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NEWS BOX

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

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

The Vestavia Hills Police Department is currently investigating the incident, but no public statements have been made regarding the cause of the accident.

A post on Meek's Instagram account Saturday said, "Our hearts are broken to share that Hudson Meek went home to be with Jesus tonight. His 16 years on this earth were far too short, but he accomplished so much and significantly impacted everyone he met." Specific details regarding a Celebration of Hudson's Life to be held on December 28, as well as how to contribute to a scholarship in Hudson's memory at Vestavia Hills High School in lieu of flowers, will follow. Please pray for Hudson's family and friends as we all process this sudden and tragic loss," the post further said.

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

Panama President Rules Out Talks With Trump Over Canal Threat

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

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

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

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

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

- 'No Chinese interference' -

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

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

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

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

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

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

The SpaceX game plan

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

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

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



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

detainees and to assess the health and humanitarian situation in #Yemen concluded today. We continue to call for the detainees' immediate release. As we were about to board our flight from Sana'a, about two hours ago, the airport came under aerial bombardment. One of our plane's crew members was injured. At least two people were reported killed at the airport. The air traffic control tower, the departure lounge -- just a few meters from where we were -- and the runway were damaged. We will need to wait for the damage to the airport to be repaired before we can leave. My UN and @WHO colleagues and I are safe. Our heartfelt condolences to the families whose loved ones lost their lives in the attack."

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

respect of international law, emphasizing that civilians and humanitarian workers must never be targeted. In a post on X, Guterres regretted the recent escalation between Yemen and Israel, and called the airstrikes on the Sanaa International Airport, the Red Sea ports and power stations in Yemen "alarming."

According to the UN Chief, the airstrikes reportedly resulted in numerous casualties including at least three killed and dozens more injured. He reiterated the call for all parties to cease military actions and exercise restraint. As per the Israel Defence Force (IDF), the Israeli Air Force conducted strikes on military targets belonging to Houthis on the western coast and inland Yemen. The attacks were carried upon the Houthi military infrastructure used for its military activities. The sites targeted included the Sana'a International Airport and the Hezay and Ras Kanatib power stations in addition to Al-Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Kanatib ports on the western coast.

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

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

Court judges". Such actions, the motion said, are "in violation of a public official's duty to uphold the law... and serve the public". If the opposition succeeds in its bid, South Korea will see its second impeachment of a head of state in less than two weeks, further destabilising its vibrant political scene.

It will also mark the first time South Korea has impeached an acting president. Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok would step in as acting president in Han's place. Holding an emergency press conference with cabinet members, Choi pleaded against the opposition's action. "An impeachment motion against the acting authority is no different from an impeachment motion against the entire cabinet," Choi said. "Our economy and people's livelihoods, which are walking on thin ice in a national emergency, cannot bear the expansion of political uncertainty surrounding the acting authority," he added.

True colors

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

Morocco migrant boat wreck on Dec 19 left 70 missing: Mali

WORLD. The sinking of a vessel carrying migrants in Moroccan waters on December 19 left 70 people missing, including 25 from Mali, that country's government said on Thursday. Around 80 migrants were on board the vessel heading for Spain, with "25 young Malians unfortunately identified among the victims", the government said in a statement. Eleven people were rescued, nine of whom were from Mali, it said in the statement, which cited embassies in the region, officials, victims' families and survivors.

Thousands of migrants attempt perilous sea crossings from African shores each year in hopes of reaching Europe, often in flimsy makeshift vessels. More than 10,400 migrants have died trying to reach Spain since 2024, including a record number heading



Israel Strikes Houthi Military Targets In Yemen

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

and Ras Kanatib power stations. In addition, the IDF struck military infrastructure in the Al-Hudaydah, Salif and Ras Kanatib ports on the western coast," the IDF said in a post on X. The IDF further said that military targets were used by the Houthi terrorist regime to smuggle Iranian weapons into the region and for the entry of senior Iranian officials. This is a further example of the Houthis' exploitation of civilian infrastructure for military purposes. The Houthi terrorist regime is a central part of the Iranian axis of terror, and their attacks on international shipping vessels and routes continue to destabilize the region and the wider world. The Houthi terrorist regime operates as an autonomous terrorist group while relying on Iranian cooperation and funding to carry out its attacks. The IDF will not hesitate to operate at any distance against any threat to the State of Israel and its citizens," the IDF concluded. This recent operation comes days after Israel had conducted a similar strike on December 19 on Houthi targets in Yemen. The IDF had announced that Israeli fighter jets struck Houthi targets in Yemen after the rebel group carried out repeated missile and drone attacks on Israel, The Times of Israel reported.



Russia Warns Against "Hypotheses" In Azerbaijan Airlines Crash

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

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

- Shrapnel strikes reported -

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



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

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

- Day of mourning -

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

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

15,000 Taliban fighters march to Pakistani border after deadly airstrikes

RNS: Tensions between Pakistan and Afghanistan have escalated sharply, with reports indicating that around 15,000 Taliban fighters are marching toward the Pakistani border. This comes in response to recent Pakistani airstrikes in Afghanistan's Paktika province, which targeted alleged Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) hideouts but resulted in significant civilian casualties. The airstrikes have sparked outrage from the Taliban regime in Afghanistan, which has condemned the attacks as "barbaric" and an act of "clear aggression," vowing retaliation. Pakistan's longstanding support of militant groups, including the Taliban, has backfired, creating a dual challenge for the country. The Afghan Taliban, now in power in Kabul, has become openly hostile towards Pakistan. At the same time, the TTP, a key ally of the Afghan Taliban, has intensified



attacks on Pakistani forces. Since the Taliban's return to power, Pakistan has witnessed a surge in terrorist attacks, with fatalities rising by 56% in 2023 compared to the previous year, according to the Center for Research and Security Studies. Over 1,500 people, including 500 security personnel, have been killed in these attacks. The TTP's increased aggression reflects the Afghan Taliban's success in establishing an

Islamic emirate, further complicating Pakistan's security situation. Recent incidents, such as the killing of 16 Pakistani soldiers at a checkpoint in northwest Pakistan, underscore the escalating threat. Pakistan's relationship with the Afghan Taliban has soured over allegations of cross-border terrorism and the Kabul government's failure to control the TTP. Measures by Islamabad, including trade

restrictions, mass expulsions of Afghan migrants, and stricter visa policies, have strained bilateral ties. The reported mobilization of Taliban fighters from Kabul, Kandahar, and Herat toward the Mir Ali border in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province marks a serious escalation in tensions, signaling a growing hostility between the two nations despite their historical ties.

Dr. Manmohan Singh's Last Rites Today, State Mourning Declared



New Delhi: Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh's last rites will take place tomorrow, with his final journey beginning at 9:30 AM from the Congress headquarters in New Delhi to Nigambodh Ghat for cremation. A state funeral will be held at 11:45 AM. His mortal remains will be taken to the Congress office in the morning, allowing the public and party workers to pay tribute. The nation has declared seven days of state mourning, lasting until January 1. During this period, the national flag will fly at half-

most across the country and at Indian missions abroad. A half-day holiday will also be observed in all Central Government offices and CPSUs tomorrow. The Union Cabinet expressed condolences, remembering Dr. Singh as an eminent statesman, renowned economist, and distinguished leader. A condolence resolution passed in his memory praised his contributions, particularly his role in India's economic reforms as Finance Minister from 1991 to 1996. The resolution also recognized his academic and public service legacy.

Ganesh from Bokaro to Represent Jharkhand Handball Team



Bokaro: Ganesh Venkatesh, a standout handball player from Bokaro, has earned a spot on the Jharkhand team for the 53rd Senior National Handball Championship, which is taking place in Kerala from December 26 to 29. The announcement was made by I Ahmed, Secretary of the Bokaro Handball Association, who highlighted Ganesh's exceptional performance and unwavering dedication as key factors behind his selection.

The Jharkhand team is set to depart for Kerala from Jamshedpur on Tuesday to participate in the prestigious competition. Ganesh's selection has garnered widespread celebrations throughout the sports community in Jharkhand, particularly in his hometown of Bokaro, where his achievement has been met with much pride.

Prominent members of the Bokaro District Handball Association, including President Ram Lakhan Mistry, Deputy Secretary Rajesh Kumar Singh, Treasurer Mithilesh Kumar Singh, Vice President TC Ghoshal, along with other key figures such as Pradeep Upadhyay, Jyoti Kumar Rawat, Mukesh Kumar, Sanjeev Kumar, Vandana, Meera Mishra, Vikas Kumar Soni, Yash Kumar, and Jugunu, have all extended their heartfelt congratulations to Ganesh for his remarkable accomplishment.

Four Policemen, Including Ex-SHO, Found Guilty in Rs. 25 Lakh Gold Theft Case

by Sumil Bajpai

Kanpur: In a significant development, four individuals, including former SHO of Rail Bazar Vijay Darshan Sharma, have been found guilty in the investigation of selling gold worth Rs. 25 lakh recovered from a thief. Police Commissioner Akhil Kumar is now preparing to take action against those involved.

The investigation, led by ADCP East Rajesh Srivastava, revealed that former SHO Vijay Darshan Sharma, under-training Inspector Ravindra Srivastava, Head Constable Aamil Hafiz, and car driver Akash were all complicit in the case. However, Head Constable Subhash Tiwari was cleared of any wrongdoing.

According to reports, the four guilty policemen visited a jeweler's shop where the stolen gold was melted down and the thief was released. Following the incident, Police Commissioner Akhil Kumar suspended five policemen, including Sharma, and ordered an investigation. While Inspector Vijay Darshan Sharma was reinstated after appealing to the High Court, the other suspended officers remain under investigation.

The case dates back to October 10, when more than Rs. 30 lakh was stolen from the home of teacher Shalini Dubey in Barra-6. At the time, Rail Bazar SHO Vijay Darshan Sharma arrested the thieves and recovered gold worth Rs. 25 lakh. However, it was later discovered that the gold was sold, and the thieves were released under suspicious circumstances, prompting further investigation.

Congress Party Workers Pay Tribute to Former PM Manmohan Singh



by Ashok Kumar

Godhar: Workers of the local Mahagathbandhan and the Congress Party gathered at the Congress Party office to pay tribute to the late former Prime Minister and renowned economist, Manmohan Singh, following his passing. In a solemn ceremony, the Congress flag was lowered, and a two-minute silence was observed in his honor.

The gathering remembered the significant contributions made by Singh, particularly his pivotal role in economic liberalization, the Right to Information (RTI) Act, MNREGA, the Aadhar ID system, and the Food Security Bill. Among those present at the tribute were senior MASS leader Hariprasad Pappu, State Congress member Ram Gopal Bhuwana, senior leaders Shriram Chaurasia, Sanjay Jaiswal, Laxman Tiwari, Satyapal Singh Broka, Awadhesh Paswan, Ramchandra Chauhan, Annu Paswan, Kendua Karkend Nagar Executive President Bittu Singh, Raju Saav, Rajkumar Rajbhar, Sanjay Chauhan, Munawar Hussain, Pramod Yadav, Rajesh Yadav, Rajesh Singh, and others.

DPS Chas Organizes Joyful Picnic for Students from Pre-Nursery to XII



Chas: Delhi Public School (DPS), Chas, hosted a vibrant picnic on December 26 and 27, 2024, for students from Pre-Nursery to XII, creating a joyful atmosphere of celebration and togetherness. The event was filled with excitement, as students presented cakes, bouquets, and handmade cards to express their gratitude towards their teachers and peers. The picnic featured various activities including sports, team-building games, and music sessions, offering students a chance to relax and bond with one another. A lively DJ session and a delicious meal added to the festive spirit of the day. Chief Mentor, Dr. Hemlata S. Mohan, praised the students' creativity and emotional growth, saying, "It's wonderful to see our students express their affection through such gestures, which contribute to their social and emotional development." Director Dr. Manisha Tiwari added, "This picnic celebrates togetherness and offers students a platform to unwind, build relationships, and showcase teamwork."

BSL Collaborates with Joy of Learning Foundation to Train Science Teachers



Bokaro: In a significant initiative to enhance the professional development of middle and high school science teachers, Bokaro Steel Limited's (BSL) Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Department has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Joy of Learning Foundation. The partnership aims to provide specialized training to educators in the fields of Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Environmental Science.

The MoU signing ceremony, held recently, was graced by Chief General Manager (Learning & Development) Mr. Manish Jalota and Director of the Joy of Learning Foundation, Ms. Anshumala Gupta, who were the chief guests of the event. The ceremony also saw the presence of Mr. Neeraj Tripathi, Senior Manager (CSR), along with other CSR Department officials, including Mr. Santosh Kumar, as well as participating teachers.

The Science Teacher Training Workshop, part of the MoA, will run until December 30, 2024, in Bokaro Steel City. A group of 45 selected middle and high school science teachers will undergo this comprehensive training. The first session was held at DAV Ispat Public School, Sector-8, and is the first in a series of four workshops scheduled over the coming months.

Designed to enhance teachers' abilities to deliver high-quality science education, the workshop will focus on critical topics in Physics, Chemistry, Biology, and Environmental Science. Participants will gain valuable skills in conducting inquiry-based experiments, fostering practical learning experiences, and developing the reasoning necessary for conceptual clarity in science. The training aims to bridge the gap between theory, observation, and practical experience, ultimately strengthening the educators' ability to nurture curiosity and critical thinking among students.

Urdu Teachers' Union Opposes Integrated Annual Leave Table for 2025



Ranchi: The Jharkhand Rajya Urdu Shikshak Sangh Central Committee convened an emergency meeting, chaired by General Secretary Amin Ahmed, to address issues with the state's integrated annual leave table for 2025.

The union representatives from across the state voiced strong opposition to the table, demanding corrections. If not amended soon, they threatened to reject the current schedule.

Following the meeting, the union submitted a memorandum to the State Project Director cum Director JCERT, urging the issuance of a separate leave table for Urdu and general schools, alongside rectifications in the integrated leave table. The memorandum emphasized that without these changes, the current table would not be accepted. Union leaders highlighted several issues, including the failure to implement a separate leave table, as promised by a JCERT notification on August 30, 2024. They criticized the integration of both school types under one table, causing ongoing problems for Urdu schools. The union also pointed out repeated errors from the 2024 holiday table in the 2025 version, such as incorrect holiday calculations for Urdu schools and reduced vacation days.

Key issues raised included the miscalculation of holidays falling on Fridays, affecting weekly holidays for Urdu schools, and discrepancies in festival dates. The union also requested more extended summer vacations and the inclusion of local holidays like Alvida Juma and Shab-e-Barat for all schools. The union leaders warned that if the department does not act swiftly, they will meet with the Education Minister for further action. The memorandum was also sent to the School Education Secretary, Deputy Director JCERT, and other relevant officials.

Present at the meeting were Union President Abdul Majid, General Secretary Amin Ahmed, and other senior members.

Project Jivika: Vedanta ESL Launches Agarbatti Manufacturing Unit for Rural Women

Bokaro: In a significant move to empower rural women, Vedanta ESL, in partnership with the Drishtee Foundation, has inaugurated an Agarbatti (incense stick) manufacturing unit under its flagship women empowerment initiative, Project Jivika.

The new facility, located in Madhuniya, Bokaro, aims to provide sustainable livelihoods for local women by offering skill development and entrepreneurial opportunities, an official announced.

The inauguration event saw the presence of prominent figures, including Kunal Daripa, Head of CSR at Vedanta ESL, Rajeev Ranjan, Project Lead at Drishtee Foundation, Pradeep Kumar, Mukhiya of Madhuniya Panchayat, and Abdul Jabbar, Ward Member.

Kunal Daripa, Head of CSR at Vedanta ESL, emphasized the transformative power of women in advancing economic and social progress. He said, "At Vedanta ESL, we are committed to empowering women through skill development and entrepreneurship. This Agarbatti manufacturing unit under Project Jivika provides women with the



tools and opportunities to become self-reliant and contribute to their communities."

The initiative has garnered strong support from the local community, with many women expressing optimism about the prospects it offers. The unit is expected to play a key role in connecting beneficiaries to broader markets, promoting rural entrepreneurship.

Project Jivika, a collaboration between Vedanta ESL and the Drishtee Foundation, focuses on improving the socio-economic status of rural women

through skill-based training and livelihood generation. The initiative supports women in various fields, such as bamboo handicrafts, poultry farming, mushroom cultivation, and detergent production. With a focus on market linkages, Jivika has already made a significant impact, fostering self-reliance and sustainable livelihoods. Given the growing demand for incense sticks in India and the enthusiasm shown by local women, the Agarbatti manufacturing unit presents a promising opportunity. The project

not only supports rural entrepreneurship but also utilizes locally sourced materials, aligning with Vedanta ESL's commitment to sustainability. The Drishtee Foundation, established in 2003, works to promote sustainability and shared prosperity in rural India, focusing on empowering women and fostering micro-enterprise development. Through its value chain approach, Drishtee links rural and urban markets, ensuring essential services and sustainable livelihoods in rural communities.

Arpita Mahila Mandal Supports Needy Workers with Winter Relief Initiative

Ranchi: Arpita Mahila Mandal, led by Mrs. Preeti Singh, President of the Officers Wives Association at CCL Headquarters, launched a humanitarian initiative to support contract workers during the winter season. The initiative aimed to provide essential relief to those facing the cold weather in Jawahar Nagar Colony.

As part of this charitable effort, the Mandal distributed relief materials to 32 contract workers. Each worker received two blankets, a



pair of socks, a food packet, and chuda to help them stay warm and nourished during the chilly weather.

The event was attended by Preeti Singh, along with

eta Singh, Poonam Jha, and Aarti Chandel.

This initiative reflects the Mandal's deep commitment to community welfare, showcasing a strong spirit of service and compassion. The effort not only provided much-needed relief to the workers but also sent a message of unity and cooperation within society.

Arpita Mahila Mandal is determined to continue its social welfare activities and extend support to the community in the future. Other esteemed members of the Mandal, including Shashi Duhan, Nisha Shukla, Rashmi Sharma, Triveni Inamdar, Neeta Lal, Sarita Saxena, Kavita Jha, Sonal, Sang-

BIT Sindri Mining Engineering Students Excel in Quiz Competition at CSIR-CIMFR

by Ravi Phillips

Sindri: BIT Sindri's Mining Engineering Department students demonstrated exceptional skill and knowledge at the Quiz Competition held on November 26, 2024, at CSIR-CIMFR, Dhanbad, in association with The Mining Engineers Association of India (MEAI), Dhanbad Chapter. The event was part of the observance of Indian Mining Day 2024 and saw the participation of several teams from colleges across Jharkhand and West Bengal.

Two teams from BIT Sindri's Mining Engineering Department stood out in the competition. Team One, consisting of Saurav Chatterjee (final-year) and Abhay Kumar (3rd-year), and Team Two,



featuring Satyam Kumar and Vansh Raj, displayed excellent technical knowledge, quick thinking, and exceptional teamwork throughout the event. Their hard work and dedication paid off on December 27, 2024, when Saurav Chatterjee and Abhay Kumar secured the first prize, while Satyam Kumar and Vansh Raj were

also awarded prizes for their outstanding performances. The students' achievements were a testament to their passion for the mining industry and their academic excellence. The event was graced by notable dignitaries, including Dr. Ajay Kumar, Director (Technical) of CMPDIL, and Dr. Arvind

Mishra, Director of CSIR-CIMFR, Dhanbad. BIT Sindri's Director, Dr. Pan-kaj Rai, extended his congratulations to the winning students.

Dr. P.K. Singh, Head of the Mining Engineering Department, along with the faculty members, expressed their pride in the students' accomplishments.

Reform-oriented, rose above muck of politics: PM Modi's tribute to Manmohan Singh

PM Modi also praised former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's dedication to his parliamentary duties and his ability to maintain relationships across party lines.



honest man, a great economist, and a leader who dedicated himself to reforms." The PM touched upon how Singh's bold moves as Finance Minister in the 1990s brought India out of its worst-ever economic crisis and ushered in an era of rapid growth. Singh had retired as a member of the Rajya Sabha, representing Rajasthan, in February this year. Before this, he represented Assam in the Upper House for six terms since 1991. PM Modi praised the Congress leader's dedication to his parliamentary duties and his ability to maintain cordial relations with politicians across party lines. "On the day his Rajya Sabha term ended, I recall that I said that as an MP, his loyalty is an inspiration to everyone. On important occasions, he used to come to Parliament in a wheelchair and do his duty as an MP," the Prime Minister said. "He rose above the muck of politics and always kept

PM Modi highlights Manmohan Singh's achievements as Finance Minister
Remembers Singh as a symbol of integrity and economist dedicated to reforms
Praises Singh's parliamentary contributions despite health issues

his ties with leaders of different parties. He was always available for everyone." Despite belonging to opposite sides of the political aisle, PM Modi said he had a deep appreciation and respect for Singh's simplicity and honesty. Even after Singh took a backseat from active politics, the Prime Minister remained in touch with him, revealing that he called up the Congress veteran to wish him on his birthday earlier in September. Reflecting on his personal equation with Singh, PM Modi added, "When I was the [Gujarat] Chief Minister, I used to have discussions on various national and international topics with him. Even after coming to Delhi, I used to meet him and speak with him on occasion. I will always remember those interactions."

New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday paid tribute to Dr Manmohan Singh, who died on December 26 at the age of 92. In a video message, PM Modi praised the former Prime Minister as a leader who rose above political divides, describing him as a reform-driven economist and a symbol of integrity. "We are all deeply saddened by the demise of former PM Dr Manmohan Singh. His passing is a setback to the whole nation," PM Modi said. "His life is an example for future generations regarding how we can rise above struggles and achieve greater heights. He will always be remembered as an

Rahul Gandhi Pays His Last Respects To Former PM Manmohan Singh

Congress MP Rahul Gandhi paid his last respects to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his residence in the national capital on Friday.

New Delhi. Congress MP and Lok Sabha Leader of Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi paid his last to former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his residence in the national capital on Friday. Congress MP Rahul Gandhi also offered condolences to the former PM's family. In his condolence message the Lok Sabha LoP said, "Manmohan Singh Ji led India with immense wisdom and integrity. His humility and deep understanding of economics inspired the nation. My heartfelt condolences to Mrs. Kaur and the family. I have lost a mentor and guide. Millions of us who admired him will remember him with the utmost pride." Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi Vadra, KC Venugopal, Devendra Yadav and several other party leaders were also present at the residence of the former PM. Several leaders and personalities



have paid their tribute to the former PM Manmohan Singh. Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived at the residence of the former PM to pay his last respects along with Union Ministers Amit Shah and JP Nadda. They offered condolences to his family in the hour of grief. Manmohan Singh passed away at AIIMS, Delhi, on Thursday evening at the age of 92 due to age-related medical conditions. He had a sudden loss of consciousness at home after which he was rushed to the AIIMS Delhi.

The mortal remains of the former PM will be kept at the All India Congress Committee (AICC) headquarters in Delhi for public viewing. As per the Congress party sources, the 'last darshan' will be scheduled for Saturday between 8:00 to 10:00 in the morning. All the party leaders including Rahul Gandhi and Sonia Gandhi will pay tribute to the former PM at the AICC office after which the last rites will be carried out. Dr Singh, renowned for introducing the 1991 economic liberalisation reforms as the Finance Minister of India, will be cremated near Rajghat, at the location where the last rites of Prime Ministers are performed. Manmohan Singh was born on September 26, 1932. Apart from being an economist, Manmohan Singh served as Reserve Bank of India governor from 1982-1985.

Shinde makes courtesy call on PM

Sources close to Shinde said that rather than giving due respect and share in power, his party, which has 61 MLAs, has been squeezed.

MUMBAI. After denial of the home ministry and due space in cabinet expansions, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde arrived in Delhi on Thursday and met Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Minister Amit Shah in Delhi. Sources close to Shinde said that rather than giving due respect and share in power, his party, which has 61 MLAs, has been squeezed.

Sources in the know said requesting anonymity: "First, BJP denied Eknath Shinde the top post. Later, it refused to concede the home ministry, and now, Shiv Sena is struggling to get the guardian ministry of Thane, Sambhaji Nagar, Nasik, and Kolhapur districts. Therefore, Eknath Shinde's meeting with top leaders of the BJP is very important and crucial. He has an excellent rapport developed in his previous 2.5 years in government. He may have aired and shared the



current political situations with the BJP leaders for solutions." They said the BJP was the single largest party with 132 seats in the state, but the alliance partners were equally responsible for the stability of the government. "We got the massive mandate that has to be respected; otherwise, it will go to waste." However, Shinde termed the

meetings courtesy calls after the NDA alliance registered a landslide victory in the Maharashtra state assembly polls.

He issued a sanitised statement to the media: "When I was chief minister of Maharashtra in the last 2.5 years, we showed how public-related work should be done. The way the people of Maharashtra voted us back into power shows they reposed faith in us. The central government is with us. The new innings under the leadership of Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis has started. Maharashtra has huge potential and capacity to develop." In a bid to obliquely explain the situation in the state, the sources referred to the Beed Sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh murder case and said the accused and mastermind, Walmik Karad, was yet to be arrested. "There is anger among the Maratha community for this reason."

How Manmohan Singh pulled India from brink of economic death

Through path-breaking reforms in the 1991 Budget, focused on liberalisation and privatisation, Manmohan Singh opened up India's economy. Here is what India Today reported on his economic reforms.

New Delhi. In 1991, India's economy was in a mess and on the verge of collapse. The situation was so dire that foreign exchange reserves were sufficient to cover only a few weeks of imports. It was then that Manmohan Singh, the then Finance Minister in the PV Narasimha Rao government, made his mark as an agent of change, unscrambling the economy. Through path-breaking reforms in the 1991 Budget, focused on liberalisation and privatisation, Manmohan Singh opened up India's economy. By dismantling the license-permit raj, allowing direct foreign investment of up to 51 per cent, and removing hurdles to facilitate foreign technology agreements, Manmohan Singh pushed India on a path of economic development and progress. The two-time Prime Minister passed away on Thursday after prolonged illness, leaving an indelible mark on the country's political history. The 92-year-old, who wore several hats as a bureaucrat and as a politician, was admitted to AIIMS, Delhi, on Thursday evening after a "sudden loss of consciousness".

On June 21, Manmohan Singh had planned to have some close friends over for lunch. That morning, his wife rang them up and suggested

postponing the lunch to the following day as some "sudden work" had come up. They agreed, and later when they sat down to watch the new government's swearing-in ceremony on TV, were amazed to see their friend being sworn in as finance minister.

Once in office, Singh quickly showed his new work-style. Mere days after he took over, he called a meeting of the eight top bureaucrats in the country, the secretaries to the leading ministries. Quietly, he told them that while he valued their "unquestionable talent and integrity", anyone who felt that he could not implement the Government's proposed rapid-fire policies must let him know. Nobody demurred, and "Singh finished with a simple, 'I need your help'".

He would, all right. Trying to unscramble the economy, and one with as many complications as India, needed a desperate team effort. With what followed in the next fortnight, amazement seemed like an understated reaction. Not just the finance minister's friends, but politicians, industrialists and government officials as well who couldn't quite believe the pace and possible scope of change: from all accounts, the devaluation of the rupee and trade reforms were



only the beginning of imminent policy changes. After years of lethargy, the government appears to be waking up to economic imperatives, initiating changes that are the most radical India has ever seen. Also, for once, there is a move to build a consensus about change, with the Opposition being used as sounding boards and the media as conduits to tell the population that the situation is terrible, and changes are necessary. Many people suggested that the IMF—pressing for deflation and deregulation in return for emergency loans—and not Singh, was the real agent of change. And hopes for a stable

economic future were tempered by fears of hard times ahead. But nobody was willing to detract from the importance of what the man was trying to do: making a move to clean up India's economic mess. The mess is prodigious. The government is over-extended with borrowings. The World Bank estimates that India owes the world \$70 billion (Rs 1,82,000 crore at post-devaluation rates of exchange). The Government's own figures are no less awesome. Weighed down with expenses at home, it is overspending by nearly Rs 40,000 crore annually, and makes ends meet only by borrowing hand over fist and printing more money (which is what the budget deficit is all about). While trade with the world has increased, imports have too, outstripping exports by more than Rs 10,000 crore. Behind these frightening numbers lie the intangibles: a power-hungry bureaucracy that is loath to trim itself; a public sector that uses up more money than it produces; monopolists fed on the principle of fiefdoms and purchasing licences; and a rural economy that thrives, in part, because the government subsidises its prosperity. The finance minister wants to end much of this.

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram calls Annamalai's self-flagellation 'theatrics'

Congress MP Karti Chidambaram criticised Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai's self-flagellation, calling it "sheer theatrics" and questioning its relevance in politics. Annamalai defended the act as a cultural penance, protesting DMK's inefficiency.

Tamil Nadu. Congress MP Karti Chidambaram mocked Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai's recent act of self-flagellation and vow to not wear slippers until the DMK government is overthrown. In a post on X, the Congress MP called it "sheer theatrics," and wrote, "This self-flagellation has no place in a mature political discourse. Wondering if some astrologer recommended this parikaram, barefoot, self-flagellation, visit to Lord Murugan's 6 abodes?"

Responding to criticism, Annamalai said the act was deeply rooted in Tamil culture and symbolised penance. "This is Tamil land. And this is the highest penance one can go through," he said, adding, "Everything cannot be normalised in Tamil society. One crime happens, and then you forget about it till the next crime happens. We are not here for critics because they will keep saying all this. We have chosen a path and we will walk in the path. We hope the Gods will guide us."



Annamalai flogged himself this morning after he promised to do so in a press conference yesterday to "take down all the evil." Explaining the rationale behind his self-flogging, Annamalai said the act was a form of protest against the continuous injustice in Tamil Nadu. He linked the event to recent controversies, including the incident at Anna University, calling it the "tipping point." "Anybody who understands Tamil culture will always know these practices are part of the land. Flogging ourselves, punishing ourselves, putting ourselves through very tough rituals, etc., are all part of this culture. It is not against any person or anything. It is against the continuous injustice happening in the state," Annamalai said. The BJP leader added that his decision to go barefoot until the DMK government is overthrown was a deliberate act of surrendering to a higher power. "In 2026, our goal is to remove DMK from power and to regain Tamil Nadu's lost glory," he declared.

"Did Jokes On Him, He Had Sense Of Humour": Vir Das On Manmohan Singh

New Delhi. Actor-comedian Vir Das, in his tribute to Dr Manmohan Singh, remembered joking about him on national television when he was the Prime Minister. Revealing that the former PM was fully aware of the jokes and was "okay with it," Mr Das said Dr Singh had a sense of humour. "Dr Manmohan Singh said that history would remember him kindly. I'm happy to see that's the case on social media today. He had a sense of humour. Personally, I remember being in my 20s and doing jokes about him on prime-time bulletins with our team having been made fully aware his office was watching and were okay with it," Mr Das wrote in a post on Instagram.

During the start of his career, Mr Das had anchored a comedy prime-time show on a news channel. According to Mr Das, the jokes made on Dr Singh were "not even that great" because they were "utterly immature" during that time. "He was the most powerful man in the country and we were doing jokes about him five nights a week on a mainstream news channel, that weren't even that great because we were utterly immature. Mind you, this wasn't even on a comedy show but as a part of a 9 pm news bulletin that every businessperson in the country watched. Think about how far-fetched that seems today," he said. Mr Das, who recently hosted the International Emmys, said that the mark of a "truly great, secure, and humble leader" is the ability to take a joke. "Great leaders understand that's part of the job, that powerful politicians and just have always been historically intertwined, and that taking humour within grace makes them so much greater. In that respect, he stood tall above any Indian leader in my lifespan. Rest in peace, Sir," he said.

Former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh died of age-related medical complications at the age of 92 on Thursday night. He had been in poor health for the last few months.

Known as the 'architect of India's economic reforms', Dr Singh was the PM for two terms in the Congress-led United Progressive Alliance government from 2004 to 2014. Born in 1932, Dr Singh studied at the University of Cambridge in the UK where he earned a First Class Honours degree in Economics in 1957. He also had a degree in Economics from Nuffield College at Oxford University.



The year of rapid strides in AI, space

EXCITING new advancements with potentially far-reaching implications were reported in the sphere of science and technology this year. Developments in artificial intelligence (AI) and space technology dominated 2024, garnering much public attention. While generative AI technologies became integral to laptops and smartphones, the world was surprised when Demis Hassabis, co-founder and CEO of Google DeepMind, was declared a co-winner of this year's Nobel Prize in chemistry. The recognition denotes the potential of applying AI in diverse fields. Hassabis has developed an AI model for creating new proteins — a breakthrough that can revolutionise the development of new medicines and vaccines.

In India, too, the application of AI technologies is picking up fast. Research related to AI is in progress, while the government has announced an AI Mission. In September, scientists at the Centre for Nano Science and Engineering, Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, made a major announcement that could impact AI and computing. They have developed a computing platform capable of storing and processing data in an astonishing 16,500 'conductance states' within a molecular film. Data storage and processing are limited to just two 'conductance states' in currently used digital computers. This could mean that complex AI tasks such as training LLMs (large language models) would not need supercomputers and could be handled with personal devices like laptops and smartphones in future. The new platform, developed by a team led by Sreetosh Goswami, is based on neuromorphic computing — computing that mimics the brain.

As the use of AI continued to spread to many areas, concerns were raised about potential ethical and privacy issues. India took baby steps for regulation with an advisory in March requiring companies engaged in AI to seek government permission before deploying certain AI models to prevent 'algorithmic discrimination' and the spread of deepfakes. Following the industry's objections that it would hamper innovation, the advisory was kept in abeyance. Globally, the European Union has taken the lead with its AI Act coming into force in August. It seeks to impose controls on providers of AI services based on their potential for causing harm. In space technology, the year saw significant developments towards achieving a fully reusable rocket. In October, private space firm SpaceX launched its Starship spacecraft using a 70-metre-tall rocket, Super Heavy, and made it return to the earth through controlled descent after launching the spacecraft. Not just this, the rocket was caught on the launch pad using a giant tower named Mechazilla with its gigantic robotic arms. The test demonstrated that rockets can be reused after they launch spaceships and satellites. At present, rockets burn down after propelling spacecraft in their orbit and some are partially usable. SpaceX CEO Elon Musk envisages refuelling of Super Heavy and its return to the launch pad within half an hour of its flight just like an aeroplane in the near future. Reusable rockets can bring down the cost of space transportation and change the dynamics of the space industry.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is engaged in developing a Reusable Launch Vehicle (RLV); it conducted an important test — horizontal landing — with its winged vehicle Pushpak in June. In 2023, the government announced a grand space vision for Amrit Kaal under which India would establish the Bharatiya Antariksha Station by 2035 and send an Indian to the moon by 2040. This year, formal approval was granted for the construction of the station, envisaging the launch of its first module by 2028. The space station could take a final shape by 2035 and its assembly would be taken up along with the human space flight initiative, Gaganyaan. As per the approvals granted in September, four missions under the Gaganyaan programme are expected by 2026.

India, however, is way behind China, which already has its space station running. China has also forged ahead with its lunar exploration. In June, it accomplished the first-ever mission for the retrieval of lunar rock samples from the moon's far side.

How India's economy can catch up with that of China

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

SOME economists say India was in the dark ages before 1991, when the economy was lit up with the IMF-induced reforms. I grew up in post-Independence India. The world did not seem dark. There was aspiration to build a new nation and exhilaration in learning new capabilities. I worked for 25 years with the Tata group, building enterprises; then as a consultant to 'learning enterprises' in the US and other countries for 20 years. I became a Member of India's Planning Commission in 2009, tasked to determine why India had lost the industrialisation race to China after 1991 and propose corrections to Indian policies. Let's step back into the pre-1991 history. India needed wheels for economic growth when it became independent: trucks to carry goods and buses for public transport. Four joint ventures were licensed in 1954 to produce such commercial vehicles; the Tata-Daimler Benz joint-venture was one. A multi-year phased manufacturing programme (PMP) was laid down in consultation with several foreign technology providers. Indian companies had to learn to produce more complex components in each phase with the technology provided by their foreign partners. The PMP in the automobile industry extended to 15 years, by the end of which 90 per cent of the vehicle had to be produced domestically.

The Tatas were good learners. Within 15 years, they produced trucks and buses to Daimler Benz's exacting standards, with over 95 per cent domestic content, incorporating components produced by hundreds of domestic companies, large and small, around the country. The Tata group established its own design and development centre in Pune, the first in India. When the technological tie-up with Daimler Benz ended, the group became free to export Indian-made vehicles. By the mid-1980s — before the 1991 liberalisation — Tata trucks and buses were running on roads of 50 countries, overtaking foreign competition. Sustainable economic growth is a process of enterprises in a country learning new skills and creating collective capabilities they did not have before. In a competitive world, late industrialists must learn faster than those ahead of them. A country's policymakers must create conditions for nurturing industries until they are strong enough for more open competition. That's how Germany, Japan, South Korea and China became industrial powerhouses. India lost the plot when, swayed by the Washington economics, it abandoned industrial policies prematurely. Ultimately, the race between countries is one between the abilities of their policymakers to learn faster. Chinese policymakers have proved to be faster

learners. The Chinese and Indian manufacturing and capital goods sectors were of comparable size in 1991. By 2010, China's manufacturing sector was eight times larger, its capital goods' sector 50 times and China was exporting machinery and computers around the world. The economy of a large country is a complex adaptive system. Many industries must grow together. Lopsided growth of one industry can harm others, weakening the economy. India cannot rely only on software/services growth. It needs more hardware/manufacturing. India's software industry has produced wealth for promoters of companies. They obtained the wealth from the arbitrage between low cost, English-speaking Indian engineers produced by IITs, and prices of software services abroad. The firms reaped the benefits of public investments in India's world-class engineering

schemes to promote manufacturing. It is also re-negotiating agreements with its trading partners. Liberal economists complain that these policies are a return to what, in their minds, were the dark ages before 1991.

Economists obsessed with Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth as a panacea for a nation's success are realising that policies to spur GDP growth are insufficient for all-round progress. Growth must be more inclusive and environmentally sustainable, too. Citizens are included in economic growth with jobs and livelihoods that provide them good incomes; poverty also reduces in an economically sustainable manner. Whereas price subsidies and unearned income support, which governments are politically compelled to give when the economy is not functioning well, are unsustainable in the long run. The evolution of India's industrial policy stalled



in 1991 because industrial policy was a bad phrase in the Washington Consensus' framework that swept the world with the fall of the Soviet Union. According to the new economic consensus, open trade across national borders and freedom for capital to roam the world is good for everyone. It is good for consumers everywhere, who can buy the best products at the cheapest prices. Unsurprisingly, the opening of the Indian economy was broadly supported by Indian citizens.

The catch is that citizens must earn enough to buy the products they are tempted to buy with open trade. For this,

they need to earn adequate incomes. The unintended consequence of India's open-market reforms is haunting the country now. Insufficient incomes, under-employment and inadequate social security — in agriculture, manufacturing and even services — is causing unrest nationwide. Industrial depth was forsaken in recent decades for growth stimulated by free trade, which spurred shallow GDP growth. India's post-liberalisation policies must be reassessed and reformed to create faster learning enterprises and more productive employment. Premature and muddled liberalisation made it easier for investors to do business, but harder for the common man to earn and live with dignity. Ultimately, there are no shortcuts to the nurturing of human assets for the growth of economy. It is good for the people and good for economic growth, too.

Detention revisited

Infra to back students who fail exams poor

THE Central Government's decision to scrap the no-detention policy in the schools it governs marks a significant shift in the approach to elementary education. Under the new framework, students of Central schools in classes V and VIII who fail their exams will now face re-examinations and, if necessary, be held back. The shift is geared towards promoting accountability and elevate learning results. Around 20 states and UTs have already scrapped the no-detention policy.

However, the policy change exposes a glaring gap: inadequate infrastructure to support detained students. Remedial programmes, personalised teaching approaches and extensive teacher training are essential. But they remain woefully underdeveloped. In their absence, detention risks punishing students for systemic failures rather than addressing their learning needs. This could exacerbate stigma, fear of failure and dropout rates, particularly among marginalised



communities. Tamil Nadu's refusal to implement such

measures serves as a cautionary tale of the policy's potential to undo progress made under the Right to Education framework.

At the same time, the implementation of the no-detention rule under the right to primary education has, over the academic sessions, faced criticism for diluting academic rigour and fostering complacency among students and educators alike. Year after year, various surveys and reports have highlighted alarming gaps in the basic literacy and numeracy outcomes of students. The fall in the academic standards expected of them does necessitate reform. But education reform must strike a balance between academic excellence and inclusivity. It is not enough to abandon old policies; we must also invest in a framework that enables every child to thrive. It should not come at the expense of a child's self-esteem or access to education.

Remembering Vajpayee, the tall statesman

The Vajpayee government not only boosted economic growth but also brought distant regions closer, fostering unity and integration.

TODAY, December 25, is a special day for us. The nation marks the 100th jayanti of our beloved former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee. He stands tall as a statesman and continues to inspire countless people.

Our nation will always be grateful to Vajpayee for being the architect of India's transition into the 21st century. When he took oath as PM in 1998, the country had passed through a period of political instability. In about nine years, we had seen four Lok Sabha elections. The people of India were getting impatient and sceptical about the government's ability to deliver. It was Vajpayee who turned this tide by providing stable and effective governance. Coming from humble roots, he realised the struggles of the common citizen and the transformative power of effective governance.

One can see the long-term impact of Vajpayee's leadership in so many sectors. His era marked a leap in the world of information technology, telecom and communications. This was particularly important for a nation like ours, which is also blessed with a dynamic yuva shakti. The NDA government under Vajpayee made the first serious attempt to make technology accessible to the common man. At the same time, there was foresight in connecting India. Most people still recall the Golden Quadrilateral Project, which connected the length and breadth of India. Equally notable were the Vajpayee government's efforts to enhance local connectivity and through initiatives like the Pradhan Mantri Gram Sadak Yojana. His government also gave a push to metro connectivity by doing extensive work for the Delhi Metro, which stands out as a world-class project. Thus, the Vajpayee government not only boosted economic growth but also brought distant regions closer, fostering unity and

integration.

Regarding the social sector, an initiative like the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan highlights how Vajpayee dreamt of building an India where modern education is accessible to all people, particularly for the poor and marginalised

sections. At the same time, his government presided over many economic reforms which set the stage for India's economic surge after several decades of following an economic philosophy which encouraged cronyism and stagnation. A wonderful example of Vajpayee's leadership can be seen in the summer of 1998. His government had just assumed office and on May 11, India conducted the Pokhran tests, known as Operation Shakti. These tests exemplified the prowess of India's scientific community. The world was stunned that India had done the tests and expressed its anger in no uncertain terms. Any ordinary leader would have buckled, but Vajpayee was made differently. And, what happened? India stood firm, with the government calling for another set of tests two days later, on May 13! If the May 11 tests showed scientific skill, the May 13 ones showed true leadership. It was a message to the world that gone were the days when India would buckle under threats or pressure. Despite facing international sanctions, the then NDA government stood firm, articulating India's right to safeguard its sovereignty while simultaneously being the strongest proponent of world peace. Vajpayee understood the Indian democracy and also the need to make it stronger. He presided over the NDA's creation,

which redefined coalitions in Indian politics. He brought people together and made the NDA a force for development, national progress and regional ambitions. His parliamentary brilliance was seen throughout his political journey. He belonged to a party with a handful

of MPs, but his words were enough to rattle the might of the all-powerful Congress party of that time. As Prime Minister, he blunted the criticisms of the Opposition with style and substance. His was a career spent largely in the Opposition Benches, but it never carried any trace of bitterness against anyone, even though the Congress stooped to new lows by going to the extent of calling him a traitor! He was also not one to cling to power through opportunistic means. He preferred to resign in

1996 rather than follow the path of horse-trading and dirty politics. In 1999, his government was defeated by one vote. A lot of people told him to challenge the immoral politics happening then, but he preferred to go by the rules. Eventually, he came back with another resounding mandate from the people. When it comes to commitment to protecting our Constitution, Vajpayee, again, stands tall. He was deeply impacted by the martyrdom of Syama Prasad Mookerjee. Years later, he was a pillar of the anti-Emergency movement. In the run-up to the 1977 elections after the Emergency, he agreed to a merger of his own party (Jan Sangh) into the Janata Party. I am sure it would have been a painful decision for him and the others, but safeguarding the Constitution was all that mattered to him.

It is also noteworthy how deeply rooted Vajpayee was in the Indian culture. Upon becoming India's External Affairs Minister, he became the first Indian leader to speak in Hindi at the United Nations. This one gesture showcased his immense pride in India's heritage and identity, leaving an indelible mark on the global stage. Vajpayee's persona was magnetic and his life enriched by his love for literature and expression. A prolific writer and poet, he used words to inspire, provoke thought and even offer solace. His poetry, often reflective of his inner struggles and hopes for the nation, continues to resonate with people across age groups.



NEWS BOX

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

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



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

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

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



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

Indian wrestling continues to grapple for survival

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

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

or any other person (including a spectator) during an International Match." The incident occurred at the end of the 10th over of Australia's innings on Day 1 of the Boxing Day Test in Melbourne when Kohli walked up to batter Sam Konstas and negligently bumped shoulders with him. Kohli admitted to the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Andy Pycroft of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees, eliminating the need for a formal hearing. Legendary India cricketer Sunil Gavaskar, speaking on the same pre-match show, expressed hope that Kohli would not be remembered for this incident.

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

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

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



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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

Deepika Padukone

Ranveer Singh Introduce Baby Dua To Paparazzi; Hold A Special Meet And Greet

Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh are proud parents to their three-month-old daughter Dua Padukone Singh. On Monday, the couple hosted a special informal meet and greet for the paparazzi, during which they introduced their baby girl Dua to the paparazzi. The couple also requested photographers to refrain from taking photos of their daughter.



Pictures of Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone from the meet and greet have gone viral on social media. While Deepika looked gorgeous in a beige gown, Ranveer donned an all-white outfit. They were also seen posing with the photographers. Paparazzo Viral Bhayani shared pictures from the meet and greet, and wrote, "Baby DUA who looks as angelic as an angel, is definitely all set to become the cynosure of every eye!" Check out some of the pictures below!

The photographers were reportedly invited to Deepika Padukone and Ranveer Singh's building's clubhouse to celebrate the arrival of their daughter Dua. During the meet and greet, Ranveer expressed how elated he is to have 'Laxmi' in his home. He also requested privacy for Dua, requesting the photographers to not take pictures of his daughter. Soon after, Deepika Padukone also joined the meet and greet, and the couple posed with the paparazzi for pictures. Ranveer Singh and Deepika Padukone welcomed their daughter Dua Padukone Singh on September 8, 2024. They shared the news of their daughter's arrival through a lovely post on social media. In November, the couple revealed that they have named her Dua, and explained its

significance. "Dua Padukone Singh 'Dua' : meaning a Prayer. Because She is the Answer to our Prayers. Our hearts are filled with Love & Gratitude. Deepika & Ranveer," they wrote. They also shared a little glimpse of baby Dua's tiny feet.

On the professional front, Ranveer Singh has several exciting projects lined up. He will next be seen in Farhan Akhtar's Don 3, alongside Kiara Advani. He also has Aditya Dhar's action thriller Durandhar, co-starring R Madhavan, Sanjay Dutt, Arjun Rampal and others. Meanwhile, Deepika Padukone was last seen in Rohit Shetty's Singham Again.



Sophie Choudry

Enjoys Karan Aujla's Mumbai Concert With Munawar Faruqui, Riyaz Ali

Karan Aujla, the Punjabi singing sensation, set the stage ablaze with his energetic performance on Sunday in Mumbai. The concert, which was a part of the singer's It Was All A Dream tour in India, turned out to be a star-studded affair as the who's who of the entertainment industry attended the grand event. Among all, singer and actress Sophie Choudry had a

stage with singer AP Dhillon by his side. Excited to see the duo, Sophie wrote in the caption, "Epic Epic Epic." A video also featured the trio grooving to Aujla's superhit track Tauba Tauba from the film Bad Newz at the grand event. Sharing the video on her stories, the actress wrote, "This song is just such a banger."

Sophie opted for a black sleeveless top, while Munawar was seen in a red loose-fitted shirt paired with a cap. Riyaz, on the other hand, opted for a T-shirt.



blast as she arrived with Bigg Boss 17 winner and comedian Munawar Faruqui and social media influencer Riyaz Ali. Taking to her Instagram stories, Sophie shared a series of pictures and videos from Aujla's Sunday concert in Mumbai. In one of the snaps, she could be seen grooving to the song Ho Gaya Pyaar Ni along with Munawar and Riyaz. "What a night!!!" she wrote in the caption.

The singer had a two-day stint in Mumbai with his concerts being held on December 21 and 22. Apart from Sophie, filmmaker Karan Johar also attended the event on Sunday night. He was accompanied by actress Neha Dhupia, who also shared a clip showing the director enjoying Aujla's foot-tapping performances. The Kuch Kuch Hota Hai director re-shared Neha's story and wrote, "Tauba Tauba I had a super time at the Karan Aujla concert!!! He's such a showman!!! Thanks Neha."

Actors Vicky Kaushal and Parineeti Chopra not only attended the concert but also joined the singer on stage. The major surprise came in with Vicky and Aujla performing their hit number, Tauba Tauba, breaking the audience into cheers and applause.



Anupamaa: Alisha Parveen Removed From Show Because Of Rupali Ganguly? Actress Says 'Maybe, Yes...'



Ever since Alisha Parveen has been ousted from Anupamaa, rumours claiming she has been removed because of Rupali Ganguly have been making headlines. Now, Alisha has also reacted to these rumours. In a recent interview, the actress opened up about her bond with Rupali and shared a cryptic response.

"I too have heard of these rumours and know that these things have been linked up with her. I have read about this in the fan messages too. People said ke unhone hi karwaya hai, it's DKP (Director's Kut Production) behind it, it's Rupali mam behind it. Exactly Kya hai ye main kaise batau ab (People said that they have done it, it's DKP behind it, it's Rupali mam behind it. Exactly what is the case, how can I say). Maybe yes, maybe no, I don't know. Maybe nothing," she told India Forums. Alisha mentioned that she shared a very professional relationship with Rupali and that their dynamics were good.

Alisha used to play the role of Ruhi in Anupamaa. However, earlier this week, she alleged that she was ousted from the show without any notice. "It is shocking and disappointing. I am not sure what exactly happened and why I am being replaced! Today was my last day on the set of Anupamaa. It was a fantastic opportunity and everybody loved my chemistry with Shivam Khajuria. But I have no clue why I was suddenly replaced," she told ETimes. "I had a meeting yesterday and was told about this decision. I am completely clueless but it happens sometimes. I will focus on my future projects now," the actress added.

It should be noted that Rajan Shahi has not reacted to Alisha's exit from Anupamaa as of now. Anupamaa is a popular show that has been ruling the TRP charts for years now. However, in recent times, several actors have left the show due to personal reasons.

Aadar Jain Passionately Kisses Fiancée Alekha Advani, Celebrates Her Birthday In Thailand



Alekha Advani is celebrating her birthday today, and her fiance Aadar Jain just made her day even more special! The lovebirds are currently holidaying in Phuket, Thailand, and Aadar has shared some stunning pictures from their vacay to wish her. The first picture shows them sharing a passionate kiss by the beach, and the photo has gone viral! On Monday, Aadar Jain took to his Instagram account to share a series of pictures from his vacay with Alekha.

The first picture shows him holding her close as they shared a kiss at the beach. Alekha is seen in a white bikini, while Aadar donned black shirts as they posed romantically against the backdrop of the gorgeous sunset. They carved out their initials in the sand, with 'A&A' written inside a heart. The next picture shows Alekha sitting on the swing at the beach. "Happy Birthday Fiancé," wrote Aadar, while sharing the pictures. Commenting on Aadar's post, his cousin Karisma Kapoor wrote, "Happy birthday Alekha @alekhaadvani."

Aadar also took to his Instagram stories to share a few glimpses from Alekha's birthday celebration at a beach in Phuket. One picture shows her posing with a chocolate cake. Check out the pictures below!

Aadar Jain and Alekha Advani had their Roka ceremony in November, in Mumbai. The intimate ceremony was attended by members of the Kapoor clan including Kareena Kapoor Khan, Karisma Kapoor, Neetu Kapoor, Ranbir Kapoor, Navya Nanda, and many others. Several photos and videos from the Roka ceremony went viral on social media.

For the unversed, Aadar Jain is the son of Rishi Kapoor's sister Rima Jain, and Manoj Jain. Aadar and Alekha made their relationship Instagram official in November last year. It was in September this year that Aadar proposed to her during their vacay in the Maldives. Sharing lovely pictures from the proposal, Aadar wrote, "My first crush, my best friend & now, my forever." Aadar was earlier in a relationship with actress Tara Sutaria, but they reportedly broke up in January last year.

On the professional front, Aadar Jain has starred in movies such as Qaidi Band, Hello Charlie and Mogul.