This morning, while we were still debating whether to keep our cafe open on a public holiday, little did we know we were about to have the surreal experience of serving King @virat.kohli @anushkasharma, and the family at our

little cafe," the café said in an Instagram post. "Virat Sir was so kind to step into our kitchen, thank chefs and let us take pictures with him," the post read. Earlier in the day, a video of Virat Kohli and Anushka Sharma



taking a stroll down a busy lane in Melbourne went viral. Notably, Virat Kohli travelled to Australia with Anushka Sharma and their two children. Along with Jasprit Bumrah, Kohli has been travelling between cities in specially-arranged flights.

The Indian cricket team opted not to train on the eve of the Boxing Day Test. Australia, on the other hand, had an optional training

session at the MCG on Christmas after which captain Pat Cummins addressed the press conference. India began training for the Boxing Day Test earlier than Australia, hitting the nets for four days between Saturday and Tuesday. Australia trained from Monday, honing their skills for the fourth Test of the five-match Border-Gavaskar Trophy. Virat Kohli looked determined in the nets over the weekend, spending extra hours in a bid to tackle his weakness outside the off-stump. The former captain began the tour with a hundred in the first Test in Perth. However, he struggled to get going in Adelaide and Brisbane, often getting out while chasing deliveries bowled wide outside the off-stump. Virat Kohli was involved in a controversy when he confronted an Australian journalist for clicking photos of his family at Melbourne airport. Kohli asked the journalist to delete photos and videos of his family, reminding the media at the airport that he wanted privacy for his young children.

Australia's 12th man stirs controversies before Boxing Day Test: Part of a plan

Australia vs India, 4th Test: In the lead-up to the Boxing Day Test, there has been plenty of noise outside the field. From Virat Kohli to Ravindra Jadeja, Indian players were targeted by a section of the Australian media, who are known for making it difficult for touring sides.

New Delhi. The Boxing Day Test at the Melbourne Cricket Ground is one of cricket's most iconic fixtures, steeped in tradition and history. As expected, the tickets for one of the biggest fixtures of the Australian summer have been sold out. Packed stands with close to 90,000 people are expected on Boxing Day, highlighting the hype for the fixture between Australia and India. However, the build-up to the potential blockbuster has been overshadowed by off-field controversies. The off-field battle led by the Australian

media has added an unnecessary edge, targeting Indian players with baseless criticisms and unwarranted scrutiny.

THE EASY TARGET?

Indian cricket star Virat Kohli became the focus of controversy when an incident at the Melbourne airport was sensationalised by sections of the Australian media. Kohli, who had landed with his wife Anushka Sharma and their children, confronted a journalist from Channel 7 who had captured video footage of his family. Concerned about privacy, Kohli requested the journalist delete images or footage of his family but allowed her to keep content featuring him alone. Under Australian law, photographing celebrities in public spaces is legal, which likely complicated the situation. Despite Kohli's polite but firm request, a section of the media reported it as a heated confrontation. Later, it became evident that the matter was a minor misunderstanding,



but the damage was done. Kohli's legitimate concerns as a father were overshadowed by sensational headlines.

RAVINDRA JADEJA CRITICISM

Shortly after the Kohli incident, Ravindra Jadeja found himself in the media's crosshairs. Following India's first practice session at the MCG, Jadeja addressed the press primarily in Hindi. This sparked frustration amongst some Australian

journalists, who accused Jadeja of refusing to answer questions in English. An Indian team media manager explained that the press conference was primarily arranged for the Indian media. However, the clarification didn't sit well with one Australian journalist, who lashed out at the media manager, calling the arrangement "hopeless."

Indian journalists present noted that many of their own questions went unanswered due to time constraints, but they refrained from creating a scene. "I was present there, and many Indian touring journalists didn't get the opportunity to ask questions due to time constraints. However, after the press conference ended, a few Australian journalists got annoyed and argued with the Indian team's media manager. They misbehaved as well, which was uncalled for. I cover press conferences regularly, and even during Australian press conferences.

Keerthy Suresh's

In Green Anarkali Suit Is An Inspiration For Every Newlywed



Keerthy Suresh has had significant developments in her life. Personally, she recently tied the knot with her longtime beau, Antony Thattil, at an intimate wedding ceremony in Goa. Work-wise, the South Indian diva is all set to make her Bollywood debut with Baby John, starring Varun Dhawan and Wamiqa Gabbi. Merely days after getting married, Keerthy dived into work mode, promoting her Bollywood debut, Baby John. On Tuesday, December 24, the 32-year-old actress was spotted in the Mumbai airport as she returned to the city after seeking blessings at Ujjain's Mahakaleshwar Jyotirlinga Temple before the release.

In a video shared by a paparazzo page, Keerthy was seen coming out of the airport, looking effortlessly gorgeous in a green-coloured silk Anarkali suit set. She opted for delicate earrings, sunglasses and silver heels to complete her look. The newly married actress also flaunted a traditional thaali (mangalsutra in Tamil). On her way out of the airport, Keerthy was seen interacting with the paps and also patiently posing with her fans.

A day before Baby John's release, the lead cast of the film Varun Dhawan, Keerthy Suresh and Wamiqa Gabbi, along with the director Atlee and his wife, were seen offering their prayers at the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain. The entire team was in ethnic attire. Baby John is scheduled to release on Christmas, i.e., December 25.

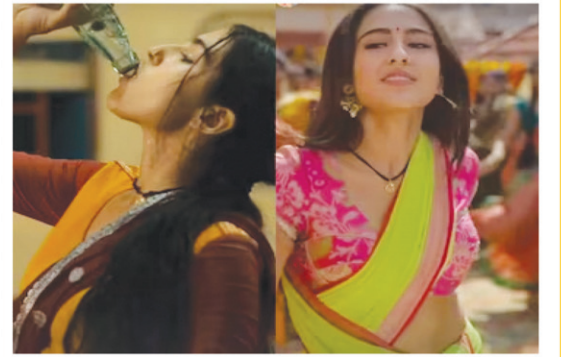
Earlier, Keerthy dropped a series of pictures on her Instagram account from one of the promotional events for Baby John. In the photos, she was wearing a red corset dress, which she accessorised using dainty jewellery. However, what caught everyone's eye was her mangalsutra. She decided to proudly flaunt her mangalsutra with the

Western dress, setting goals. Sharing the post, Keerthy wrote, "That's how I got back to promotions with my 'Good vibes only' Color! #BabyJohnPromotions."

In other news, Keerthy tied the knot with her longtime beau Antony Thattil in Goa. The couple was in a relationship for 15 years before they decided to get married on December 12 in an intimate wedding ceremony. Taking to social media, Keerthy first shared glimpses from her traditional South Indian wedding followed by a White wedding. She ditched captions and posted the pictures with the hashtag "ForTheLoveOfNyke."



Sara Ali Khan Celebrates 3 Years Of Akshay Kumar, Dhanush Starrer Atrangi Re, Drops A Montage Video



Sara Ali Khan, Akshay Kumar, and Dhanush starrer Atrangi Re has completed three years today. To make this day more special, Sara shared a special montage video featuring iconic scenes from the movie. Directed by Aanand L. Rai, Atrangi Re was released in December 2021 and received widespread acclaim for its storyline and performances. Taking to her Instagram handle, Sara shared a video which is a compilation of her dialogues from the film. She played the character Rinku which left a mark on audience's mind. In conversation with Mid-Day, Sara confessed, "I called Aanand R Lai and told him, 'Atrangi Re is a great script. This character is outstanding. Are you sure you don't want to call Alia Bhatt (to do the role instead?)'" When asked why she asked such a question, Sara Ali Khan explained, "Because I was very nervous. This was after Love Aaj Kal. He told me, 'On a personal note, I'll deal with you. But Rinku is not a character that you can play on the back foot. So you can't do this (have doubts) right now or ever'. That really helped pick me up."

Atrangi Re is a cross-cultural love story set in Bihar and Madurai. While Sara plays a proper Bihar girl, Dhanush essays the role of a Tamilian student. The film also stars Akshay Kumar. On the work front, Sara Ali Khan is set to share the screen space with Ayushmann Khurrana for the first time in an upcoming action comedy film. This fresh pairing has generated a lot of buzz. The film will be produced by Dharma Productions and Sikhya Entertainment. The film, yet to be named, will be directed by Aakash Kaushik and is expected to be a unique spy comedy. However, this is the first time Ayushmann Khurrana is working with Karan Johar. Pinkvilla has reported, "Karan and Guneet have been very excited about this subject as the script has shaped up well with a perfect blend of espionage elements with comedy. The script tick marks all the boxes of a commercial film as it has scale, thrill, and action with a lot of comedy, and the trio of Karan, Guneet, and Aakash feel that Ayushmann Khurrana fits the character."

Varun Dhawan Picks A Dhoti-Kurta For Baby John Promotions, Fans Give Thumbs Up



Varun Dhawan and Wamiqa Gabbi, starring Baby John, are all set for a grand release on December 25. Much ahead of the film's release, the Kalees directorial has been making quite some noise. Multiple reports by trade experts even claimed that Baby John tried to remove Allu Arjun's Pushpa 2 from the theatres. Amid all this, the entire cast of the movie has been doing their best on back-to-back promotional sprees. Recently, Varun Dhawan and Wamiqa Gabbi grabbed the attention with their traditional looks.

In a video on Instagram, Varun Dhawan and Wamiqa Gabbi were spotted at the airport, reportedly on their way to a promotional event for Baby Johns. For the same, the actor picked a white kurta teamed with a matching dhoti and a cream-coloured doshala. He also sported a pair of kolapuri jootis and sunglasses to make his overall look charming. On the other hand, Wamiqa looked stunning as always in a yellow-hued sharara.

Wamiqa's ensemble included a short kurta alongside a sheer dupatta and flared pants, providing her utmost comfort. The entire outfit showcased white embroideries which enhanced the Khufiya fame's look. She kept the rest of her appearance simple and opted for subtle makeup. Side-parted open tresses complemented her look perfectly. As soon as the video as posted online, netizens started lauding the duo for their looks. One user said, "So beautiful so elegant just looking like a wow," while another mentioned, "Wow so cute yaar Varun." Meanwhile, someone wrote, "Dono hi Jodi hit hogi." "Varun in Dhoti style awesome," read another comment. Besides Varun Dhawan and Wamiqa Gabbi, Baby John also stars Keerthy Suresh, Zara Zayna and Jackie Shroff in key roles. Earlier, the entire team of the film, alongside co-producer Atlee and his wife, Priya went to seek blessings at the Mahakaleshwar Temple in Ujjain ahead of the film's release. In a few viral pictures and videos, the team was spotted attending a special early morning puja at the temple. For the day, Varun wore a white kurta-pyjama and was seen seated on the floor with folded hands to offer his prayers. Keerthy Suresh was also spotted beside him. The newlywed actress stunned in a green outfit and looked stunning. On the other hand, Atlee and Priya also opted for traditional outfits for the visit.

Karisma Kapoor

Shares Unseen Throwback Photo With Shyam Benegal, Calls Him 'Legend Forever'



Legendary filmmaker Shyam Benegal passed away on December 23. Many celebrities including Amitabh Bachchan, Akshay Kumar and others have expressed their condolences on social media. Karisma Kapoor also shared an unseen throwback with the late director from the sets of Zubeida and gave him tribute. The photo has gone viral. Taking to her Instagram stories, Karisma Kapoor shared a photo in which she is seen talking to the director. Both are smiling and talking about a scene. "Rest in peace Shyam Babu, legend forever. .Ur Zubeidaa...#shyambenegal," read the caption. Zubeidaa" is the concluding chapter in a trilogy that began with Mammo (1994) and continued with Sardari Begum (1996). The film is based on the life of the ill-fated actress Zubeida Begum, who married Hanwant Singh of Jodhpur and was the mother of the film's writer, Khalid Mohamed.

Earlier, Shyam Benegal was laid to rest today with full state honours. His funeral was done at the Shivaji Park Electric Crematorium in Mumbai. The Indian national flag is draped over the mortal remains of the deceased. Gulzar, Naseeruddin Shah,

Booman Irani, Divya Dutta, Shreyas Talpade and others were spotted attending the last rites. The videos are going viral on social media. Earlier, Amitabh Bachchan also mourned Shyam Benegal's death. Following his death, Big B took to X and his blog to offer his condolences. "T 5233 - We have lost another stalwart of the Film Industry today.. Shyam Benegal passes away.. Prayers and condolences," Amitabh wrote on X. Shyam Benegal's career spanned over five decades, cementing his position as a pioneering filmmaker in Indian cinema.

He made his debut in the film industry with the 1974 movie Ankur. His subsequent films, such as "Nishant" (1975), "Manthan" (1976), and "Bhumika" (1977), solidified his reputation as a masterful director, earning him numerous national and international accolades. Later, Benegal also made several critically acclaimed films like "Mandi" (1983), "Trikaal" (1985), and "Sardari Begum" (1996). His last release was Mujib: The Making of a Nation, which hit theatres in 2023.

The filmmaker also celebrated his 90th birthday earlier this month when he revealed that he was working on 2-3 projects. "We all grow old. I don't do anything great (on my birthday). It may be a special day, but I don't celebrate it specifically. I cut a cake at the office with my team," he told PTI and then added, "I'm working on two to three projects; they are all different from one another. It's difficult to say which one I will make. They are all for the big screen."

