

- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 5.15 नन नन ननह 5 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 7.20 नन ननह 7.25 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 6.15 नन ननह 5.45 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 7.15 नन ननह 5.45 नन नननननन
- टनन-नननननननननननन सुनह 7.45 नन ननह 7 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 3.35 नन ननह 5.20 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननननननननन सुनह 2.50 नन ननह 2.30 नननननन
- टटनननर ननननन सुनह 8.15 नन ननह 7.55 नन नननननन
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- टटनननर ननननन सुनह 5.05 नन ननह 4.55 नन नननननन
- टटनननर ननननन नननननननननननन ननह 8.55 नन ननह 8.30 नन नननननन
- टटनननर ननन नननर नन 9.10 नन ननह 8.45 नन नननननन
- टटनननर नननननर नन 9.10 नन ननह 8.45 नन नननननन
- टनन-नननन नन नननर नन सुनह 5.30 नन ननह 5.25 नन नननननन
- टटनननर ननननननननन नन सुनह 4.00 नन ननह 4.15 नन नननननन
- टटनननर ननननननननन नन सुनह 9.50 नन ननह 9.35 नन नननननन
- टनन-ननननर नन 6.50 नन ननह 6.40 नन नननननन
- टनन-नननर नन सुनह 8.15 नन ननह 7.55 नन ननह 7.45 नन नननननन



हतप्रभ करने वाला है इस सनातन सेवक का महाप्रयाण

अयोध्या अमावा मंदिर के सदस्य किशोर कुणाल का निधन बहुत बड़ी क्षति है। श्री अयोध्या जी के महंत श्री जयराम दास जी कहते हैं कि अभी कल ही किशोर जी से 15 मिनट तक बात हुई थी। सब ठीक था। कोई परेशानी नहीं थी। उसके अगले दिन निधन की सूचना आई, विश्वास भी नहीं हो रहा। यह सर्वविदित है कि श्रीराम



जन्मभूमि मंदिर के निकट अमावा मंदिर में कई वर्ष से जो नि:शुल्क भोजन प्रसाद की व्यवस्था चल रही है, वह पटना के महावीर मंदिर ट्रस्ट से ही जुड़ी है, जिसकी व्यवस्था कुणाल किशोर देखते थे। बिहार राज्य से भारतीय पुलिस सेवा के पूर्व अधिकारी थे। अपने पुलिस करियर के दौरान उन्हें अयोध्या विवाद पर विश्व हिंदू परिषद और बाबरी मस्जिद एक्शन कमेटी के बीच मध्यस्थता करने के लिए तत्कालीन प्रधानमंत्री वीपी सिंह द्वारा विशेष कार्य अधिकारी (अयोध्या) के रूप में नियुक्त किया गया था। उन्होंने चंद्रशेखर और पोंवी नरसिम्हा राव के प्रधानमंत्रित्व काल के दौरान इस पद पर काम करना जारी रखा, किंतु विचारधारा की विसंगति के कारण बात बन नहीं पाई। किशोर कुणाल का जन्म 10 अगस्त 1950 को एक भूमिहार ब्राह्मण परिवार में हुआ था। उनकी स्कूली शिक्षा मुजफ्फरपुर जिले के बररुग गांव में हुई। फिर उन्होंने पटना विश्वविद्यालय में इतिहास और संस्कृत का अध्ययन किया। 1970 में स्नातक की उपाधि प्राप्त की। बाद में अपने करियर के मध्य में उन्होंने मास्टर डिग्री के लिए भी अध्ययन किया, जिसे उन्होंने 1983 में प्राप्त किया। उनके शिक्षकों में इतिहासकार आरएस शर्मा और डीएन झा शामिल थे । 1972 में कुणाल गुजरात कैडर में भारतीय पुलिस सेवा के अधिकारी बन गए। उनकी पहली पोस्टिंग आणंद में पुलिस अधीक्षक के रूप में हुई। 1978 तक वे अहमदाबाद के पुलिस उपायुक्त बन गए। 1983 में अपने मास्टर की पढ़ाई पूरी करने के बाद कुणाल को पटना में वरिष्ठ पुलिस अधीक्षक नियुक्त किया गया। चर्चित बॉबी हत्याकांड उनके जीवन का एक ऐसा मोड़ था, जहां से उनकी दिशा बदल गई। 2001 में कुणाल ने स्वेच्छा से भारतीय पुलिस सेवा से इस्तीफा दे दिया। सेवानिवृत्ति के बाद उन्होंने बिहार राज्य धार्मिक न्यास बोर्ड और अधक्ष के रूप में कार्य किया। कुणाल महावीर मंदिर ट्रस्ट, पटना के सचिव भी रहे और इससे पहले महावीर आरोग्य संस्थान के सचिव थे, जिसमें वे गरीबों के लिए स्वास्थ्य सेवा में सुधार से जुड़े थे। उन्होंने पटना में ज्ञान निकेतन स्कूल की भी स्थापना की। वीपी सिंह की सरकार ने अयोध्या विवाद को संभालने के लिए गृह राज्य मंत्री के नेतृत्व में 1990 में एक 'अयोध्या सेल' की स्थापना की। कुणाल को इसके कामकाज में सहायता के लिए 'विशेष कर्तव्य पर अधिकारी' नियुक्त किया गया था। यह सेल चंद्रशेखर की सरकार (नवंबर 1990-मार्च 1991) के तहत जारी रहा, उस दौरान राजीव गांधी ने सुझाव दिया कि अयोध्या मुद्दे को तय करने के लिए ऐतिहासिक और पुरातात्विक साक्ष्यों को ध्यान में रखा जाना चाहिए। विश्व हिंदू परिषद (वीएचपी) और बाबरी मस्जिद एक्शन कमेटी (बीएमसी) के प्रतिनिधियों ने अयोध्या सेल के बैनर तले मुलाकात की और अपने-अपने सबूतों का आदान-प्रदान करने का फैसला किया। कुणाल ने कहा कि उन्होंने प्रस्तुत साक्ष्य को भारतीय ऐतिहासिक अनुसंधान परिषद (आईसीएचआर) के अध्यक्ष, भारतीय पुरातत्व सर्वेक्षण (एसएसआई) के महानिदेशक और अभिलेखागार के महानिदेशक को सत्यापन और रिपोर्ट प्रस्तुत करने के लिए भेज दिया। बीएमएससी द्वारा नामित चार प्रमुख इतिहासकारों- आरएस शर्मा , सुरजभान, एम. अतहर अली और डीएन झा ने वीएचपी के साक्ष्य की जांच के लिए छह सप्ताह का समय मांगा। वीएचपी इस मांग से सहमत नहीं हुई। इसके बाद वार्ता समारंभ हो गई। कुणाल ने बाद में दोनों पक्षों द्वारा प्रस्तुत साक्ष्यों और अन्य साक्ष्यों का अपना विश्लेषण प्रकाशित किया, जिसे उन्होंने स्वयं खोजा, जिसका शीर्षक अयोध्या रिविजिटेड था। हालांकि कुणाल जी के अयोध्या प्रमाण में अनेक विसंगतियाँ हैं, जिन्हें स्वीकार नहीं किया गया। कुणाल किशोर पटना के महावीर मंदिर के सचिव थे। उनके सचिव रहते महावीर मंदिर का जीर्णोद्धार कार्य 30 अक्टूबर 1983 को शुरू हुआ और इसका उद्घाटन 4 मार्च 1985 को हुआ। राज्यपाल आरएस गव्ह ने कहा था कि महावीर मंदिर एक आदर्श धार्मिक ट्रस्ट है और देश के अन्य ट्रस्टों को भी इसका अनुकरण करना चाहिए। महावीर ट्रस्ट ने बाद में महावीर कैसर संस्थान की स्थापना की। समिति कंकड़बाग में महावीर आरोग्य संस्थान नामक एक अन्य अस्पताल भी चलाती है और इसके परिसर में महावीर नेत्रालय की स्थापना की गई है, जो आंखों की समस्याओं से पीड़ित लोगों की जरूरतों को पूरा करता है। मंदिर ट्रस्ट ने पहले ही चार बड़े अस्पताल स्थापित किए हैं और जरूरतमंद लोगों को वित्तीय सहायता प्रदान करता है। वह गुप्त युग (343 ई.) से संबंधित और कैमूर पहाड़ियों में स्थित पूर्वी क्षेत्र में 'सबसे पुराना' जीवित मंदिर के वैष्णो देवी मंदिर की तरह एक पूर्ण तीर्थस्थल के रूप में भी विकसित किया गया है, जिसमें शयनश्रृंग, विश्राम कक्ष, रसोई और कुशल परिवहन प्रणाली जैसी कई सुविधाएं हैं। मंदिर की विकास योजनाओं के हिस्से के रूप में, ढाई एकड़ में एक 'विवाह' मंडप का निर्माण हुआ है।

मनमोहन का स्मारक तो सही, नरसिम्हा राव का कब बनेगा



जितेंद्र तिवारी

चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ अनिल चौहान सहित सेना के तीनों अंगों के प्रमुखों की उपस्थिति में पूर्ण सैन्य सम्मान के साथ और 21 तोपों की सलामी देकर पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री के प्रति सम्मान प्रकट किया गया। कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेताओं और गांधी परिवार की उपस्थिति का यहां इसलिए उल्लेख करना अनावश्यक है, क्योंकि उन्हें तो उपस्थित रहना ही था। कौन नहीं जानता कि एक बेहद ईमानदार छवि वाले और पूर्ण सादगी से जीवन जीने वाले मनमोहन सिंह के कार्यकाल में ही देश में सबसे ज्यादा घपले-घोटाले सामने आए थे। यह बात सही है कि मनमोहन सिंह एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर थे। वे कैसे प्रधानमंत्री बने, वह एक अलग कहानी है। हां, पर वे पहले एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर (प्रधानमंत्री) नहीं थे। सही मायने में राजीव गांधी पहले एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर थे। उसके बाद चंद्रशेखर, एचडी देवेगौड़ा, इंद्र कुमार गुजराल और डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह को इसी श्रेणी में रखा जाना चाहिए। वैसे, किसी दिवंगत व्यक्तित्व की कठोर आलोचना टीका नहीं होती। पर वस्तुतः डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह राजनीतिक व्यक्ति नहीं थे। जो इतिहास है, वह यह लिखा जाएगा कि डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह बड़े अर्थशास्त्री, विचारक, शिक्षक और एक समर्पित नौकरशाह थे।

पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह का 28 दिसंबर को दिल्ली के निगम बोध घाट पर अंतिम संस्कार संपन्न हुआ। डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह को जिस भव्यता के साथ विदा किया गया, वे वास्तव में उसके अधिकारी थे। देश की राष्ट्रपति द्रौपदी मुर्मू, उपराष्ट्रपति जगदीप धनखड़, प्रधानमंत्री नरेंद्र मोदी और उनके मंत्रिमंडल के वरिष्ठ सहयोगी राजनाथ सिंह और अमित शाह सहित अनेक केंद्रीय मंत्री पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री के अंतिम संस्कार के समय उपस्थित रहे। चीफ ऑफ डिफेंस स्टाफ अनिल चौहान सहित सेना के तीनों अंगों के प्रमुखों की उपस्थिति में पूर्ण सैन्य सम्मान के साथ और 21 तोपों की सलामी देकर पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री के प्रति सम्मान प्रकट किया गया। कांग्रेस के वरिष्ठ नेताओं और गांधी परिवार की उपस्थिति का यहां इसलिए उल्लेख करना अनावश्यक है, क्योंकि उन्हें तो उपस्थित रहना ही था। कौन नहीं जानता कि एक बेहद ईमानदार छवि वाले और पूर्ण सादगी से जीवन जीने वाले मनमोहन सिंह के कार्यकाल में ही देश में सबसे ज्यादा घपले-घोटाले सामने आए थे। यह बात सही है कि मनमोहन सिंह एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर थे। वे कैसे प्रधानमंत्री बने, वह एक अलग कहानी है। हां, पर वे पहले एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर (प्रधानमंत्री) नहीं थे। सही मायने में राजीव गांधी पहले एक्सिडेंटल प्राइम मिनिस्टर थे। उसके बाद चंद्रशेखर, एचडी देवेगौड़ा, इंद्र कुमार गुजराल और डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह को इसी श्रेणी में रखा जाना चाहिए। वैसे, किसी दिवंगत व्यक्तित्व की कठोर आलोचना टीका नहीं होती। पर वस्तुतः डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह राजनीतिक व्यक्ति नहीं थे। जो इतिहास है, वह यह लिखा जाएगा कि डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह बड़े अर्थशास्त्री, विचारक, शिक्षक और



एक समर्पित नौकरशाह थे। इसीलिए सोनिया गांधी के संवैधानिक कारणों से प्रधानमंत्री न बन पाने और उसे त्याग प्रचारित कर मनमोहन सिंह का चुनाव किया। सरकार के ऊपर नेशनल एडवाइजरी कमेटी बनाकर जैसे देश का शासन सोनिया परिवार ने पदों के पीछे से चलाया, वह भारत की राजनीति में कभी नहीं हुआ था। डॉ. मनमोहन सिंह के कार्यकाल में हुए टूजी, श्रीजी, कोयला, एशियन गेम्स आदि घोटालों की लंबी फेहरिस्त को दोहराने की आवश्यकता नहीं। मनमोहन सिंह की साफ-सुथरी छवि को सामने रखकर कांग्रेसियों ने घपले-घोटालों का ऐसा दौर चलाया कि जनता खुद ही जंतर-मंतर पर जुटने लगी और कुछ नौसिखियों ने उन्हें भुना लिया। यह अलग बात है कि आज वे उसी भ्रष्टाचार के दलदल में डूबे दिल्ली व पंजाब की सत्ता पर काबिज हैं। उस दौर में प्रधानमंत्री के हस्ताक्षर होने से पहले सरकारी फाइलें सोनिया गांधी तक जाती थीं, यह एक ओपेन सीक्रेट है। इतना ही नहीं, कांग्रेस के युवराज कहे जाने वाले राहुल गांधी ने मनमोहन सिंह के मंत्रिमंडल द्वारा पारित एक प्रस्ताव को दिल्ली के प्रेस क्लब में आकर जैसे फाड़ा, वैसा अपमान आज तक देश के किसी प्रधानमंत्री का नहीं हुआ होगा। वह ऐसा

तत्कालीन राष्ट्रपति एपीजे अब्दुल कलाम उनके संस्कार में सम्मिलित नहीं हो सके थे। प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी का विषय अलग है। उनका निधन तब हुआ, जब उनके द्वारा रोपे गए बीज से बना विशाल वृक्ष देश की सत्ता पर आसीन था और उनके सहचरी ही सत्ता को संचालित कर रहे थे। इतना सम्मान दिए जाने के बाद भी कांग्रेस स्मारक बनाने की आड़ में मनमोहन सिंह का एक और अपमान कराने का कारण बनी है। स्मारक का विवाद इसीलिए खड़ा किया गया है, यह जानते हुए भी कि उसकी एक प्रक्रिया है। इस सबके बीच एक पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री का नाम और चर्चा में आ गया- पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री नरसिम्हा राव। वे देश के पहले ऐसे प्रधानमंत्री हैं, जिन्हें देश की राजधानी में दो गज जमीन तक तो छोड़िए, अंतिम संस्कार का भी अवसर नहीं दिया गया और न ही सैन्य सम्मान। 2004 में जब उनका निधन हुआ, तब उनकी ही पार्टी कांग्रेस की सरकार केंद्र में सत्तारूढ़ थी और मनमोहन सिंह जो प्रधानमंत्री थे। जो सोनिया परिवार आज मनमोहन सिंह के लिए स्मारक की मांग कर रहा है, उसने अपने ही नेता नरसिम्हा राव के लिए कांग्रेस मुख्यालय के दरवाजे तक नहीं खोले थे। राव की पार्थिव देह 10 अक्तबर रोड स्थित कांग्रेस मुख्यालय के बाहर एंबुलेंस में आधे घंटे तक पड़ी रही पर उसे भीतर लाने की इजाजत नहीं दी गई। फिर राव के परिवारों पर यह दबाव बनाया गया कि वे यह बयान दें कि वे अपने पिताजी का अंतिम संस्कार हैदराबाद में करेंगे। यह बयान भी इस शर्त पर दिलवाया गया था कि यदि वे ऐसा करते हैं तो दिल्ली में नरसिम्हा राव की स्मृति में एक स्मारक बनाया जाएगा। इसके बाद प्रतीकात्मक तौर पर मनमोहन सिंह और सोनिया गांधी समेत कुछ लोगों ने एंबुलेंस में पुष्पजलि अर्पित कर उसे हवाई अड्डे के लिए रवाना

कर दिया गया। ऐसा क्यों किया गया, उसका एक कारण है, पर इसी में छिपा कांग्रेसी संस्कार है। यही कांग्रेसी संस्कार पूर्व राष्ट्रपति प्रणब मुखर्जी के लिए भी प्रकट किया गया। जीवन भर कांग्रेसी रहे प्रणब दा के निधन पर कांग्रेस कार्यमिति द्वारा शोक प्रस्ताव न किए जाने को उनकी बेटी शर्मिष्ठा मुखर्जी जी सामने लेकर आई हैं। वहां, भारतीय जनता पार्टी जिस विचारधारा और संस्कारों को साथ लेकर चली और बढ़ी है, उसमें राजनीतिक विरोध को अपसृश्यता के स्तर तक नहीं स्वीकार किया जाता। यही कारण है कि मोदी सरकार ने पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री के अंतिम संस्कार और सम्मान में कोई कोर कसर नहीं रखी। यह पहला मौका था, जब किसी राष्ट्रपति ने निगमबोध घाट पर जाकर श्रद्धा सुमन अर्पित किए हों। प्रोटोकॉल में यह आवश्यक नहीं था। राष्ट्रपति चाहतीं तो उनके आवास पर जाकर पुष्पजलि कर सकती थीं। पर राजनीतिक विरोध और पक्ष-विपक्ष को नजरंदाज कर मोदी सरकार ने एक बड़ा संदेश दिया है। जहां तक स्मारक बनाने वाले स्थल पर ही अंतिम संस्कार का सवाल है, तो यह जानना जरूरी है कि अब राजघाट के आसपास का स्थान इसके लिए एक नियम के अनुसार ही आवंटित किया जा सकता है। पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री अटल बिहारी वाजपेयी के निधन के बाद भी पार्टी की ओर से तत्काल अटल स्मारक न्यास गठित किया गया, जहां उनका अंतिम संस्कार किया गया और जहां आज अटल सदैव स्मारक है, उसके लिए भाजपा ने एक प्रक्रिया का पालन कर जमीन का भुगतान किया है। कांग्रेस भी जब अपने किसी नेता के नाम पर स्मारक बनाकर सरकार से जमीन के लिए आवेदन करेगी, उसे मिल जाएगी, पर कांग्रेस को पहले यह तो बताना ही होगा कि वह पूर्व प्रधानमंत्री नरसिम्हा राव का स्मारक कब बनवाएगी।

बेहद रोचक है हेमलता के गायन सफर की दास्तान

1970-80 का दशक हिंदी सिनेमा में अनेक बदलाव लेकर आया था। मध्यम वर्ग को प्रमुख रूप से चित्रित करती फिल्मों के इस दौर में अपने मध्यवर्गीय अनुभवों के साथ कई नए निर्देशक, सितारे, संगीतकार और गायक भी सामने आए। मध्यम वर्गीय परिवार से आई एक गायिका हेमलता ने भी इस दौर में अपनी पहचान बनाई। अपने प्रेम और भक्ति गीतों के लिए प्रसिद्ध हुई हेमलता ने लक्ष्मीकांत-प्यारेलाल, कल्याण जी-आनंद जी जैसे दिग्गज संगीतकारों के साथ तो काम किया ही, लेकिन रविंद्र जैन और उषा खन्ना के साथ उन्होंने सबसे ज्यादा गाने गाए। 'अखियों के झरोखों से, मैंने देखा जो सांवेरे', 'कौन दिशा में लेके चला रे बटोहिया', 'तू इस तरह से मेरी जिंदगी में शामिल है', 'तू जो मेरे सूर में सूर मिला ले, संग गा ले', 'मेघा ओ रे मेघा, तू तो जाए देश-विदेश', 'जब दीप जले आना, जब शाम ढले आना' जैसे उनके गीत आज भी गीत-संगीत प्रेमियों में बेहद लोकप्रिय हैं। हेमलता के जीवन के अनेक अहम पहलुओं को सामने लाती एक महत्वपूर्ण पुस्तक 'दास्तान-ए-हेमलता' हाल ही में सर्वभाषा ट्रस्ट से आई है, जिसके लेखक हैं वरिष्ठ पत्रकार डॉ. अरविंद यादव। पुस्तक में हेमलता के बचपन से लेकर उनकी सफलता तक की अनेक प्रामाणिक और रोचक जानकारीयां हैं। हेमलता का जन्म 16 अगस्त 1954 को हैदराबाद में हुआ। उनके पिता जयचंद भट्ट ने अपने लाल, कल्याण जी-आनंद जी। शास्त्रीय संगीत की स्वर लहरियों के बीच ही उनका लालन-पालन हुआ। बाद में जयचंद भट्ट मद्रास विश्वविद्यालय में म्यूजिक के आचार्य बने तो परिवार मद्रास आ गया। छुट्टियों में हेमलता अपनी निहाल गीतियां जातीं, जहां उन्हें भरपूर प्यार और आजादी मिलती। यहाँ वे रेडियो तो सुनती ही, फिल्में भी खूब देखतीं। उन्हें फिल्में के गाने तुरंत याद हो जाते, खासतौर पर लता मंगेशकर के गीत, जो उन्हें बेहद अच्छे लगते

थे। नानी भी जब-तब उनसे लताजी के गीत सुनतीं। एक गीत दिल अपना और प्रीत पराई तो बार- बार सुनतीं। नानी के साथ ही गोंदिया के लोग भी उन्हें 'लता' कहकर बुलाने लगे थे। कुछ दिनों के बाद उनका परिवार कलकत्ता चला आया। उनके पिता विद्यार्थियों को संगीत सिखाते तो नन्हीं हेमलता भी अपने पिता की नकल करती। तब तक पिता हेमलता को नहीं सिखा रहे थे, जब उनके शिष्य गोपाल मल्लिक ने अपने गुरु को आश्चर्यचकित करने और हेमलता की प्रतिभा को सबके सामने लाने का एक साहसी प्रयास किया। रंजीत स्टुडियो में आयोजित एक भव्य संगीत समारोह में, जिसमें लता मंगेशकर, उषा मंगेशकर, सुधीर सेन, हेमंत कुमार, संध्या मुखर्जी जैसे बड़े-बड़े कलाकार भाग ले रहे थे, उसमें हेमलता को बेबी लता के नाम से गाने का मौका दिया गया। बिना पिता जयचंद को बताए उन्हें भी इस समारोह में आमंत्रित किया गया। सात वर्ष की

हेमलता की आवाज और उनका आत्मविश्वास डेढ़ लाख दर्शकों को इतना पसंद आया कि वंस मोर... वंस मोर... के शोर के बीच हेमलता की पात्रा चल में रहने का इंतजाम भी कराया। इस बीच नौशाद ने भी हेमलता को सुना और उन्हें पांच साल के लिए अनुबंधित कर लिया केवल अपने साथ गाने के लिए। यह बात अखबारों में आ गई और बंबई में एक नई गायिका के आने का हल्ला हो गया। कई बड़े संगीतकार हेमलता से मिलने आने लगे। एक दिन लक्ष्मीकांत-प्यारेलाल ने स्टूडियो बुलाकर कुछ लाइव हेमलता से गवाई और अगले दिन ताड़देव फेमस रिकॉर्डिंग स्टूडियो में आने को कहा। पिता और बेटी दोनों अगले दिन जब वहां पहुंचे तो पता चला उन्हें वहां रिकॉर्डिंग के लिए बुलाया गया है तो दोनों नौशाद के कॉन्ट्रैक्ट को याद करके बाहर से ही वापस आ गए। अगले दिन वह जानकर कि उन्हें लता मंगेशकर जी के साथ गाना था, जो काफी

देर इंतजार करके वहां से गईं, दोनों को बेहद दुख हुआ और उन्होंने नौशाद से कॉन्ट्रैक्ट तोड़ दिया। पहला गाना उन्हें उषा खन्ना के साथ मिला। फिल्म थी एक फूल एक भूल और गाना था दस पैसे में राम ले लो। अब मानो हेमलता के संघर्ष के दिन खत्म होने वाले थे। गाना खत्म होने के कुछ मिनटों के बाद ही कल्याण जी-आनंद जी का उसी स्टूडियो में रुकने का संदेश आया। दूसरा गाना उन्होंने मुकेश जी के साथ रिकॉर्ड किया। गाने के बोल थे ले चल ले चल मेरे जीवन साथी। फिल्म थी विश्वास। अगले ही दिन इसी फिल्म का एक और गीत रिकॉर्ड हुआ, जिसमें उनके साथ थे मुकेश, महेंद्र कपूर। गीत के बोले थे- ढोल बजा, ढोल ढोल जानिये। इसके बाद हेमलता को फिल्म इंडस्ट्री में काम मिलने लगा। आशीर्वाद, ज्योति, माता महाकाली, रूप रुपैया जैसी अनेक फिल्मों के लिए उन्होंने गाया। इस समय उनकी उम्र मात्र चौदह वर्ष की थी।

2025 में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था को मिलेगी मजबूती

भारतीय राजनीतिक चुनौतियों से उत्पन्न आपूर्ति श्रृंखला और कच्चे तेल के दामों में आई तेजी के बावजूद भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था 2024 में विश्व की सबसे तेज बढ़ने वाली अर्थव्यवस्था बनी रही है। तकनीकी प्रगति, प्रौद्योगिकी, बैंकिंग, नवीकरणीय ऊर्जा और आत्मनिर्भर भारत जैसे नीतिगत उपायों से भारत वैश्विक आर्थिक क्षेत्र में एक प्रमुख खिलाड़ी के रूप में अपनी स्थिति को मजबूत रखने में सफल रहा है। मजबूत विदेशी मुद्रा भंडार और विदेशी निवेश के रिकॉर्ड प्रवाह ने भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था के लिए इंजन का कार्य किया है, तो बढ़ती मुद्रास्फीति, घटता उपभोग, वित्तीय ऋण और जीडीपी वृद्धि पूर्वानुमानों में कमी ने बड़ी चिंताएं भी पैदा की हैं। 2047 तक भारत को विकसित राष्ट्र का दर्जा दिलाने की दिशा में आगे बढ़ने के लिए वर्तमान आर्थिक स्थितियों में वर्ष 2025 की रणनीतियों पर ध्यान केंद्रित करना होगा। निवेश, उपभोग और ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में होने वाले सुधार वर्ष 2025 में भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था का मजबूत आधार तैयार करेंगे। दुनिया में सबसे अधिक आबादी वाला देश होने के कारण वर्ष 2025 में भी घरेलू मांग में मजबूत निरंतरता बनी रहेगी। शहरी के साथ-साथ ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों की मांग में भी सकारात्मक रुझान दिखाई दे रहा है। जून 2024 में भारत की जीडीपी में निजी अंतिम उपभोग व्यय 57.9 प्रतिशत से बढ़कर 60.4 प्रतिशत हो गया।

ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में उपभोक्ता वस्तुओं की मांग 2.2 प्रतिशत से बढ़कर 2023 में 6.2 प्रतिशत हो गई। सांख्यिकी मंत्रालय के अनुसार मासिक प्रति व्यक्ति व्यय में शहरी-ग्रामीण अंतर वित्त 2011-12 में 84 प्रतिशत से घटकर 2022-23 में 71 प्रतिशत हो गया। यह 2023-24 में और घटकर 70 प्रतिशत हो गया। ग्रामीण क्षेत्रों में उपभोग वृद्धि से ग्रामीण और शहरी दोनों क्षेत्रों में असमानता कम हुई है। चालू वित्त वर्ष की दूसरी तिमाही यानी जुलाई-सितंबर में आम चुनावों के कारण भारतीय अर्थव्यवस्था में 5.4 प्रतिशत की वृद्धि हुई, जो पहली तिमाही की 6.7 प्रतिशत वृद्धि के मुकाबले धीमी है। तीसरी तिमाही में अर्थव्यवस्था पुनः बढ़ने का अनुमान है। क्रिसिल की नवीनतम रिपोर्ट के अनुसार, चालू वित्त वर्ष 2024-25 में भारत की वृद्धि दर 6.5 प्रतिशत से सात प्रतिशत के बीच रह सकती है। इसका प्रमुख कारण यह है कि भारत के पास अभी कार्यशील युवाओं की सबसे बड़ी फौज है। 125 से 54 आयु वर्ग की महिलाओं के बीच श्रम बल भागीदारी दर में भी वृद्धि हुई है। हालांकि उत्पादन आधारित प्रोत्साहन योजना और मेक इन इंडिया अभियान सहित अनेक सरकारी प्रोत्साहनों के बावजूद विनिर्माण क्षेत्र अपेक्षित लाभ लेने में सफल नहीं रहा है। इसके लिए विनिर्माण क्षेत्र की दीर्घकालिक प्रकृति पर अधिक ध्यान देते हुए संरचनात्मक सुधारों की दिशा में बढ़ना होगा।

खतरनाक होता आसमान

कजाकिस्तानी शहर अकतौऊ के पास अजरबैजान के यात्री विमान दुर्घटनाग्रस्त होने से 38 लोगों की मौत हो गई। इस दुर्घटना ने रूस-यूक्रेन संघर्ष क्षेत्र के ऊपर से उड़ान भरने के दौरान आने वाले खतरों को पुनः सामने ला दिया है। एफ्रेवर 190 बाकू से रूस के ग्रेजनी जा रहा था, तभी इसने रास्ता बदला और अकतौऊ से कुछ किलोमीटर की दूरी पर इमरजेंसी लैंडिंग को कोशिश की। शुरूआती आश्ंकाएं चिड़िया से टकराने के इर्द-गिर्द केंद्रित थीं, लेकिन सरकारी और मीडिया रिपोर्टों में यह बात लगातार जोर पकड़ने लगी कि विमान पर एक गलत रूसी एंटी ड्रोन हमला हुआ। विमान में हुए छेद और ऑक्सीजन मास्कों का बाहर आना दबाव में आई गिरावट (डिप्रेशराइजेशन) का संकेत हो सकता है। हमले के बाद भी हवाई जहाज उड़ता रहा और उसने पूरब की ओर लगभग 300 मील की सीधी दूरी तय करते हुए आखिरकार कैस्पियन सागर पार कर लिया। रिपोर्टों में विमान की निर्वंत्रण प्रणाली क्षतिग्रस्त होने की बात कही गई है, जो शायद उसके इस अजीबो-गरीब उड़ान पथ की वजह हो सकती है। उनमें क्षतिग्रस्त हवाई जहाज को उतरने की इजाजत से इनकार किए जाने की बात भी कही गई है। हालांकि मानदंड क्षतिग्रस्त नागरिक विमान को नजदीक में कहीं भी उतरने की इजाजत देते हैं। कॉकपिट वॉक्स रिकॉर्डर और डिजिटल फ्लाइट डेटा रिकॉर्डर बरामद हो गए हैं, जिससे काफी जानकारी सामने आएगी। अजरबैजान के पास इस उड़ान पर संभ्रुता है और ब्राजीलियाई विनिर्माता एफ्रेवर भी उस बहु हितधारक जांच में एक पक्ष होगा, जो हादसे की वजह और पूरे घटनाक्रम के साथ-साथ यह भी उजागर करेगी कि क्या और कैसे उड़ान की नियंत्रण प्रणाली प्रभावित हुई। यह इस और भी इशारा करेगी कि इसमें हवाई और ड्रोन रक्षा में इस्तेमाल होने वाली जैमिंग प्रणालियों की क्या भूमिका थी।

Social Media Corner

सब के हक में...

महाकुम्भ-2025, प्रयागराज की तैयारियों के दृष्टिगत आग तीर्थराज प्रयाग में विभिन्न घाटों का निरीक्षण किया तथा संबंधित अधिकारियों को आवश्यक दिशा-निर्देश दिए। धर्म, अध्यात्म और संस्कृति के महासमामग, महाकुम्भ के सफल आयोजन हेतु डबल इंजन सरकार प्रतिबद्ध है। आइए, एकता के इस पावन महायज्ञ में सहभागी बनें!

(यूपी के सीएम योगी आदित्यनाथ का 'एक्स' पर पोस्ट)

झारखंड में बेरोजगारी आसमान छू रही है। बेरोजगारी कम करने के लिए मुख्यमंत्री रोजगार सृजन योजना की शुरुआत की गई थी। लेकिन यह योजना केवल कामगों पर ही सीमित रह गई है। वित्तीय वर्ष 2024-25 में, गिरिडीह जिले के 416 लोगों ने रोजगार के लिए आवेदन किया, लेकिन एक भी व्यक्ति को ऋण स्वीकृत नहीं हुआ। मुख्यमंत्री हेमंत सोरेन जी, सिर्फ कागजी घोषणाओं से जनता का पेट नहीं भरता। वादे करना आसान है, लेकिन असली चुनौती उन्हें धरातल पर लागू करना है। राज्य के लाखों युवा बेरोजगारी का दर्श झेल रहे हैं। अपनी घोषणाओं को कागजों से बाहर निकालकर रोजगार के पर्याप्त अवसर सृजित करिए।

(पूर्व सीएम बाबूलाल मरांडी का 'एक्स' पर पोस्ट)

Black swans that have shaken West Asia

BLACK swans, says Nassim Nicholas Taleb in his classic 2007 book, are highly improbable events that have a high impact and where we cover our shock by concocting post-facto explanations. Applied to his native West Asia, the last 15 months have seen the appearance of more than one black swan and the high impact of each is still working its way through the region's fault lines.

The massive terror attack launched by Hamas on October 7, 2023, was a black swan event that initially cracked the legend of Israel's invincibility. The heavy loss of life and abduction of over 250 citizens inflicted a collective sense of trauma on the Jewish state, accompanied by a reckoning that retribution alone could restore its sense of security. That retribution has led to over 45,000 dead Palestinians in Gaza, some 70 per cent of them women and children.

And yet, the bloodlust continues. Every day, day after day. Social media posts by Israeli soldiers, politicians and news anchors gloating over the orgy of death and destruction point to a stunning loss of humanity in people whose own sense of history should have made them more sensitive to the sheer injustice of collective punishment.

On the Arab street, October 7 was seen as a possible game-changer, an end to a debilitating status quo and a hope that the Iran-led Axis of Resistance would seize the opportunity and that Hezbollah and Hamas would inflict enough damage on Israel to bring it to the negotiating table. They clearly hadn't anticipated Israel's willingness to use overwhelming and completely disproportionate force in the densely populated civilian areas of Gaza, nor its assassination of Hamas, Hezbollah leaders and even of Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, nor the impotence of the international community to enforce a ceasefire. The killing of Ismail Haniyeh in an Iranian safe-house in Tehran, of Hassan Nasrallah in a basement in Beirut and the simultaneous detonation of thousands of paggers used by Hezbollah cadres were mini black swans in their own right. The fear of Israel's defence and intelligence capabilities was restored and the lack of a damaging response from Iran dashed any wishful thinking that October 7 might lead to a Palestinian state. Israel's pursuit of retribution has been accompanied by a cavalier disregard of international humanitarian law. Judges at the International Criminal Court have issued arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for war crimes, including starvation, murder, targeting of civilians and persecution. The International Court of Justice has also held Israel's continued occupation of Gaza, the West Bank and east Jerusalem to be completely illegal.

Israeli's strident defiance of these rulings has been matched by the Biden administration's staunch defence of its principal ally in West Asia even as Trump 2.0 threatens sanctions against these international organisations for their temerity in citing the rule of law. For many in the Global South, the West's contrasting reactions to Ukraine and Gaza mark a fitting requiem to the rules-based international order. The improbable evisceration of Hezbollah and diminution of Iran's bluster has also had a high impact in Israel's immediate neighbourhood. To Israel's north, Hezbollah often acted as a state within a state and the fading of its dark shadow opens the possibility of Lebanon becoming a more normal state, something that its beleaguered citizens have yearned for decades.

And, in Syria, the sudden weakening of Hezbollah and Iran created an equally improbable opportunity for Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). The HTS moved out of its stronghold in Idlib, took the Aleppo, Hama, Homs and Damascus cities in barely a week and toppled the hated Assad dynasty that had ruled Syria with an iron fist for over five decades. The euphoria over the unexpected flight of Bashar al-Assad to Moscow among ordinary Syrians, however, is tempered by the unsavoury antecedents of Ahmed al-Sharaa. The HTS leader was closely affiliated with al-Qaeda and there are legitimate questions about the extent to which his jihadi tendencies were merely a youthful indiscretion.

Syrian crisis gives Islamic State a window of opportunity

The al-Sharaa government must ensure that the ISIS does not make a comeback.

REGIME change in any country, achieved not through parliamentary elections, introduces considerable instability in the region. This is worrisome to its neighbours, like what happened in Bangladesh. It is more so in Syria, a classic example of “ungoverned territory” or “failed state”, as defined by American think tank RAND in 2007. The characteristics of a “failed state” are low-level administrative penetration into its territory, a lack of monopoly on the use of force by permitting illegal armed groups, the absence of effective controls on its land and sea borders, thus allowing influence by undesirable foreign elements. Syria has been welcoming foreign terrorists for years, much before the start of the Syrian Civil War, which began in 2011.

From the 1960s, Syria allowed terrorists like Abu Nidal, Nazar Mansur Hindawi and George Habash to freely operate from its land. On December 18, 1985, Abu Nidal claimed to a French paper, ‘Jeune Afrique’, that he was helping French covert group Action Directe, Basque separatist group ETA, Irish Republican Army and Baader-Meinhof gang. Abu Nidal was expelled from Syria only in 1987, under US pressure. Consequently, the Syrian government could not help other states, even if they wanted, in hostage rescue from their territory. The Washington Post (July 18, 1986) reported Syrian Vice-President Abdul Halim Khaddam admitting to American and French leaders, with whom he had good relations, that he could not help rescue American and French hostages kidnapped by local extremists as “they were being held in a region outside Syrian control”. In 2005, Khaddam exiled himself to Paris due to differences with Bashar al-Assad.

Even with this inconstancy, Syria tried to take care of Western sensitivities while offering sanctuary to terrorists, as in the case of notorious mercenary Carlos the Jackal (Ilich Ramirez Sánchez) by forcing him to be inactive when Hungary expelled him in 1985. However, it expelled him in 1991 when he showed signs of joining Iraq's covert operations against America as Syria had opposed Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait.

Syria's alignment with American security policy continued during the post-9/11 period, although in that process it received considerable flak from human rights organisations. Diplomatically, Syria openly opposed Saddam. To quote noted Middle

East scholar Shibley Telhami of Brookings, Syria “surprised many by supporting UN Resolution 1441 demanding immediate Iraqi compliance with previous UN resolutions”.

Covertly, Syria helped the CIA deal with terrorists suspected to be involved in the 9/11 attacks. The Canadian Justice Dennis O'Connor Commission report (2004-05) on the “extraordinary rendition” of Maher Arar, a Canadian citizen of Syrian origin, to Syria on the CIA's initiative and his harsh interrogation and incarceration by Syrian agencies for one year is an example of covert intelligence cooperation between the two countries.

All these factors should be kept in mind while assessing the long-term stability of the new



government under Ahmed al-Sharaa alias Abu Mohammed al-Jolani, leader of Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS). He was once the chief of ‘al-Nusra’, an al-Qaeda front. True, American officials are expressing a new comfort level, as is evident from the statements of US diplomats Barbara A Leaf and Roger D Carstens on December 20, which has led to the scrapping of a \$10-million reward for al-Sharaa's arrest. Apart from the possibility of future clashes with Turkey over the Kurds, who are supported by America, the new al-Sharaa government must ensure that the Islamic State (ISIS) does not make a comeback, not just in Syria but also the entire region. There is a view that some hardliners within the HTS are not yet reconciled in supporting the leadership's “more moderate and

pragmatic approach”. This is because some of the Chechen, Balkan and Central Asian jihadists are still among the HTS's rank and file. It is quite possible that ISIS “could seek to poach these militants and bring them into their fold”. The Soufan Centre, which has been mostly correct in the past in its assessments about the ISIS in that region, has flagged some scenarios in its brief dated December 18, 2024. It says: “The current environment in Syria is tailor-made for the Islamic State to exploit in an effort to help facilitate its comeback and resurgence, not just in the country but across the region”.

Firstly, it says that ISIS attacks in Syria alone had “tripled from last year” to about 700 for 2024. The ISIS has also improved “in sophistication, increased in lethality and become more dispersed geographically”. Secondly, it would take advantage of the intra-coalition (anti-Assad) fights between Turkey-backed Syrian National Army (SNA) and Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), a Kurdish militia backed by America.

Soufan says the Kurds came under attack in Kobani and Manbij, aided by Turkish drones and other military assets. It adds that in northern Syria, a tenuous ceasefire between the SNA and the Kurds is holding on. There are fears that the Kurds might lose Kobani, a “geographically and symbolically important” area. The SDF is also facing major challenges in Deir ez-Zor, with Sunni Arabs protesting against its rule in Raqqa and Al-Hasakah.

If Kurdish troops (SDF) are removed from guarding the prisons and detention centres, there is a strong possibility of the ISIS trying to strike, as it did between January 20 and 30, 2022, at Al-Hasakah prison. This was a spectacular attack by the ISIS after it lost territories in Syria in 2019. During this attack, 200 to 300 ISIS fighters broke into the security ring of 9,000 SDF soldiers, supported by the US and UK's air forces, and freed 400 prisoners using suicide bombers and weapons. This fight had given a great propaganda edge to the ISIS.

Soufan predicts that it will be to the advantage of the ISIS if the US decides to withdraw its forces, as announced by President-elect Donald Trump. In that case, the responsibility of propping up the al-Sharaa government will rest with Ankara. This view is endorsed by BBC's Orla Guerin.

Migration slowing

States should fine-tune policies accordingly

DOMESTIC migration is slowing in India, according to a working paper released recently by the Economic Advisory Council to the Prime Minister. The total number of migrants in the country has dropped by 11.78 per cent as compared to the 2011 Census figure. This indicates that fewer people are travelling to other states in search of jobs as they are preferring to work in their own district or state. This trend is being attributed to improved economic avenues and infrastructure in areas from where high migration has traditionally been taking place.

West Bengal and Rajasthan have emerged as the new migrant destination hotspots, while Uttar Pradesh, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh also figure among the top five. It is apparent that states such as Punjab and Haryana — which have high stakes in the agricultural and industrial sectors — are not so attractive to migrants. This is partly due to tensions between locals and ‘outsiders’. Migrants would rather not



live and work in states where they might face hostility and discrimination. Policymakers need to understand the

ground reality, which has serious implications such as labour shortage and higher production costs.

Every state needs horses for courses to spur economic growth, and migrants come in handy when locals are reluctant to do unskilled work in particular. However, initiatives such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) and the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana have changed the demographic dynamics. It was MGNREGS that helped millions of workers stay afloat after they trudged back to their villages during the Covid-induced lockdown in 2020. And this reverse migration has not turned out to be a mere aberration. Various states must take this shift into consideration while framing or reviewing policies. The priority should be to maximise economic gains while ensuring social harmony.

Dr Singh faced criticism with grace

He was a shrewd player of other people's vanities, disarming them with effusive praise

I first met Manmohan Singh in 1981. As a reporter for Business Standard in Delhi, I had accompanied my bureau chief to meet the member-secretary of the Planning Commission. They were old friends, and as we sat on the sofa in the expansive office, my boss noticed that the leather upper of Dr Singh's well-polished shoe had a tear at the crease. Why don't you get new shoes, my bureau chief asked in friendly banter. Dr Singh's response was that with the savings from his last UN assignment, he had built a house for himself. Now he needed to save for getting his daughters married. Shortly afterwards, I visited another member of the Commission at his home. The distinguished scientist apologised for not being able to offer me a cup of tea. Sugar has become so expensive, he explained. Such were the times, when people even at the apex of the government lived modest lives on modest salaries in an economy known globally for poverty and domestically for shortages and controls of every kind. And such was the economy that Dr Singh released from controls in 1991. Producers now chase consumers, as they should. In truth, Dr Singh got more than his fair share of credit for what was done in 1991. As he himself once said in an interview, it was a team effort, and everyone — from the mostly unsung PV Narasimha Rao to his principal secretary AN Verma and others in the industry and commerce ministries — played their roles, including Yashwant Sinha, who as Finance Minister under Chandra Shekhar did the fire-fighting to stave off bankruptcy until the Rao government was sworn in. But there can be little doubt that the critical event signalling a new era for India was Dr Singh's 1991 Budget in which he quoted Victor Hugo to say that no power on earth could stop an idea whose time has come, and ended with the ringing words, “Let the whole world hear it loud and clear. India is now

awake. We shall prevail. We shall overcome.”

As though to balance things out, Dr Singh got more criticism than he perhaps deserved for some of the things that happened under his prime ministership. He had been dealt a very difficult hand: A rickety coalition government in which every partner did what it wanted, a government hamstrung by the need for support from obstructive Communists, a Cabinet in which many ministers owed their loyalty to Sonia Gandhi, not to the PM, and Mrs Gandhi herself who kept some of the reins in her hand and created a dyarchy. Dr Singh was in office, but not really in power or in full control.

In the end, what remains with you are his personal qualities. The transparent integrity and sense of public purpose, the decency and courtesy that marked every meeting, the depth of understanding and wisdom that he displayed in every encounter, the occasional chuckle that showed his ability to laugh even in trying times. What remains also is the obvious regard in which he was held by leaders of stature such as former Singapore PM Lee Kuan Yew. And he could say a lot with a few words. Back in 1996, when I mentioned that the Rao government would not be highlighting economic reforms in its election manifesto, he paused for a moment before asking: “What else is there to talk about?”

Commentators have referred to Dr Singh's humility. Yes, he had a humble manner that came naturally, but I have long suspected that in his own estimation he stood taller than those around him — with good reason. If it was so, he had the good sense to keep this self-assessment well hidden. In fact, he was a shrewd player of other people's vanities, disarming them with effusive praise — as I saw more than once. This

came out wrong in the over-the-top statement that he made to George W Bush at a lunch in Delhi's Taj Palace hotel, when he told the visiting US President that all of India loved him, or words to that effect.

He did the same with Michel Camdessus, the IMF managing director who had sanctioned the life-saving loan in 1991. Later, at a dinner in Delhi when Camdessus had come visiting, Dr Singh was typically effusive in praise, referring to his guest (if memory serves me right) as Sir. Perhaps this was just



an Indian mannerism. But, sitting there, I felt that no finance minister of India should be addressing an IMF executive in that manner.

When faced with criticism, he was all grace, never referring to it in personal meetings or during interviews. When releasing the first book published by the newspaper's short-lived books division, he said that he understood the criticism for what his government failed to do, but added that the paper should at least give credit to the government for what

it did achieve. It was a fair point. The criticism worth recalling was by Ashok V Desai, a contemporary and friend of Dr Singh's at Cambridge. As a sharp and acerbic columnist at Business Standard, Desai wrote in 1995 or thereabouts that Dr Singh was personally honest but tolerated corrupt people around him. Dr Singh called me to protest, asking how he could defend himself against such criticism. I told him that the author was his friend and I would get Desai to speak to him. Many years passed before Desai told me that Dr Singh had finally forgiven him. But the fact is that Desai had put his finger on the spot.

Still, the free air that we breathed found reflection in how people spoke at an event in Vigyan Bhavan for releasing a festschrift in Dr Singh's honour, co-edited by Isher Judge Ahluwalia and Dr Singh's tutor at Oxford, Ian Little. Ahluwalia had asked me to be one of the speakers at the event, and while I said what I wanted to say, I lightened my critical comments with humour. Not so Raghuram Rajan, then adviser to the PM while still teaching at Chicago, who delivered some pretty heavy-duty criticism. I can think of no other government under which an event to honour the PM would see speakers criticising his government to his face and then joining him at dinner! Such was the freedom of the times. It has been my good fortune as a journalist to have been able to interact with Dr Singh as often as I did over 35 years, enjoying his warmth and courtesy, leaving every meeting with fresh awareness of his wisdom and, for all the criticism that I directed at him and his government, always having the greatest respect for a truly great son of India. His passing has been for me a more saddening event than that of any other public figure.

Indian Share Market Opens Lower, Prepares To Move Into New Year With Caution

Mumbai. The domestic benchmark indices opened lower on Tuesday as selling was seen in IT, realty, auto, financial service, FMCG, media and private bank sectors on Nifty. At around 9:25 am, Sensex was trading at 77,813.49 after declining 434.64 points or 0.56 per cent, while the Nifty was trading at 23,536 after declining 108.90 points or 0.46 per cent. The market trend remained mixed. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1,096 stocks were trading in green, while 1,040 stocks were in red. According to market experts, "December has been weak for equity markets globally. S&P 500 is down by 2.34 per cent and Nifty is down by 2.6 per cent." "Markets are preparing to move into the New Year with caution since uncertainty is high and valuations are stretched," they noted. Nifty Bank was down 191.50 points or 0.38 per cent at 50,761.25. Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 56,944.80 after dropping 244.95 points or 0.43 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 18,618.95 after dropping 21 points or



0.11 per cent. On the sectoral front, buying was seen in the PSU Bank, Pharma, Metal, Energy, Commodities, PSE and Healthcare sector. In the Sensex pack, Tech Mahindra, HCL Tech, TCS, Infosys, Zomato and NTPC were the top losers. Whereas, Tata Motors, ITC, Tata Steel, SBI, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Nestle India were the top gainers.

Income Tax department denies report on using DigiYatra data to go after evaders

NEW DELHI. The Income Tax Department has denied a TNIE report that said the tax department will be tapping Digi Yatra data to go after evaders. Responding to the report, the department said in a social media post that as on date, there is no such move by the income tax department. "It is seen that news articles have appeared stating that DigiYatra data will be used to crack down on tax evaders. In this connection, it is clarified that as on date there is no such move by the Income Tax department," said the department on social media platform X. TNIE had reported citing unnamed sources that Income tax department has collected the entire passenger data on DigiYatra app, and the same is being reconciled with income tax filings. The report further stated that the tax department might be issuing notices in 2025 based on analysing the DigiYatra data. Earlier, responding to the report Digi Yatra has also termed it as 'false' and said that Digi Yatra prioritizes data security and privacy. "The app follows the Self-Sovereign Identity (SSI) model, where Personally Identifiable Information (PII) and travel credentials are stored exclusively on the user's device, not on any central repository. If the app is uninstalled, the data is deleted entirely. Additionally, airport systems purge data within 24 hours of flight departure," it said in an email response. It further said: "As part of our commitment to privacy, safety, and security, we do not store any personal data. While this limits our ability to provide customized or personalized services like other brands, it ensures maximum user privacy. Our d-KYC (Don't Know Your Customer) campaign underscores this commitment, clearly communicating that we don't collect or retain user information. There is no mechanism for data sharing with third parties, and no MoU exists between Digi Yatra Foundation and the Income Tax Department."

Focus on next-gen therapeutics, AstraZeneca to restructure biopharma unit

Bengaluru UK-based pharmaceutical giant AstraZeneca has announced plans to restructure its biopharma unit to concentrate on next-generation therapeutics. "In the Biopharmaceutical Business Unit, we are now furthering these efforts to deliver the next generation of therapeutics in our pipeline, focusing on specialists, science, and innovation, while improving access to our existing portfolio in specialist disease areas we are present in. This has led to a strategic restructuring of our biopharmaceutical team impacting certain roles," a company spokesperson told Business Standard in an email query. This decision follows reports of layoffs affecting over 125 employees within the unit. Reports suggest that about 20 senior managers and nearly 110 executives have been sacked from various levels in the sales department. "Our aspiration to be pioneers in science has increased our focus on specialist disease areas where we can make the most meaningful difference in helping people with cancer, other chronic and rare diseases," the company spokesperson said. AstraZeneca stated that it is committed to transforming patient outcomes in the country. Its global portfolio includes over 20 novel therapies spanning various disease areas, including lung cancer, breast cancer, gastrointestinal cancer, heart failure, diabetes, respiratory syncytial virus (RSV), severe asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and neurofibromatosis type 1 (NF1). "We are creating the next generation of therapeutics," spokesperson said.

DMRC, NCRTC get record ridership, give driving training to women in 2024

NEW DELHI. The year 2024 saw both the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation and the National Capital Region Transport Corporation make remarkable strides in advancing urban transportation infrastructure. While the DMRC achieved key breakthroughs, including the first twin tunnels under Phase-IV construction and the completion of an 865-metre underground tunnel between Chhatarpur and Chhatarpur Mandir Station, the NCRTC opened two major sections, signed crucial agreements, and was lauded by the German Ambassador who took a ride on its Nam0 Bharat train. Despite these advancements, the year was also marked by a tragic incident for the DMRC. On February 8, a portion of the Gokulpuri Metro Station on the Pink Line, located in northeast Delhi, collapsed, resulting in the death of a 53-year-old man and injuries to four others. In response, the DMRC carried out a thorough inspection and took corrective measures that included the removal of concrete structures and installation of

stainless-steel railings at five elevated stations along the Pink Line to enhance safety. The year began on a high note for the DMRC with President Droupadi Murmu taking a ride on a metro on February 7. On March 4, the Union Cabinet chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi approved two new corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project -- Inderlok - Indraprastha (12.377 km) and Lajpat Nagar - Saket G Block (8.385 km). In an interview with PTI in July, DMRC Managing Director Vikas Kumar said they are planning to employ the use of artificial intelligence in its Phase-4 project for crowd management and maintenance of trains in order to increase efficiency. The Delhi Metro, the Indian Railway Catering and Tourism Corporation Limited, and the Centre For Railway Information Systems joined hands on July 10 to revolutionise the seamless travel experience of the main line railway and metro passengers in the Delhi-NCR area. The idea was to promote the 'One India One Ticket' initiative of the



government by launching the Beta Version of Delhi Metro Rail QR Codebased ticket. The urban transporter also announced the introduction of international flight check-in facilities at the New Delhi and Shivaji Stadium metro stations on the Airport Express Line on July 17. The metro achieved a major construction milestone in Phase 4 with the completion of an 865-metre underground tunnel between Chhatarpur and Chhatarpur Mandir Station on the Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridor on August 21. On September 18,

the metro successfully completed the first twin tunnel breakthrough under Phase - 4 construction. Additionally, a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on August 21 between the DMRC and the NCRTC for an integrated QR-ticketing system, allowing passengers to book QR code tickets for both Nam0 Bharat and Delhi Metro on a single platform. Further improving commuter convenience, the DMRC launched the multiple-journey QR ticket system on September 12, which simplified travel with a single QR code. On October 5, an underground tunnel between Chhatarpur and Chhatarpur Mandir Station on the Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridor was completed. The longest underground tunnel of 2.65 km between the Tughlakabad Airforce Launching shaft and Maa Anandmayee Marg on the Tughlakabad-Aerocity corridor of Phase-IV was completed on December 4.

ITR filing deadline extended for belated/revised return. Check all details

NEW DELHI. The Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) has extended the deadline for resident individuals to file their belated or revised Income Tax Returns (ITR) for the Assessment Year (AY) 2024-25. The original deadline of December 31, 2024, has now been pushed to January 15, 2025. This extension gives taxpayers an additional two weeks to complete or revise their filings. The CBDT shared this update via an announcement on X, and said, "CBDT extends the last date for furnishing Belated/ Revised return of income for AY 2024-25 in the case of Resident Individuals from December 31, 2024 to January 15, 2025." The change has been made using the board's powers under section 119 of the Income-tax Act, 1961. This extension applies to two specific cases. Firstly, it benefits individuals who missed the initial deadline of July 31, 2024, to file their ITR and had until December 31 to file a belated return. Secondly, it allows



taxpayers who need to make corrections to previously filed returns an extended window to submit their revised filings. Under current rules, taxpayers filing belated returns must pay a late fee. If the taxable income is below Rs 5 lakh, the fee is Rs 1,000. For those with taxable income above Rs 5 lakh, the late fee increases to Rs 5,000. Taxpayers often make errors or omissions when filing their ITR, such as missing income details or claiming incorrect deductions. A revised return allows individuals to rectify these mistakes.

Filing a corrected ITR ensures compliance with tax regulations and can help avoid penalties or additional scrutiny. Despite repeated efforts to encourage tax compliance, a small portion of India's population files income tax returns. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary recently revealed in Parliament that only 6.68% of India's population filed ITRs in the fiscal year 2023-24. "In FY 2023-24, the percentage of population that filed Income Tax Return is 6.68%. The total number of persons filing income tax returns is 8,09,03,315," he informed the Rajya Sabha on December 17. The new deadline aims to provide relief to taxpayers who may have faced difficulties meeting the December 31 deadline. It also ensures that those needing to correct or update their returns have sufficient time to do so without unnecessary haste.

Discount broking is the future: HDFC Sec MD

NEW DELHI. The year 2024 was full of surprises, and events that defined the business and economic landscape of India. While some of them turned out to be positive for the country, many others put the country's economic resilience to test. We list out some of the defining events of the year: **Giant leap for semicon industry** The government approved India's first semiconductor fabrication unit (fab) in Dholera, Gujarat. The project is a joint venture between Tata Electronics and Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp of Taiwan. It has approved two assembly, testing, marking, and packaging (ATMP) units — one in Assam and the other in Dholera. An assembly and test (OSAT) facility is being set up by CG Power and Industrial Solutions. This JV with Japan's Renesas Electronics Corporation and Thailand's Stars Microelectronics is another major step

forward for the sector. This includes the approval of Micron Technology's packaging unit and Keynes Semicon's chip unit in Gujarat. "The Nifty shows only modest upside potential, as it is now trading at 23x FY25 and 20.5x FY26 consensus EPS, indicating modest upside potential in the next 12 months. This implies that investors may face a period of lower-than-expected returns, as the broader market may have already priced in some of the expected growth," he said, adding the Nifty may touch 26580 points sometime next year. Since the advent of the low/discount broking spearheaded by Zerodha—the most profitable brokerage for the past many years—full-service players have been losing market share and today discount broker Groww is the largest with over 13. 1 million active customers followed by Zerodha at 8.1 million, Angel One at 7. New capital gain tax The government raised capital gains taxes — short-term

capital gain (STCG) and long-term capital gain (LTCG) — on capital assets. The LTCG is now uniformly taxed at 12.5% for all classes of assets. Budget 2024 raised the STCG tax rate on sale of listed equity shares and equity-oriented mutual funds from 15% to 20%. The Budget 2024 rationalised holding periods of STCG and LTCG. Unlisted financial and non-financial assets now require a 24-month holding period to be considered long-term. Listed assets must be held for 12 months to qualify as LTCG. The indexation benefit that investors used to get was removed in Budget. Earlier, some assets enjoyed LTCG tax of 20% with indexation and 10% without indexation. The LTCG tax without indexation was effective July 23, 2024. Facing backlash, the Centre moved an amendment to the Finance Bill, 2024, to let taxpayers select either 12.5% LTCG tax without indexation or 20% rate with indexation for assets purchased before July 23.

India to focus on quality, maintenance of national highways in 2025 after record construction

In 2025, the NHAI is aiming to set new benchmarks in quality construction and management of National Highways and provide a safer, smoother, and seamless travel experience to National Highway users.

NEW DELHI. After constructing a record 56,700 km of National Highways (NHs) in the country in the last 10 years, the Road Transport and Highways Ministry will shift focus on the quality of construction and maintenance of NHs in 2025. The Ministry of Road Transport & Highways (MoRTH) is primarily responsible for the development, operation and maintenance of NHs. Since 2013-14, the length of NHs has increased from 0.91 lakh km to 1.46 lakh km. New Highways Secretary V Umashankar has held several meetings to step up the quality of national highway construction and its maintenance. Faced with criticism over the poor quality of certain highways,

such as Delhi-Jaipur (NH-48) and Amritsar-Jamnagar Economic corridor on social media, the ministry is set to take steps to improve the quality. Union Road Transport and Highways Minister Nitin Gadkari has repeatedly expressed frustration over poor quality of construction of some highways. To enhance accountability and assess the quality of construction and maintenance of National Highways, the state-owned National Highways Authority of India (NHA) earlier this month introduced a comprehensive rating system for performance assessment of the concessionaires engaged in such works. A detailed methodology for rating the concessioners has been formulated by NHA under which concessioners will be evaluated every six months and ratings will be uploaded on the NHA website and its social media handles. In 2025, the NHA is aiming to set new benchmarks in quality construction and management of National Highways and provide a safer, smoother, and seamless travel experience to National Highway users. Construction of the much delayed Delhi-Mumbai Expressway, Delhi-Dehradun Expressway, and Bengaluru-Chennai Expressway is also likely to be completed



in 2025. The ministry is also likely to push a corridor-based highway infrastructure development approach focusing on ensuring consistent standards, user convenience and logistics efficiency, as compared to the earlier project-based development approach, focused on addressing stretches of local congestion. This corridor approach has already led to the identification of a network of 50,000 km of high-speed highway corridors through a scientific transport study based on GSTN and toll data to support India's transformation into a USD 30-plus trillion economy by 2047. By the end of the ongoing fiscal year, the ministry is aiming to increase the length of operational high speed corridors (HSC) to 4,827 km. Till December 2024, the ministry has been successful in operationalising 4,693 km of

HSC in the country. The ministry is also likely to issue bids in a transparent manner for multi-party interoperable system for barrier-free toll collection system based on satellite navigation technology. Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal told PTI that 2024 has been significant so far as the shipping industry is concerned. "Of Rs 80 trillion investment projected in the maritime sector in the next 25 years in Maritime Amrit Kaal Vision 2047, Rs 54 trillion is estimated in enhancing India's ship ownership, ship-building and ship registration ecosystem," Sonowal said. He further said steps required to be taken to boost the Indian shipping industry include granting infrastructure status to ships under DEA's harmonised master list, and bringing vessels within the ambit of the SARFAESI Act, allowing creditors to leverage the Act's mechanisms for efficient recovery of dues. According to the minister, domestic shipyards such as Cochin Shipyard Ltd, L&T Shipyard, Swan Energy (Pipavav Shipyard), Chowgule Shipyard, and Shoft Shipyard are in talks with global players to participate in ship-building and ship-repair clusters.

'Doesn't seem suicide': Mother uses ChatGPT to re-examine Suchir Balaji's death

► **Suchir Balaji Death: OpenAI whistleblower Suchir Balaji's mother, in an interview with, has alleged foul play in her son's death. Balaji, 26, was found dead in his San Francisco apartment last month.**

NEW DELHI. OpenAI whistleblower Suchir Balaji's mother has alleged foul play in her son's death, claiming that a private investigator's probe contradicted the police's version. In an exclusive interview

with India Today, Balaji's mother, Poornima Ramarao, said she used ChatGPT to determine that the blood stains found in her son's apartment don't seem like a case of suicide. Balaji, 26, was found dead in his San Francisco apartment last month, with the medical examiner ruling it a suicide. Balaji, who left OpenAI in August, recently spoke out against OpenAI's data-gathering practices and alleged copyright violations in the development of ChatGPT.

Seeking an FBI investigation, Poornima said she found her son's apartment ransacked and there were signs of struggle in the bathroom.

"There were signs of a fight in the bathroom and when we fed the picture to ChatGPT, we found that the splatter of blood is not like what it is supposed to be as per the cause of death. We also found separate blood spots in the bathroom that indicate he



may have been hit. There was also no suicide note left," a grieving Poornima said. That's when she decided to hire a private investigator to probe the death of her son. The private investigator has concluded that it doesn't seem like a case of suicide, she said. "When death by suicide is determined, so many factors are taken into account. The major factor is whether the person is depressed. They didn't even ask us," Balaji's mother said.

Elon Musk, in an X post, has also backed Poornima's claims about foul play. She further said that the attorney told them that no one had entered the apartment on November 26 and all CCTV cameras were thoroughly checked. "The attorney said we checked all the CCTV, no one came in, no one went out. After that, the decision to declare it to be a case of suicide was made. We mentioned that there are 3 entrances. Two of them, one through the garage and one through the backdoor, don't have CCTV.

However, the police are not listening to us," she said. Appealing to the Ministry of External Affairs for intervention, Poornima alleged that the tech industry lobby in San Francisco was very powerful. "There is a lot of corruption. My son wanted to make a difference to mankind. He was working on a project called 'Futura Doctor Visit'. Our dreams have been snatched away from us," she said.

Over 15k cops deployed for New Year celebrations

Elaborate security measures have been planned, particularly in high-traffic areas like Connaught Place, Khan Market, India Gate, and popular hotels, restaurants and party hubs, said officials.

NEW DELHI. Delhi Police has announced robust security arrangements for New Year's eve, deploying nearly 15,000 police and paramilitary personnel to ensure public safety and prevent hooliganism, traffic violations, and overcrowding in the national capital, officials said on Monday. Police have also increased deployments in the border areas of the city, they said. Delhi, bordered by Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan, attracts a significant influx of visitors for New Year celebrations. Elaborate security measures have been planned, particularly in high-traffic areas like Connaught Place, Khan Market, India Gate, and popular hotels, restaurants and party hubs, said officials. Deputy Commissioner of Police (New Delhi) Devesh Kumar Mahla said, "We have prepared a comprehensive arrangement to ensure the safety and security of all residents and visitors during the upcoming new year's eve celebrations."

The New Delhi district has been divided into two zones: Zone A, supervised by additional DCP-I, will cover areas like Parliament Street and Connaught Place while Zone B, supervised by additional DCP-II, covers areas like Chanakyaपुरi and Tughlak Road.

The deployment in New Delhi district also includes, four ACPs, 23 inspectors, and 648 police staff. 100 home guards and 11 companies of Central Armed Police Forces (CAPF), including a dedicated women's unit. Specialized teams for bomb disposal, SWAT, and Prakra vehicles. The DCP said that to manage crowds and traffic, buses heading towards Connaught Place will be diverted from 7pm on December 31.

Exit gates at Rajiv Chowk Metro Station will close post 9pm to prevent overcrowding. 47 pickets have been erected for vehicle diversion around Connaught Place. "Strict checks will be conducted for alcohol consumption, public disturbances, and narcotics use. Only individuals with valid hotel or restaurant invitations will be allowed entry into restricted areas," said the DCP. The officer said that live monitoring through CCTV cameras will ensure rapid intervention. In the southwest district, DCP Surendra Choudhary said that there will be 27 checkpoints with breath analyzers to deter drunk driving. "Security at 35 key venues, including malls, cinemas, and party hubs like Hauz Khas Village. 14 Quick Reaction Teams (QRTs) and 16 PCR vans for immediate response," said the DCP. Additional Commissioner of Police (Traffic), DK Gupta, emphasised strict traffic regulations at hotspots like Saket Mall, Ambience Mall, and Hauz Khas. "We urge everyone to celebrate responsibly and follow traffic rules to ensure a safe and joyous New Year," he said.

"VIP Lounge, Free Transport": Cops 'Invite' Drunk Drivers On New Year's Eve

New Delhi. Ahead of New Year's Eve and a night of parties, Delhi Police have put out a humorous social media post to warn drunk drivers and troublemakers. The post says the capital's cops will hold a "Cell Block Party" for hooligans.

The post says this party's "opening performer" is breathalyzer that would identify drunk drivers. Police, the post said, would provide "free transportation" to jail and a "VIP lounge" in the form of jail cells. Speed cameras are in place for the "cinematography" of this party. "If you spot someone who needs to party just dial 112 and let the good times roll," the post said, adding that the venue is the "nearest police station".



The caption read, "Who needs a countdown when you can count down the days until your release."

In neighbouring Noida too, cops are patrolling to review preparations. Owners of restaurants and pubs have been asked not to take bookings more than their capacity. In cases of drunk driving, the car would be seized besides a fine.

In Maximum City Mumbai, a large posse of police personnel will be on the street to manage traffic and identify troublemakers. The cops will set up multiple checkpoints to identify drunk drivers and step up patrolling in crowded areas. Drunk drivers, troublemakers and those harassing women would face strict action. Joint Commissioner of Police Satyanarayan Choudhary said, "We are also looking at entry of illegal weapons into the city. History sheeters are being monitored and preventive action is being taken if needed."

Over 50 Cars Punctured Due To Iron Board On Mumbai-Nagpur Highway

New Delhi. Panic ensued along the Mumbai-Nagpur Samruddhi Highway after over 50 vehicles were punctured passed over an iron board that had fallen on the road.

The incident occurred around 10 pm on December 29 between the Malegaon and Vanoja toll plaza in Washim district, impacting four-wheelers and cargo trucks. This resulted in a long traffic jam on the



highway. Further, commuters were stranded on the highway overnight as no assistance arrived for a long time. It is being investigated if the board fell accidentally or was thrown intentionally. This comes at a time the safety on the high-speed corridor is under question. In June, at least six people were killed and four injured in a collision between two cars on the Samruddhi Mahamarg near the Kadwanchi village on Samruddhi Highway in Jalna district.

The Samruddhi Mahamarg is a partially functional six-lane and 701-km-long access-controlled expressway in Maharashtra. It is one of the country's longest greenfield road projects connecting Mumbai and the state's third-largest city Nagpur. It was built at a cost of Rs 55,000 crore.

No medical units, fewer AED devices in metro stations for passengers, reveals RTI

NEW DELHI. Despite operating an expansive 393-kilometre metro network with 288 stations, the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) lacks dedicated medical units to handle passenger emergencies. Moreover, only six stations on the Airport Express Line—the least frequented route—are equipped with Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs), vital for reviving cardiac arrest victims. The information was revealed in an RTI query filed by Dr Aman Kaushik, accessed by this newspaper. The RTI sought a list of metro stations where medical teams, doctors, and AED devices are available. The DMRC's response was stark: no medical units or doctors are deployed at any station, and AEDs are present only at six stations on the Airport Line—New Delhi, Shivaji Stadium, Dhaula Kuan, Delhi Aerocity, Airport (T-3), and Dwarka Sector-21. Dr Kaushik recounted the incident that



pushed him to file the RTI. "Last year, I witnessed a passenger collapse inside the metro. There was no trained staff to administer CPR, and the crowd panicked. I stepped in and performed CPR, reviving the patient. The individual was dropped off at Azadpur Metro Station, but there was no AED machine there," he said.

Kaushik highlighted the absence of AEDs at busy interchange stations like Rajiv Chowk and Kashmere Gate. Kaushik emphasised the urgent need for trained personnel and adequate equipment to handle cardiac

emergencies.

"Sudden cardiac deaths can be reduced only with proper CPR training and the availability of AEDs at all stations," he said. A DMRC official responded to the RTI stating that operations personnel and station staff have been trained in first aid and CPR. "First aid kits are available with train operators and at all stations. In case of emergencies, station staff provide assistance, including wheelchairs, stretchers, and first aid. Passengers are escorted to the nearest hospital via ambulances, PCR, or private vehicles to ensure timely medical care during the golden hour. Each station's control room has details of nearby hospitals, and injured passengers can also be shifted to empanelled hospitals if needed," the official said.

Dr Kaushik, however, argued that while tie-ups with CAT ambulances and hospitals are helpful, they are not sufficient to address sudden cardiac arrests.

Cost of LCA Mark 2 jet project may rise due to likely engine price hike: Sources

India has plans to buy around 200 LCA Mark 1A fighter jets along with the same number of LCA Mark 2 and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft each in the next 15 years.

New Delhi. As the government tackles the delay in the LCA Mark 1A fighter jet project, the price of the deal for the LCA Mark-2 engine is likely to go up, increasing the overall cost of the project, defence ministry sources said on Monday. The deal is being negotiated by Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) and the American GE to supply GE-414 engines for the LCA Mark-2 aircraft as the price of the deal is now going to rise due to cost escalation, sources told. All indigenous fighter programmes are facing delays, mainly due to engine issues.

India has plans to buy around 200 LCA Mark 1A along with the same number of LCA Mark 2 and Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft each in the next 15 years.

The Tejas Mark-1 and Mark-1A variants are



powered by the off-the-shelf GE-F404 engines purchased from the US.

The Air Force, in the recent past, has repeatedly expressed dissatisfaction with the current pace of the LCA Mark-1A programme. The first aircraft from the existing order was scheduled for delivery by March 31, 2024.

GE Aerospace, manufacturer of the F404 jet

engines, earlier this year, cited supply chain issues as the main reason for the delay in supplying the engines to India.

The F404 series engines are required to produce the 83 Tejas Mark-1A jets ordered by the government under a contract worth Rs 48,000 crore signed in February 2021. HAL has reportedly assured the Air Force that it will deliver 16 LCA Mark-1A jets during the financial year 2024-25 and complete the delivery of all 83 jets by 2029.

The fifth-generation Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft is expected to enter production in 2035, the sources added. The LCA Mark 2 will be an improved version of the existing LCA Tejas fighter jet. The Tejas Mark 2 is expected to be a heavier, more advanced aircraft with enhanced indigenous combat capabilities.

Dallewal will take medical aid if Centre speaks to farmers: Punjab to Supreme Court

Jagjit Singh Dallewal has been on an indefinite hunger strike at the Khanauri border between Punjab and Haryana since November 26, urging the Centre to address farmers' demands, including a legal guarantee for Minimum Support Price on crops.

NEW DELHI. The Punjab government on Tuesday informed the Supreme Court of a proposal that farmer leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal, who has been on an indefinite fast since November 26, would accept medical aid if the Centre spoke to the protesting farmers. A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Sudhanshu Dhulia was hearing a contempt plea against the

Punjab Chief Secretary and DGP for not complying with the Supreme Court's order of giving medical aid to Dallewal. During the hearing, the Punjab government sought three more days time for compliance with the order.

Punjab Advocate General Gurwinder Singh informed the court that intervenors and negotiators had gone to the protest site at the Khanauri border between Punjab and Haryana and efforts for compliance were made. Seeking more time in the wake of the Punjab Bandh on Monday, Gurwinder Singh said: "There were traffic blockades and hindrances and said the protesters had proposed that Dallewal would take medical aid if the Centre was ready to talk to them."



"As per the negotiators, there is a proposal given by the farmers to the Central government that if they get an invitation for a talk, then Dallewal is ready to get medical aid as desired." At this, the bench said, "We are not concerned with that, we are only concerned with compliance. Whatever is going on, we cannot comment on that."

While deferring the hearing to January 2, the court said, "An application has been

moved on behalf of the officers of the state of Punjab seeking an additional three days' time. Taking into consideration the totality of circumstances and keeping the interest of justice in view, we are inclined to accept the request to afford some more time for compliance."

Tuesday's hearing came three days after a Punjab government team attempted to persuade Dallewal to take medical aid. He, however, declined it, fearing the use of force to oust him from the protest site.

On December 28, the Supreme Court came down heavily against the Punjab government for its failure to shift the fasting farmer leader to a hospital as his health had deteriorated. Farmers, under the banner of SKM (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, have been camping at the Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana since February 13.

NEWS BOX

Jimmy Carter's State Funeral To Be Held On January 9 in Washington DC

Washington, United States.Former US President Jimmy Carter's official state funeral will be held on January 9 in Washington DC, the same day as a national day of mourning announced by President Joe Biden on Sunday. Biden is expected to deliver a eulogy for the former President, and on Monday he ordered federal offices closed on January 9 "as a mark of respect" for Mr Carter. The Supreme Court followed suit on Monday noon, announcing it would also be closed on January 9 in recognition of the day of mourning.

Mr Carter passed away on Sunday (local time) at the age of 100. Services honouring Mr Carter will begin on January 4 and include a brief pause at his boyhood home and the family farm in Plains, Georgia, where he grew up, and a stop at the Georgia State Capitol for a moment of silence.

Mr Carter will lie in repose at the Carter Presidential Center in Atlanta until January 7 for mourners to pay their respects, before departing for Washington, DC, where his remains will be carried to the US Navy Memorial and then to the US Capitol in a funeral procession. Upon arrival at the Capitol, members of Congress will pay their respects to the late President during an afternoon service on January 7. He will lie in state until January 9. The state funeral will be held at the National Cathedral at 10 a.m. that day.

In a letter on Monday, Congressional leaders from both parties notified Mr Carter's son James Carter III and the Carter Center of their intent for the late President to lie in state at the Capitol from January 7-9.

"In recognition of President Carter's long and distinguished service to the nation, it is our intention to ask the United States House of Representatives and the United States Senate to permit his remains lie in state in the Rotunda of the United States Capitol," the lawmakers said in a joint statement. With your approval, we will move forward with these arrangements so that the American people have the opportunity to pay their respects to President Carter before he is laid to rest," they added.

In a statement on Truth Social on Sunday, US President-elect Donald Trump also paid tribute to Mr Carter, writing that "the challenges Jimmy faced as President came at a pivotal time for our country and he did everything in his power to improve the lives of all Americans".

Swiss Cabin Crew Member Dies After Smoke Forced Emergency Landing In Graz

Zurich.A Swiss Internaional Air Lines cabin crew member on an aeroplane forced to make an emergency landing due to smoke inside the aircraft has died, the flag carrier said on Monday. The Airbus A220-300 jet, with 74 passengers and five crew on board, was flying from Bucharest to Zurich on December 23 when it had to land in Graz, Austria after engine problems occurred and smoke filled the cockpit and cabin. The plane landed safely. "We must report, with the deepest of sorrow and regret, that our young colleague died in the hospital in Graz on Monday," Swiss said in a statement. Swiss chief executive Jens Fehlinger said the loss had left the airline, a subsidiary of Germany's Lufthansa, in shock and grief. We are devastated at our dear colleague's death," he said. "Our thoughts are with his family, whose pain we cannot imagine. I offer them my heartfelt condolences on behalf of all of us at Swiss." Swiss said in a statement that "out of respect for the loved ones, we will not provide detailed information about our employee or the cause of death." After the plane made an emergency landing, one cabin crew member was flown by helicopter to a hospital in Graz and taken into intensive care. Another cabin crew member was also taken to hospital.

All passengers were evacuated and 12 received medical attention. Swiss on Tuesday said that all passengers who were admitted to hospital had since been able to leave. Chief operating officer Oliver Buchhofer thanked the local emergency services in Graz who had helped passengers and crew. This is the saddest of days for us all," he said. "Losing our colleague and fellow member of our Swiss team leaves me distraught and dismayed." He said Swiss would work "with the relevant authorities, to determine the causes involved." Swiss said the focus of its investigation was on the mechanical parts of the aircraft, such as the engine, but also on the use of protective breathing equipment for the cabin crew.

Kim Jong Un Vows To Further Solidify Russia Ties In Letter To Putin

Seoul. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un pledged to solidify the country's comprehensive strategic partnership with Russia in his letter to President Vladimir Putin on Monday, state media KCNA reported on Tuesday. In the message, Kim sent New Year greetings to Putin and all Russians, including their troops and expressed his willingness to further step up bilateral ties, which he said the two leaders have elevated to a new height this year, through new projects, KCNA said.

Kim "wished that the New Year 2025 would be recorded as the first year of victory in the 21st century when the Russian army and people would defeat neo-Nazism and achieve a great victory," KCNA said. Kim and Putin signed a mutual defence treaty at a summit in June, which calls for each side to come to the other's aid in case of an armed attack.

North Korea has since dispatched tens of thousands of troops to Russia to support its war against Ukraine, and Seoul and Washington said that more than a thousand of them have been killed or wounded.

South Korean court issues arrest warrant for impeached president Yoon

SEOUL.A South Korean court has issued an arrest warrant for impeached, suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol, investigators said Tuesday, over his short-lived bid to impose martial law on the country. Yoon briefly suspended civilian rule this month, plunging South Korea into its worst political crisis in decades. He was stripped of his presidential duties by parliament over the action, but a constitutional court ruling is pending on whether to confirm the impeachment. "The arrest warrant and search warrant for President Yoon Suk Yeol, requested by the Joint Investigation Headquarters, were issued this morning," the Joint Investigation Headquarters said in a statement. The conservative leader faces criminal charges of insurrection, which could result in life imprisonment or even the death penalty. Investigators probing Yoon over his declaration of martial law requested the warrant Monday after the suspended president failed to report for questioning a third time. "The reason for the warrant is that there is a concern that the individual may refuse to comply with

summons without justifiable reasons, and there is sufficient probable cause to suspect the commission of a crime," a Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) official told reporters at a briefing on Tuesday. "The warrant is valid until January 6," the official said, adding that Yoon could be held at a police station or the Seoul detention center. Yoon's lawyer called the arrest warrant for the impeached president "illegal and invalid", saying investigators lacked the authority to probe the president. "The arrest warrant and search and seizure warrant issued at the request of an agency without investigative authority are illegal and invalid," a statement sent to AFP by lawyer Yoon Kab-keun said. Even though the warrant has been issued, it is unclear whether investigators and police will be able to execute it. The Presidential Security Service has previously refused to comply with three search warrants. It said



Tuesday that "security measures regarding the execution of the warrant will be carried out in accordance with lawful procedures," in a statement to local media. But lawyer Yun Bok-nam, president of Lawyers for a Democratic Society, told AFP that while there was a legal basis for rejecting a search

warrant "there's no such provision for arrest warrants". "I expect the (arrest) process will proceed smoothly," he said, adding that warrants were typically valid seven days and had to be executed within that time frame. Police were deployed early Tuesday outside Yoon's residence in central Seoul, in a likely bid to head off scuffles. Yoon's supporters and protesters calling for his removal have both staked out his residence, with local media running images of altercations between the two camps overnight. Up to 3,000 people will move to protest against the unfair and invalid arrest warrant," said an official from the largest protest group supporting Yoon. Local media reported than an imminent arrest or search of the presidential residence was unlikely, as investigators would seek to coordinate with the presidential security service.

Six people injured in New York City convenience store firing

Police said that one of the intended targets, used a woman as a shield. The woman ended up shot in the stomach while the person who grabbed her went unscathed.



interim Chief of Department John Chell said. There was no immediate information on the condition of those wounded in what Chell called "a brazen and heartless attack on innocent New Yorkers and cowardly intended victims." Police believe the two shooters were aiming for people in a group standing outside the store on White Plains Road, a commercial

thoroughfare in the Bronx. Chell said police have video showing the attackers opened fire around 5 p.m. as they ran across the road to the store, then kept shooting as their targets ran into the store. After bumping into the woman and girl at the counter, one of the people who ran inside took hold of her and spun her into the line of fire, Chell said. Chell said all of those shot, except the 40-year-old mother, were wounded in their arms or legs. The Fire Department said it took five of the wounded to hospitals, and the sixth apparently got a ride to a hospital from someone else. In addition to the mother and daughter, those wounded included four men, aged 18 to 21, Chell said.

There Are No Trans Kids": JK Rowling's Controversial Remark Sparks Debate

JK Rowling has once again stirred controversy with her remarks on transgender issues



World. JK Rowling has once again stirred controversy with her remarks on transgender issues. The Harry Potter author, in her latest post on X, claimed that transgender children "do not exist" and dismissed the concept of being "born in the wrong body." The controversy began on Sunday when an X user criticised Rowling for allegedly not using her influence for positive change. The user wrote, "I wish you would use your immense power for good. Your hateful focus on trans kids is hurtful and unnecessary." In response, JK Rowling wrote, "There are no trans kids. No child is 'born in the wrong body'. There are only adults like you, prepared to sacrifice the health of minors to bolster your belief in an ideology that ends up wrecking more

harm than lobotomies and false memory syndrome combined." Her remarks met with immediate backlash, with critics accusing her of perpetuating harmful rhetoric against transgender individuals. A user commented, "Isn't that the same logic homophobic people used in the previous century against gays and lesbians?" Another said, "You're also a medical expert. Didn't know that. This thing that everyone famous for anything feels the urge to act as an expert of something else... makes me crazy! I surely need to be visited by a novelist..." to which Rowling replied, "But being trans isn't a medical

condition, or so we're told." "Whatever you believe doesn't matter. If a person feels and identifies as a different gender, who are you to judge? Let people be who they want to be. It doesn't affect your life in any way shape or form. They're not forcing their beliefs on your lifestyle. Stay in your own lane," read a comment. Rowling's remarks also found support from some quarters. One user wrote, "You don't need to be a medical expert to know right from wrong or child exploitation when you see it." This is not the first time JK Rowling has come under fire for her opinions on transgender issues. Back in August, she criticised Algerian boxer Imane Khelif's participation in the Paris Olympics 2024, suggesting that Khelif, who defeated Italian boxer Angela Carini in a 46-second match, was a man competing against women. Rowling accused organisers of enabling "men's power over women," and criticised the International Olympic Committee (IOC) for allowing Khelif to compete.

Venezuela's top court issues a \$10 million fine for TikTok over allegedly deadly video challenges

CARACAS. Venezuela's Supreme Court on Monday issued a \$10 million fine against TikTok for "not implementing measures" to prevent viral video challenges that have allegedly led to the deaths of three Venezuelan children recently.

Judge Tania D'Amelio said TikTok had acted in a negligent manner and gave it eight days to pay the fine,



while also ordering the video service company to open an office in Venezuela that would supervise content so that it complies with local laws. The judge did not explain how Venezuela would force TikTok, whose parent company is based in China, to pay the fine. Venezuela has blocked dozens of websites in previous years for not complying with regulations set by its telecommunications commission. TikTok did not immediately respond to requests for comment from The Associated Press. In November, Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro blamed TikTok for the death of a 12-year-old girl who allegedly died after participating in a TikTok challenge that involved taking tranquilizer pills and not falling asleep. Venezuela's Education Minister Hector Rodriguez also said last month that a 14-year-old died after taking part in a TikTok challenge that involved sniffing substances. And on Nov. 21, Venezuela's attorney general blamed video challenges on TikTok for the death of a third child. Dozens of radio stations and television channels have been taken off the air in Venezuela under Maduro over their news coverage. More than 60 websites belonging to human rights groups and news companies were blocked at different times this year, according to VE Sin Filtro, a group that tracks media freedoms in the South American country. In August, Venezuela banned the social media platform X as thousands of Venezuelans took to the streets to protest the re-election of Maduro. The Venezuelan government initially banned X for 10 days, after Maduro accused its owner Elon Musk of using the social media platform to "orchestrate attacks against Venezuela." Musk had accused Maduro of rigging the July 28 election, which the United Nations and the Carter Center, an organization that monitors elections around the world, said.

New Taiwan Board Game Invites Players To Battle 'Chinese Invasion'

Taipei. A new board game set against the backdrop of armed conflict around Taiwan is set to be released in January 2025, amid renewed threats from Beijing, inviting players to participate in an imaginary Chinese invasion 20 years from now. China has ramped up military activity close to democratically governed Taiwan in recent years, including massing naval forces around the island this month. The new game, titled "2045", tasks gamers with navigating the troubles of war by using colourful action cards, and role-playing characters involved in operations 10 days before a fictional Chinese invasion of Taiwan. That includes members of Taiwan's armed forces, Chinese sleeper agents and pro-China politicians working to sabotage the island's defence, as well as citizens picking up guns to defend their homeland. China claims Taiwan as its own and has never renounced the use of force to bring the island under its control. Taiwan's president and his government strongly object to



China's sovereignty claims and say only the island's people can decide their future. Taiwanese board game maker Mizo Games started crowdfunding the game in August. Within two-and-a-half-months, the company had received more than T\$4 million (\$121,966) to fund the project. "It is not quite peaceful around Taiwan island and the Western Pacific as we speak,"

Chang Shao Lian, the founder of Mizo Games told Reuters at his Taipei office. Chang said he wanted "players to feel they want to win and think about what they will do to win". The game, which is also set to go on sale in the U.S. and Europe later in the year, has been developed at a time when Taiwan officials have intensified preparations for scenarios including a

China conflict. Last week, Taiwan's presidential office held its first "tabletop" exercise involving government agencies beyond the armed forces, simulating a military escalation with China. He exercised involved scenarios, including the island being "on the verge of conflict", to test the readiness of government offices and civil society. Players who participated in a test run of "2045" said they learnt about what might happen in the event of a Chinese invasion and that they hoped the game could help people understand the implications of a war. "I'm not very knowledgeable on military matters, therefore through this game I learnt about where the army may land and launch an attack," said Kalin Lai, a 23-year-old who tried out the game. Mizo has previously created two other Taiwan war-themed board games - one about surviving an air raid in Taipei and the other about a bombing in Kaohsiung during Japan's colonisation of the island between 1895 and 1945.

NEWS BOX

Emma Raducanu pulls out of Australian Open warmup with back niggle

New Delhi. Grand Slam champion Emma Raducanu has withdrawn from the Auckland Open due to a back injury, dealing a blow to her preparations for the Australian Open. The 22-year-old British tennis player was scheduled to face Robin Montgomery of the United States in the first round of the ASB Classic on Tuesday.However, Raducanu has decided to travel to Melbourne to continue her preparations for the Australian Open, which begins on January 12. Raducanu, a Grand Slam champion and sixth seed at the Auckland warm-up event, expressed her disappointment in a statement:I've tried my best to be ready. I love Auckland and the fans here, but unfortunately, I've picked up a back niggle and won't be ready in time."Since her remarkable US Open victory in 2021, Raducanu has faced persistent injury setbacks. This year, she skipped five tournaments in the WTA's Asia swing after spraining ligaments in her foot.Additionally, she spent much of the previous season recovering from ankle and wrist surgeries. The 22-year-old managed to play only three matches after the Seoul injury in September,



all of which she won while representing Great Britain at the Billie Jean King Cup Finals. Despite this success, she heads into the Australian Open without any recent match practice.Last season, Raducanu encountered fewer injury issues but played only 10 matches after Wimbledon and missed the Miami Open in March due to another back problem.To address her fitness challenges, Raducanu has enlisted the help of renowned trainer Yutaka Nakamura, who has been working with her in Auckland.

"I just needed a more tailored approach and someone dedicated solely to me as an individual," Raducanu said earlier this month. "It's already bringing a positive change. The integration between my fitness work and on-court training with [coach] Nick [Cavaday] is making a noticeable difference."Currently ranked 56th in the world, Raducanu will not be seeded at the Australian Open.

Travis Head's celebration insulted not just Pant but 1.5 billion Indians: Navjot Sidhu

New Delhi. Former Indian cricketer Navjot Singh Sidhu slammed Travis Head's celebration after dismissing Rishabh Pant, calling it an insult to 1.5 billion Indians and demanding "stringent punishment" to prevent similar acts on the cricket field in the future.

The incident took place during the final session of Day 5 of the Boxing Day Test when Head dismissed Pant, who had scored a brisk 30. Head's peculiar celebration—pointing one finger into a circularly shaped hand—left fans and commentators puzzled. Although Channel 7's James Brayshaw and Pat Cummins later clarified that the gesture symbolised "putting his finger on ice"."Travis head's obnoxious behaviour during the course of the Melbourne test doesn't auger well for the gentleman's game..... sets the worst possible example when there are kids, women, young & old



watching the game..... this caustic conduct did not insult an individual but a nation of 1.5 billion Indians.....stringent punishment that would serve a deterrent for the future generations needs to be slapped on him so that no one dares follow suit !!!" Sidhu wrote on X.Channel 7's James Brayshaw offered some clarity. "Now, great people in the back have said after he took 4-10 within 17 balls in Sri Lanka in 2022 he was quoted as saying, 'I had to put the digit on ice'," Brayshaw said. "So that was the celebration. He said 'I just got him, and I'm putting it back on ice'."Australia captain Pat Cummins provided an explanation for Head's celebration. "I can explain that. His finger is so hot, that he is going to put it in a cup of ice. Yes, that's what it is. That's normally the running joke. Was it at the Gabba or somewhere.

Manchester United face clear threat of relegation, admits Amorim after another loss

Ruben Amorim admitted that it is "really clear" Manchester United are being drawn into a relegation battle following their 2-0 defeat to Newcastle at Old Trafford.

New Delhi. Manchester United manager Ruben Amorim admitted that the Premier League club must acknowledge they are in a relegation battle, despite the embarrassment of being in such a situation. The Red Devils suffered a 2-0 defeat to Newcastle at Old Trafford on Monday night, marking their fifth loss in six Premier League matches. This latest disappointing result leaves United 14th in the table, just seven points above the relegation zone. Liverpool legend Jamie Carragher described their recent form as



"relegation form," a sentiment Amorim echoed. The coach made this candid admission after watching his side outplayed at home by Newcastle. Amorim has become the first United manager since Louis van Gaal in 2015 to oversee three consecutive Premier League defeats. Although United have remained in the top flight since their promotion to the old First Division in 1975, they now sit precariously just seven points above the relegation zone halfway through

the season.Speaking after the game, Ruben Amorim admitted it is "really clear" that Manchester United are in a relegation battle. He described the situation as "a bit embarrassing" during his post-match press conference but took responsibility for the team's struggles.When asked whether his team is in a relegation fight, Amorim told Sky Sports: "That is really clear, and we have to fight. This is a really difficult moment-one of the most difficult in the history of Manchester United-and we need to address it

Mitchell Starc to miss Sydney Test Australia head coach gives injury update

Melbourne. Australia head coach Andrew McDonald remained optimistic that Mitchell Starc would be available for the final Test of the Border-Gavaskar Trophy in Sydney. However, McDonald acknowledged that Starc was managing a niggle and that a decision would be made closer to the New Year's Test, which begins on 3 January. AUS vs IND, 4TH TEST: FULL SCORECARD

Mitchell Starc dealt with an upper-body concern throughout the five-day Melbourne Test match. The issue first became apparent on Day 3 when Starc was seen clutching his back during spells and left the field at the close of play. Despite the discomfort, Starc pushed through the niggle, bowling at full pace on the final day to help Australia defend a target of 330 and secure victory in the Boxing Day Test.Starc consistently bowled at speeds of around 140 km/h and claimed the crucial wicket of Virat Kohli before lunch on Day 5. He managed to bowl 16 overs in the final innings of a closely contested Test that swung back and forth until India lost seven wickets in the last



session, conceding the series lead to the hosts."Clearly, Starc is carrying something of some description. We'll assess that. But other than that, it looks as though we got through pretty well unscathed. However, it's a short turnaround, and recovery is

important. We'll assess what the team looks like in Sydney based on the surface, as we always do," McDonald said on 31 December

"Any time you get through the game, it's always a good indicator that you're a chance for the next one. It didn't stop him," he added.

"There was clearly a bit of discomfort early in his spells, but once he warmed up, he seemed relatively free. His ball speeds were good."I think the morning session, when we bowled over 20 overs, was probably as good as we've delivered."Australia added Sean Abbott and Jhye Richardson to their Test squad as back-ups before the fourth match in Sydney. Both are expected to be available for the final Test despite their Big Bash League commitments.Australia will aim to regain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy for the first time since 2014. They need nothing less than a win in Sydney to reclaim the trophy. If the series ends in a draw, India will retain the trophy and head home as holders.

Barcelona lose another appeal to register Dani Olmo before deadline

Barcelona have lost another appeal for the registration of Dani Olmo for the rest of the season on Monday, one day before the deadline to register the Spanish international.

New Delhi Barcelona have lost another appeal to register Spanish forward Dani Olmo for the remainder of the season-just one day before the deadline.The club signed Olmo in August for approximately €55 million (\$57.22 million). However, due to their inability to meet La Liga's wage cap, the attacking midfielder was registered only for the first half of the season.Barcelona managed to register Olmo initially by reallocating wages from long-term injured players, which allowed them to fit the 26-year-old, along with forward Pau V-ctor, into their budget. However, the four-month allowance for this arrangement is set to expire at the end of the month.On Friday, Barcelona's request to provisionally register Olmo was denied by the Commercial Court Number 10. The ruling was upheld on Monday by the Court of First Instance Number 47.cording to La



Liga, the precautionary registration of Olmo was rejected because none of the necessary conditions for such a measure were met. La Liga also emphasized that its Delegate Commission has full authority to approve budgeting rules, which no club, including Barcelona, has previously contested.

The league further clarified that the decision not to register Olmo was made initially by its Budget Validation Body and later confirmed by its Financial Fair Play Committee, Social

Appeals Committee, and UEFA's Second Instance Licensing Committee of the Spanish Football Federation.

Olmo, who played for Barcelona's youth academy before leaving for Dinamo Zagreb at 16, has scored six goals in 15 appearances for the club this season. He was instrumental in helping Spain win the European Championship during the summer.

Barcelona now faces a race against time to find an alternative solution to register Olmo before January 1, or he risks becoming a free agent. Reports suggest Premier League clubs are already expressing interest.

Spanish media has reported that the club plans to sell VIP boxes at its Camp Nou stadium, potentially generating over €100 million, though this move would require La Liga's approval.Hansi Flick's Barcelona currently sits third in La Liga, three points behind leadersAtlético Madrid.



Cummins put his hands up in crisis and inspired Australia to a crucial 2-1 lead after initially going 0-1 down.

Pat Cummins sets the tone

With the series hanging in the balance after the drawn Gabba Test, the onus was on Cummins to put Australia back on top, and he did not let his team down. In the first innings at the MCG after the Aussies lost six wickets, Cummins joined hands with the stylish Steve Smith to build a priceless 112-run stand, also taking his team past the 400-run mark.Cummins made 49 off 63 and was unlucky to not reach his fifty, but gave Australia the much-needed kick in their first innings. With the ball, Cummins gave the hosts the first breakthrough after dismissing Rohit Sharma, who might be terribly out of form, but is more than capable of taking quality bowling attacks to the cleaners.ummins also cleaned up KL Rahul, after which he got rid of Bumrah to finish with figures of 29-6-89-3.

Australia coach defends Mitchell Marsh amid widespread calls to drop all-rounder

Border-Gavaskar Trophy: Australian coach Andrew McDonald has defended the role of out-of-form all-rounder Mitchell Marsh in the team ahead of the fifth and final Test against India.

New Delhi Australian coach Andrew McDonald has defended all-rounder Mitchell Marsh despite mounting criticism and widespread calls to drop him from the playing XI for the fifth and final Test in Sydney. Marsh has endured a dismal run in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar series, averaging just 10.42 with the bat and managing only one double-digit score across seven innings.This marks the second-lowest batting average by an Australian in a home Test series (minimum seven innings), behind

only Kim Hughes' 10.12 during the 1984-85 season. Marsh's contribution with the ball has also been minimal, apart from a couple of early wickets in Perth. Speculation about Marsh's fitness has circulated, but McDonald dismissed concerns of an injury, attributing Marsh's limited bowling involvement to tactical decisions.We haven't required him with the ball as often as what we would have thought. He bowled again today. His speeds are up in the high 120s. There are no injury concerns there," McDonald said during a media interaction on Monday."I think to sort of head that down that angle is a little bit unfair. We just haven't required him at certain times for whatever reason, so that's more a tactical implementation, as opposed to a body. "I think the amount of overs that we've been bowling across the series is probably going to be a benefit to us." Marsh's inclusion in the Test team came as a replacement for Cameron Green, who



missed the series due to back issues. However, with Green unavailable, Marsh's poor form has led to growing arguments for his exclusion, especially as Australia seeks to maintain their 2-1 series lead.

Complicating the selection dilemma is the potential unavailability of paceman Mitchell Starc, who may miss the Sydney Test due to injury. This could deter selectors from making multiple changes to a team fresh off a victory in Melbourne. McDonald acknowledged Marsh's struggles but noted his positive attitude within the camp. "Would he like better performances? Of course," McDonald said. "But he's in a good headspace after the win in Melbourne."

Should Marsh be dropped, all-rounder Beau Webster is on standby for a potential Test debut. Captain Pat Cummins is expected to confirm the final XI either on Thursday or at the toss on Friday.

Shweta Tiwari

Reacts To Palak Tiwari And Ibrahim Ali Khan Dating Rumours: 'They Will Forget...'

For a long time now, dating reports of Palak Tiwari and Ibrahim Ali Khan have been making headlines. While the two have repeatedly claimed that they are just good friends, Palak's mom, actress Shweta Tiwari has now said that such rumours do not bother her. In a recent interview, Shweta talked about Palak's dating reports and argued that such social media chatter is not relevant to her. "Rumors don't bother me anymore, in all these years I have realized people's memory only last for 4 hours. They will forget the news after that, so why bother? As per rumours, my daughter is dating every third guy, and I am getting married every year. As per the internet, I am already married thrice. These things don't affect me now, earlier they did when social media was not there and when some journalist never liked writing good things about you. Negativity about actors sell. After dealing with that era, this doesn't affect me," Shweta told SCREEN.

Palak Tiwari and Ibrahim Ali Khan's dating rumours first made



headlines in 2022 when they were snapped together by the paparazzi. Later, they were also spotted together at a concert in Mumbai, following which netizens were left confident that the two are indeed dating.

However, later in an interview with Siddharth Kannan, the Bijlee Bijlee fame clarified that they are just 'nice friends'.

"We were just out, and we got papped. It ends there. It's just that. In fact, we were with a group of people. It wasn't just us, but it got papped like that. It was the narrative that people liked the most, but that's it. We are nice friends. He is a very sweet guy. That's all there is to it. We talk sometimes and that's all," she had said. Meanwhile, on the work front, Palak Tiwari was last seen in Salman Khan's Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan.

Kangana Ranaut

Lauds Himachal Women, Calls Them 'Equal Or Better Looking' Than Preity Zinta, Yami Gautam

Actress turned politician Kangana Ranaut took to her Instagram stories recently to appreciate women from Himachal Pradesh. She called them hard-working and gave a shout-out to her fellow Himachal actresses like Preity Zinta, Yami Gautam, and Pratibha Ranta. Kangana shared a picture of herself with Preity, Yami, and Pratibha Ratna and wrote, "#peopleofhimachal When I go to

at her home. "Merry Christmas everyone, how are you all celebrating? I made gajar ka halwa for myself," she wrote.

On the work front, Kangana Ranaut is eyeing the release of her much-awaited film Emergency. The political drama, written, directed, and co-produced by Kangana, was earlier scheduled to be released on September 6 but was postponed due to the failure to get a clearance from the CBFC. Starring Kangana Ranaut as the former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi, the film delves into the time when an Emergency was imposed in India for 21 months from 1975 to 1977. Besides Kangana, Anupam Kher, Milind Soman, Mahima Chaudhry and Shreyas Talpade will also be seen playing key roles in the film. While Shreyas will be playing the role of Atal Bihari Vajpayee, Anupam Kher is set to portray Jayaprakash Narayan in the upcoming flick. Notably, the film will now be released in theatres on January 17.



Himachal and see our women equally or better looking than us work tirelessly in the fields no insta no reels raising cattle and making the ends meet. I feel they can definitely do with some hype. #himachaligenes #himachaliwomen." Recently, Kangana also celebrated Christmas at her home in Himachal. She shared a snippet of her celebration on social media and revealed that she decided to mark the festive occasion with 'Gajar Ka Halwa'. In the bunch of photos, she was seen enjoying the dessert while sitting on a comfy couch



Shalin Bhanot Makes First Appearance Amid Eisha Singh Dating Rumours, Reacts As Paps Ask About Bigg Boss 18



During the Weekend Ka Vaar episode of Bigg Boss 18, Salman Khan confronted Eisha Singh and questioned her relationship with Shalin Bhanot. Eisha clarified that she isn't romantically involved with him, and that he is just a good friend. Now, amid their dating rumours, Shalin Bhanot made his first appearance in the city. He was spotted by the paparazzi, and was asked about Salman Khan mentioning his name in the recent episode of Bigg Boss 18. In a video shared by Pinkvilla, Shalin Bhanot was spotted arriving at an eatery in Bandra, Mumbai. He looked dapper in an orange t-shirt paired with black jeans. The paparazzi asked him about yesterday's Bigg Boss 18 episode, during which Salman Khan mentioned him. "Kal ke episode mein aap hi ka naam chal raha tha," asked one photographer. In response, Shalin folded his hands, flashed a smile and said that he is glad he is being remembered. "Yaad kar rahe hain, achhi baat hai," he said humbly. Check out the video below.

Salman Khan Playfully Teases Eisha Singh With Shalin Bhanot's Name On Bigg Boss 18

For the unversed, in a recent Weekend Ka Vaar episode of Bigg Boss 18, Salman asked Eisha, "Whose was the last phone call you made before entering the house?" He then hinted at Shalin Bhanot and said, "Boyfriend nahi hoga, very close friend hoga, shayad main unko jaanta hoga, nature ke bahut he calm honge, Shalin honge," hinting at Shalin Bhanot. Eisha, however, clarified that Shalin is a good friend and claimed that the two are not dating. "Shalin is only my best friend. We have worked together, so of course, we share a very close bond, but there's nothing more to it," she said, adding, "Shalin and I share a close friendship, and I value him deeply. But that's all there is to it." Later in the episode, Karan Veer Mehra revealed that Shalin was always on a video call with Eisha while they were shooting for Khatron Ke Khiladi. However, Eisha denied all claims. She worked with Shalin Bhanot in the supernatural thriller show, Bekaboo, which went off air earlier this year. Meanwhile, Shalin Bhanot was a participant in Bigg Boss 16, which aired two years ago.

Kareena Kapoor Captures Adorable Moments Of Taimur And Jeh Skiing During New Year Vacation



The Pataudi family—Kareena Kapoor, Saif Ali Khan, and their sons, Taimur and Jeh—are soaking up the winter vibes abroad during their New Year getaway. Kareena recently made fans' weekend more delightful by sharing glimpses of her sons enjoying the snowy adventure of skiing. On Sunday, Kareena took to her Instagram stories to share endearing moments from their ski resort vacation. One picture featured Taimur Ali Khan, aka Tim Tim, dressed in his skiing uniform, ready to take on the slopes. Captured from behind, Taimur stood confidently with ski poles in hand, and Kareena lovingly captioned the image, "Mera Beta," accompanied by a red heart emoji.

Another heartwarming picture captured Taimur from the front, basking in the sunlight. Donning a red jacket, neon pants, and perfectly matching helmet and goggles, Taimur looked every bit the little skier. Kareena humorously wrote, "Don't ask me if I ski! I take my sons' pictures (accompanied by a red heart and a laughter emoji), someone needs to (accompanied by a star emoji)."

Jeh, on the other hand, brought his own charm to the vacation with his playful antics. In one picture, he is seen in full skiing gear, lying on the snow with a caption that read, "Meanwhile..." paired with a speak-no-evil and a laughter emoji. In another hilarious snapshot, Jeh is seen lying on the snow again, prompting Kareena to jokingly ask, "Does this count as skiing?"

The family's snowy adventure comes just days after Kareena shared festive pictures from their Christmas celebration.

The album was filled with warmth and joy, showcasing the family unwrapping presents, enjoying treats, and savoring moments by the Christmas tree. One picture of Kareena and Saif, cozily enjoying hot beverages next to a beautifully decorated tree, stood out as a fan favorite. On the professional front, Kareena Kapoor has an exciting year ahead. According to PinkVilla, she has signed on for a film that's being touted as one of the biggest and most ambitious projects in Indian cinema. The movie is expected to go on floors in January 2025 and is slated for a 2026 release. Meanwhile, Saif Ali Khan is gearing up for his role in Race 4, where he will be seen alongside Sidharth Malhotra.