

## 13 dead, 99 rescued as Navy speed boat rams into ferry off Mumbai coast

New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) Thirteen people, including a Navy official, died as a naval vessel collided with a passenger ferry off the coast of Mumbai on Wednesday. The Navy said the accident occurred when the Navy speed boat undergoing engine trials lost control and collided with the passenger ferry, Neelkamal, off Karanja, Mumbai. The ferry was carrying passengers from Gateway of India to Elephanta Island. The accident led to the loss of 13 lives, including a navy personnel and two persons employed with the speed boat-making company. They were on board the naval boat for the trials, the Navy said. Search and rescue efforts were launched by the Navy in coordination with the Coast Guard and



Marine Police. Four naval helicopters, 11 naval craft, a Coast Guard boat and three Marine Police boats are carrying out the rescue work. The survivors were picked up by the Navy and civil craft in the area and have been transferred to jetties and hospitals in the vicinity. So far 99 people have been rescued. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh

posted on X, "Deeply saddened by the loss of precious lives in the collision between passenger ferry and Indian Navy craft in Mumbai Harbour. My heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families. Extensive search & rescue efforts are ongoing by the Indian Navy and Coast Guard, deploying multiple assets, to locate missing persons."

## Priyanka Gandhi, Shrikant Shinde likely in Parliament panel on simultaneous polls

New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) Priyanka Gandhi Vadra and Manish Tewari are set to be among the Congress representatives in the Parliamentary panel that will scrutinise the two Bills proposing simultaneous Lok Sabha and state Assembly polls, while Kalyan Banerjee of the Trinamool Congress and P Wilson of the DMK are also expected to be its members, sources said.



mittee. The Speaker will take a final call on the names for the panel and its chairperson.

Sukhdeo Bhagat and Randeep Surjewala are the Congress' other choices for the joint committee of Parliament. Saket Gokhale of the TMC and T M Selvaganapathi of the DMK are also expected to be part of the panel.

The sources said P P Chaudhary is also being considered as the probable BJP choice for the panel in which the saffron party

and its allies will be in a majority due to their numerical superiority in Parliament.

While Prasad, a well-known lawyer, has held the portfolio of law minister in the previous Modi government, Chaudhary was a deputy minister in the crucial ministry. The two 'one nation, one election' (ONOE) Bills, including one requiring an amendment in the Constitution, lay down the mechanism to hold simultaneous elections.

## Sharad Pawar meets PM Modi with a group of farmers

► This is first meeting between Pawar and Modi since the complete rout of Mahha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra Assembly polls

New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) The last time Nationalist Congress Party (SP) chief Sharad Pawar met Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the meeting had generated a lot of political buzz. Today, after a few years, Sharad Pawar, a leading light of the Opposition alliance, again called on Prime Minister Modi at his Parliament House office. He was accompanied by some farmers from the Vidarbha region of Maharashtra, with the Prime Minister's office putting out images of the meeting that looked warm and congenial on the face. This is the first meeting between Sharad Pawar and Modi since the complete rout of the opposition Mahha Vikas Aghadi in Maharashtra Assembly polls. Sharad Pawar's NCP(SP) is a major constituent of the Aghadi which lost comprehensively at the hands of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance coalition in the state. Pawar and other constituents of the Aghadi have



been alleging Tampering of the electronic voting machines as a possible reason behind the Opposition debacle in the state. The Agadi partners

have even approached the election commission in this matter. The Pawar and Modi meeting at the height of this distrust is important.

## Shri Ram Katha will be organized by Shri Sanatan Dharma Prachar Samiti Agrawal Sabha Delhi



New Delhi: Shri Ram Katha Paath will be organized by Shri Sanatan Dharma Prachar Samiti Agrawal Sabha Kailash Nagar from 20 December to 29 December. On this, different stories will be narrated every day by the narrator Acharya Mahamaya Prasad Shastri ji. Patron of the organization Narayan Agarwal Ghee Wale told that 1000 women will start the journey by carrying Kalash in the Katha. On this occasion, Pradhan Arun Gupta Pappu Bhai Social Worker told that this sto-

ry will run for 9 days by the learned Pandit Acharya Mahamaya who has come from Uttarakhand. Thousands of people will be present in this Katha and will enjoy the Katha. This time more number of devotees are participating in the Katha as compared to last year. Due to more crowd in the Katha, special cooperation is also being received from the police administration. Special arrangements have also been made by the organization to ensure that the devotees do not

face any kind of problem. In view of the crowd at the Katha venue, many LED TVs have also been installed so that the devotees can listen to the narrator through TV. On this occasion, patron Narayan Agarwal Ghee Wale, head Arun Gupta Pappu Bhai, Rohit Jain, Rahul Gupta, Abhishek Gupta, Dinesh Mittal, Puneet Jain, Ashok Agarwal Radha Hosiery Wale, Mahendra Agarwal, Puneet Jain etc. will play an important role as organizers in the Katha.

## Lok Sabha proceedings adjourned amid CNG uproar over Shah's Ambedkar remarks

New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) Lok Sabha proceedings were adjourned for the day on Wednesday amid noisy protests by Opposition members seeking an apology from Home Minister Amit Shah for his remarks which they claimed were an insult to B R Ambedkar. When the House reconvened at 2 pm, the protests continued.

Soon ministers and MPs tabled parliamentary documents amid the din. Following which P C Mohan, who was chairing the proceedings, adjourned the House for the day. When the House was adjourned for the day, most Opposition members excluding those from the TMC

were on their feet raising slogan of 'Jai Bheem' and seeking an apology from Shah. Most Congress members were in the Well raising slogans.

Earlier, the House was adjourned till 2 pm as Congress members trooped into the Well displaying posters of Ambedkar and sought an apology from Shah for his remarks during a discussion in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday. Some members of INDIA bloc were also in the Well of the House. Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi was present in the House along with his sibling Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. Members of other Opposition parties, including from Trinamool



Congress, stood at their seats in support of the Congress.

Law Minister Arjun Ram Meghwal countered the Congress, saying the party has always insulted Ambedkar and ensured his defeat in the Lok Sabha elections. The minister also claimed that the Congress has now

been forced to take the name of Ambedkar though the party does not respect him.

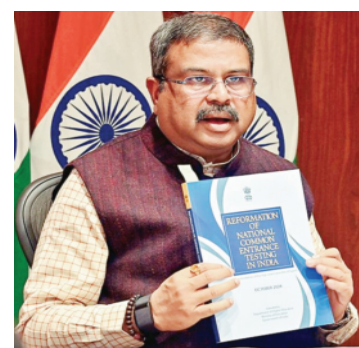
Speaker Om Birla asked the members to allow the Question Hour to continue but as the din continued, the proceedings went on for less than two minutes before being adjourned till 2 pm.

## NTA to hold entrance exams only: Pradhan

New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) Starting 2025, the National Testing Agency (NTA) will no longer conduct recruitment examinations, instead it will focus only on entrance examinations for higher educational institutions. Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan on Tuesday said the decision has been made as per the high-level committee set up in June this year following allegations of National Eligibility-cum-Entrance Test (NEET) paper leak. He said there

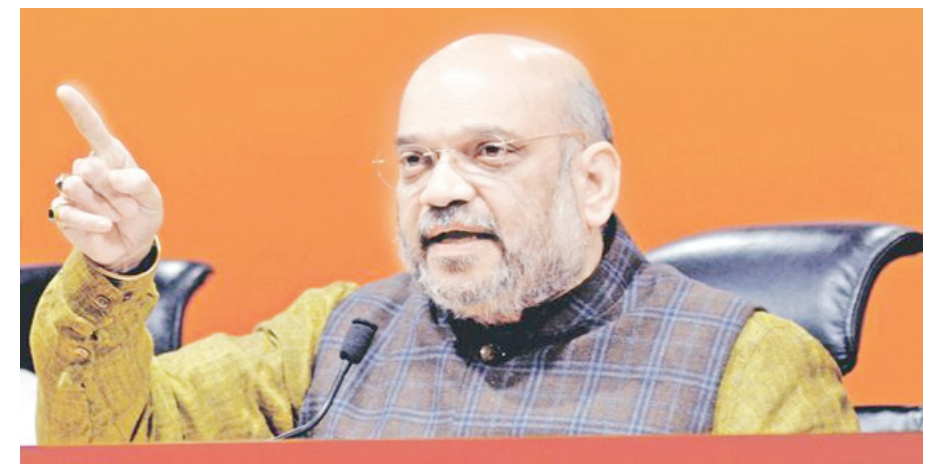
are ongoing discussions between education and health ministries whether NEET will be conducted in pen-paper mode or online mode. The decision on the conduct of NEET examination will be finalised within a week, Pradhan said. "The administrative ministry of NEET is the Health Ministry and we are in talks with them about whether NEET should be conducted in pen and paper mode or online mode. We have had two rounds of talks with the Health

Ministry. As now talks at secretary level is one. Whatever option will be considered best suited for conducting the exam, NTA is ready to undertake the exercise," Pradhan said. Recruitment exams such as All-India Council for Technical Education, National Institute of Technology (non-teaching), Military Nursing Service Recruitment Exam (MNS) and National Highway Authority of India recruitment exams were conducted by the NTA apart from entrance



exams like NEET-UG, JEE, CSIR NET, CSIR JRF among all.

## Congress twisted facts, distorted my statement on Ambedkar: Amit Shah



New Delhi, Dec 18 (GNS) Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Wednesday accused the Congress of twisting facts and distorting his comments in the Rajya Sabha related to BR Ambedkar after BJP leaders "exposed" the opposition party's repeated "insults" to the architect of the Constitution.

Addressing a press conference here, Shah alleged that the Congress in the past has also misrepresented his and even PM Narendra Modi's comments to spread confusion and mislead people.

"I condemn the Congress for twisting facts. Why did it happen? It happened because BJP leaders spoke on how the NDA governments upheld the Constitution and established with facts that the Congress is anti-Ambedkar, anti-Constitution and anti-reservation," Shah told reporters here. The senior BJP leader said the Congress also insulted VD Savarkar and blew to smithereens the values enshrined in the Constitution by imposing Emergency. "When all these facts came out, the Congress used its old tricks and made an effort to mislead society by presenting twisted facts," Shah said.

He said he comes from a party that can never insult Ambedkar. Asked about Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's demand for his resignation, the home minister said in a lighter vein that he can quit if this will make the Congress president happy but it will never solve his problems. He has to remain in his chair, a reference to his party being in the opposition, for 15 more years, Shah said.

# Farmers can be part of the climate change solution

Many farmers probably haven't read the new report from the United Nations warning of threats to the global food supply from climate change and land misuse. But we don't need to read the science — we're living it. Here in the San Joaquin Valley (California), one of the world's most productive agricultural regions, there's not much debate anymore that the climate is changing. The drought of recent years made it hard to ignore; we had limited surface water for irrigation, and the groundwater was so depleted that land sank right under our feet. Temperatures in nearby Fresno rose to 100 degrees or above on 15 days last month, which was the hottest month worldwide on record, following the hottest June ever. (The previous July, temperatures reached at least 100 degrees on 26 consecutive days, surpassing the record of 22 days in 2005.) The heat is hard to ignore when you and your crew are trying to fix a broken tractor or harvest tomatoes under a blazing sun. As the world heats up, so do our soils, making it harder to get thirsty plants the water they need. With state-of-the-art science, innovation and sound public policy, farmers can work to make sure this latest dire warning about the warming planet does not become self-fulfilling. The valley's characteristic winter

tule fog is also disappearing, and winters are getting warmer. Yields of many stone fruits and nuts that feed the country are declining because the trees require cool winters and those fogs trap cool air in the valley. Warm winters also threaten the Sierra Nevada snowpack, which provides 30 per cent of California's water. We had a good wet winter this year, but a few years ago the snowpack was at its lowest level in 500 years. We also worry that last year's record California wildfires, which blanketed the valley with smoke for weeks, might become the new normal. I don't get sick much, but that summer I had a hard time breathing because of the congestion in my lungs. The latest report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change reinforces our anxiety. It warns of declines in food yields, instability in food supplies, increased soil erosion and threats to water availability in coming decades. The global food supply system is a big contributor of the greenhouse gases that are warming the planet, the report added. As The Times reported recently, without "action on a sweeping scale" the warming climate will intensify "the world's droughts, flooding, heatwaves, wildfires and other weather patterns" and speed up "the rate of soil loss and land degradation." The good news is that

farmers can be part of the solution. At our 4,000-acre farm, where we primarily grow tomatoes, we started planting winter crops that require less water, like garbanzo beans and garlic. When necessary, we leave some fields unplanted for part of the year to save water for our high-value almond and pistachio trees. We switched to drip irrigation long ago, which efficiently delivers water to crops at their roots under the soil, protected from the hot sun. We try to take great care of our soil's health and we keep learning how to do it better. A living soil with lots of organic matter absorbs and holds more water and nutrients, retains more topsoil and grows healthier plants that survive increasing pressures from pests and diseases. After harvesting our fall crops, we now use cover crops that return carbon and nitrogen to the soil and nourish the microbes and fungi essential for a living soil ecology. The plants and soil organisms work together to pull carbon out of the atmosphere and draw it down into the root zone. We minimise disturbance of our land by decreasing tillage, which protects these microorganisms and keeps carbon in the soil, where it belongs. Rather than being a source of carbon emissions, farms could store carbon where it's needed to grow food. This has been good for our business, too. We spend less on water,



energy and fertiliser and are getting good yields. We and other farmers here are constantly experimenting with new approaches to keep soils healthy. We're part of a work group at the University of California, Davis, Cooperative Extension, where we learn about the science and share successes and failures with other farmers. Research and education like this are essential for farmers who are too busy growing food to keep up with the latest science and technologies. The science is clear that the challenges facing agriculture will only become more dif-

ficult, and in unpredictable ways. Farmers will need more financial incentives to adopt practices that encourage healthy soils and water conservation, like government grants or cost-sharing arrangements. That kind of support would lower the barriers of cost and risk that farmers now face in trying new, climate-friendly ways of farming. With state-of-the-art science, innovation and sound public policy, farmers here and elsewhere in the United States can work to make sure this latest dire warning about the warming planet does not become self-fulfilling.

## Moon dust could give astronauts permanent DNA damage, study finds

In space, they say, no one can hear you sneeze. But Apollo 17 astronaut Harrison Schmitt was doing a lot of that inside the Challenger command module when he visited the moon in 1972. One day, after a lunar walk, Schmitt accidentally breathed in some of the abundant moon dust that he and his commander had tracked back in to the Challenger living quarters. For a full day, Schmitt suffered from what he described as "lunar hay fever." His eyes watered, his throat throbbled, and he broke into a sneezing fit. No, Schmitt wasn't allergic to the moon. NASA scientists now understand that pieces of moon dust — especially the smallest, sharpest particles — pose clear health risks to astronauts.

A recent study published in the April issue of the journal *GeoHealth* examined exactly how dangerous that dust can be on a cellular level — and the results are as ominous as the dark side of the moon. In several lab tests, a single scoop of replica moon dust proved toxic enough to kill up to 90 per cent of the lung and brain cells exposed to it. [5 Mad Myths About the Moon] Dust on the moon behaves a little differently than dust on Earth. For starters, it's sharp.

Because there's no wind on the moon, the dust never erodes. Instead, grains of moon dust — which are largely the products of micrometeorite impacts — remain sharp and abrasive and can easily slice into an astronaut's lung cells if breathed in too deeply. On top of this, moon dust can float. With no atmosphere to protect the moon from constant bombardment by solar winds and the charged particles they carry, lunar soil can become electrostatically charged like clothing with static cling. "This charge can be so strong that the soil particles actually levitate above the lunar surface," the authors wrote in the new study. From there, it's easy enough for dust to cling to the nooks and crannies of an astronaut's spacesuit and follow him or her back inside living quarters. These loose particles can clog sensitive equipment, jam zippers, ruin clothing.

## Off the cuff: How easy is the fall from grace

► Parakeet's living nightmare is playing a game of patience with a grey-and-ginger cat



The early bird, they say, gets the worm. Or, put another way, the early worm meets the bird. There's no escape for the poor, industrious, soil-turning earthworm once it is spotted from the treetop by a sharp-sighted bird. Gone, in one fell swoop! It is also, I believe, the one and only time that a worm will — however briefly — experience the headiness of being airborne before everything comes to an end. But here's an account — a true account — of a sand tray, crawling with worms ... and every one of them ends up lucky. Lucky, despite being in the direct line of sight of not one but a whole flock of birds: parakeets. Rainbow-coloured and raucous. It is the dead of winter but that, apparently, is when the eucalyptus trees here decide to bloom. Pink blossoms stand out against the pale green leafage, waving in the gentle breeze. The air outside may be icy; cold enough, one would think, to suggest migration to any sane bird. But the parakeet apparently entertains no such notion. If it's going anywhere, it is from its nest straight to the nearest eucalyptus tree. The flock just off my balcony are daily visitors. Their appetite is insatiable. They will sip nectar from the eucalyptus blossoms from the crack of dawn until it's time to go home. That is the extent of their industry. The nectar, I'm convinced, is so addictive that the birds cannot abandon their drinking habits. They will drink, fly away briefly on a cloud of euphoria and return before 20 seconds have elapsed. Then they will engage in another round. And another. By mid-afternoon, the drinking starts taking its toll. The copious amount of nectar consumed begins to go to the head. Anyone observing these amusing antics would assume that now's the time to call a halt to

this hyper-liquefying and try, instead, to find something solid to consume: like a few worms. In fact, there's a tray full of them on the balcony, in plain sight. But either the parakeets have no appetite for worms after a belly full of nectar, or they simply cannot see the worms any longer — their noted sharp sight has been dulled, or even distorted. With the nectar making their heads swing it's anybody's guess what the worms look like to a parakeet in this state. What's clear is that the birds are not in the least interested in the worms. And the worms, if they only knew it, would be astounded at their luck. Only, they haven't a clue. And the parakeets, some of them totally inebriated by now, also haven't a clue as to how things might pan out for them after this session of wild partying on the eucalyptus tree. In the past, I have watched a few of them consume so much that they've lost control of their faculties entirely. I've observed them clutching desperately to a branch while their little feathered rainbow-hued bodies battle the loss of stability and equilibrium. On a few occasions, a timely (or inopportune) gust of wind has caused what little gripping-facility remained in the claws to come undone, causing the bird to slip off the branch and fall, without even trying to flap and fly, to the ground. My apartment is situated on the third floor, but if I leaned over the balcony and looked down I would see — not a fallen bird — but the parakeet's living nightmare, seated under the tree, waiting, playing out this game of patience: a grey-and-ginger cat, of course. I have spotted it once, slinking away from public view, mouth full of rainbow feathers. And I'm reminded, there's a lesson to be learned about the dangers of excess: how easy it is to fall from grace.

## Living together as a nation is a moral choice

Are we a nation? Does the natural diversity of the Indian social landscape undermine Bharat, the *rashtra*? Do we need to homogenise to become a nation? Does being a nation undermine our diverse identities? Logic, common sense and the experience of living in India suggest these to be red herrings. Diversity is natural to human existence. Only Indians, since the British pointed it out, make a fetish out of it and constantly talk either of nurturing diversity or of diversity being under threat. It requires an extraordinary kind of insularity to presume that diversity is unique to India. All people have it. Diversity exists in all nations.

Even those that claim to be governed by a single religion, caste, tribe or language. The defining feature of a nation — at least a civilised and caring nation — is the desire and ability of the people to live together rather than fighting with each other over the natural dissimilarity in belief patterns, religions, languages, food choices and preferences for conjugal living etc. France has 25 regional languages, each regional language has many sub-groups. A report written for the French Government in 1999 identified 75 languages as regional or minority languages. China has eight main dialects, each of which has hundreds of variations, not counting minority languages like Mongolian or Tibetan and their variations. The religious universe is equally diverse.

A Pew report of 2017 identified 13 countries, including the United Kingdom, where Christianity is the state religion. And yet, only 59 per cent of the people in the UK practice Christianity. Even fewer follow the Anglican denomination which is the one that is the 'state religion'. Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Hinduism are the other minority religions. One-quarter of the UK said they did not practice any religion. None of this leads France, China or the United Kingdom or any other country, to wonder whether they are a nation or a nation-in-the-making.

In India, historically speaking, people revel in how unique they are and superior to others. An almost impermeable layer of superiority also makes them quite contemptuous, and unmindful of each other as they divide themselves into castes and sub-castes and sub-sub-castes, and religions and sub-religions... the defining feature here is to create ever small, insular groups. Each of which group then asserts its presence, loudly if possible.

Outsiders frequently get overwhelmed by such insularity that marks the Indian society and culture. Various visitors who came to India in historical times noticed stark differences between Indians and the outside world. However, it was Babar, the invader from Kabul, who first noticed that such insularity was indicative of Indians being uncultured. He had decided to stay in India even while his generals insisted on leaving behind the heat and dust of India and return to the pleasant climes of Kabul. Writing his memoirs in the 16th century, he

remarked that Indians did not have the ease of interacting with each other, unlike the people of Afghanistan and Uzbekistan who were comfortably cosmopolitan. To this day, social division along innumerable fault-lines is a characteristic feature of India. Whether this is due to our innately strong sense of self or an inability to find common platforms, it hardly matters. Whether we like it or not, other countries do see us as one nation and have done so perhaps since the earliest days. Greek geographer Herodotus used the term 'India' in the fifth century BC. In the modern world, existence is defined by citizenship. Rights flow from where you live. The right to do business, the terms of business, depend on that.

No doubt, identity has multiple strands to it. Insular groups based on caste and religion are, by definition, a microcosm of reality and have limited relevance beyond that microcosm. Attempts to project such insular groups as the primary identity of an individual, important beyond all others, have only resulted in violence and bitterness. Kashmiri Pandits and Kanyakubj Brahmins have as little in common with each other as Mappila Muslims and Deobandis. The one secular, open-ended identity that is available to all, and which guarantees constitutional rights to the people, is that of belonging to a nation.

Asserting the identity of an insular group over and above everything else is liable to undermine any collective identity. Whether or not to live together as a nation is, in the end, a moral choice. The Constitution makers of India made that moral choice for us when they chose to have the Constitution as the fundamental norm, from which flowed all other norms for the state and the people of India. They gave us a Constitution that was extraordinarily detailed. They also made the Constitution the device with which to transform the Indian society. The grand project of the Constitution involved, among other things, a commitment to the ideas that were not, in 1947, a characteristic of India. The Constitution talked of equality of status and opportunity for all citizens in a society that was extremely unequal in every possible way.

It talked of the liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith and worship for all citizens in a society that had just emerged out of a murderous partition of the country, because some people insisted on religion as their primary identity. There was a commitment to providing social, economic and political justice to the citizens. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, the Constitution was also following an ancient Indic tradition: asserting the right of individual conscience and belief. A defining characteristic of India in the past has been a refusal to allow a monopoly of truth to any one belief system. Till the arrival of Islam at any rate, Saiva, Vaishnava, Sramana, Nirgrantha (Jaina) to name only the most well known; all these groups freely crossed over from one to the other, without social sanction against such crossings.

## Access For All' gives call for all-inclusive arts festival

Access For All' has given an open call for 'Manifesto for Accessible Art Festival' (MAAF), where accessibility is at the apex of planning an all-inclusive arts festival celebrating artists and audiences with disabilities. The project in India is a first of its kind between 'Access For All' and performer and creative consultant, Jonny Cotsen, to develop MAAF. The aim of this project (Virtual Artist Residency) is to design a Mani-

festos for an all-inclusive festival co-hosted between Wales and India. MAAF will be a structured toolkit that focuses on providing a global platform for artists with disabilities and will cater to the needs of audiences with disabilities and provide a universally designed space, without adopting an 'able-ist' approach. MAAF is one of the British Council's 'Connections Through Culture' grants, supported by the Wales Arts International/

Arts Council of Wales to develop co-created projects between artists, arts organisations, and festivals in both India and Wales. Commenting on the project, Siddhant Shah, Founder and Access Consultant, 'Access For All', said, "The entire process of MAAF will be documented and we aim to use it as a resource toolkit to aid and assist art festivals, organisations and others to incorporate an accessible approach from conception."

# Born in a tribal family and serving as a medical officer

- ▶ Performance of duties with responsibility gets recognition
- ▶ Medical and Health Officer Dr. Appiah at the farewell meeting

Mulugu, 18 December : The farewell meeting for Dr. Appiah, a dedicated Medical and Health Officer who served in Mulugu district for eight years, was held under the leadership of District Medical and Health Officer Dr. Gopala Rao. Dr. Appiah, born into a tribal family in Mulugu district, rose to prominence through his commitment to providing health-care services to the tribal commu-

nities, including the Gutti Koyas, living in remote forested areas and river bends.

During his tenure, he significantly enhanced medical facilities and created awareness about health-care services among the tribal population. His efforts earned recognition not only from the local communities and officials but also from state-level ministers and governors. At the meeting, Dr. Go-

pala Rao and others honored Dr. Appiah with traditional felicitation items like Koniadi and Gajamas. He was praised as a role model for medical services across Mulugu and neighboring districts.

Dr. Appiah expressed that performing duties with responsibility and dedication leads to both professional growth and personal development. He highlighted his coordination with state officials

to establish health sub-centers and implement specific healthcare plans for the region.

The farewell was attended by several notable figures, including Dr. Jagadeeswar (Superintendent of the District Main Hospital), Dr. Pawan Kumar, Dr. Chandrakant, and other district health officers, staff members, and community health providers, who lauded Dr. Appiah's contributions.



# Vaccines should be stored at an adequate temperature

Warangal, 18 December : The District Medical and Health Officer (DMHO) of Hanumakonda, Dr. A. Appiah, emphasized the importance of maintaining vaccines at the correct temperature to ensure their effectiveness. During an inspection of the vaccination program at Punnelu Nandan, and Panthini health sub-centres under the Primary Health Centre, Dr. Appiah urged health workers to adhere strictly to immunization schedules. This ensures that children receive full protection against preventable diseases.

- ▶ Hanumakonda DMHO Dr. A. Appiah



**1. Vaccination Coverage:**  
Punnelu : 14 individuals vaccinated. Panthini: 11 individuals vaccinated. Nandan: 7 individuals vaccinated.

**2. Health Monitoring:**  
Cases registered: Punnelu : 236 BP, 106 diabetes, and 3 TB cases. Panthini: 265 BP, 175 diabetes, and 3 cancer cases. Nandan: 129 BP and 60 diabetes cases.

**3. Community Engagement:**  
Health workers were instructed to educate mothers about the importance of vaccines and their role in disease prevention. Minor vaccine

side effects like fever or pain were described as temporary and manageable.

**4. Leprosy Survey:**  
Health staff conducted a Leprosy Case Detection Campaign (LCDC), visiting all households in the area.

**5. Infrastructure Updates:**  
TGMIDC conducted a site inspection for a proposed sub-center building, which is currently

operating out of Gram Panchayat facilities. At the first aid center set up for the CM Cup at Jawaharlal Nehru Stadium, 86 individuals were treated for minor health issues over two days. Dr. Appiah highlighted the critical role of health workers in ensuring effective vaccine distribution and follow-ups while maintaining proper vaccine storage protocols.

# District-wide Survey to Identify Out-of-School Students Initiated

- ▶ Hanumakonda District Incharge Collector Satya Sharada Devi

Warangal, 18 December : District In-Charge Collector Dr. Satya Sharada Devi emphasized the collective responsibility to ensure all children aged 6-14 years are enrolled in schools. She announced a special survey to identify out-of-school children during a review meeting held on Wednesday with officials from the Education, Labor, Women and Child Welfare, and Police Departments.

Dr. Devi instructed schools to identify students who have been absent for more than one month and categorize them as out-of-school children (OSC). For students aged 15-19 who have dropped out, she suggested encouraging them to continue their education through the Open School Society. She urged school principals and teachers to investigate and address the reasons behind students' absenteeism and implement measures to make



schools more appealing. The District Education Department will conduct the survey annually in December and January, focusing on identifying "Badibadi" (out-of-school) students.

Special attention will be given to areas with high populations of migrant workers. The District Education Officer (DEO) outlined the survey's procedures and provided necessary proformas and guide-

lines for implementation. Officials present included DEO Mrs. D. Vasanthi, Qualitative Education Coordination Officer A. Srinivas, District Welfare Officer Jayanthi, and P. Venkanna from the Police Commissionerate, along with Mandal-level education officials. Together, they pledged to work collaboratively to address this critical issue and ensure every child has access to education.

# Don't leave those who break the law

- ▶ Warangal Police Commissioner Amber Kishore Jha
- ▶ Negligence of police officers will not be tolerated

Warangal, 18 December : Warangal Police Commissioner Amber Kishore Jha has issued a strong directive to police officers to uphold the law and ensure public trust in their duties. During his annual inspection at the Station Ghanpur ACP office on Wednesday, the Commissioner emphasized that negligence in maintaining law and order will not be tolerated. The inspection included a detailed review of case records and investigations, particularly those involving grave crimes and SC/ST cases. Commissioner Jha urged officers to expedite the resolution of serious cases and ensure thorough investigations. He emphasized the importance of installing CCTV cameras in police stations, banks, and key intersections to enhance surveillance and prompt response to incidents. Addressing the officers, the Commissioner underscored the importance of discipline, proactive policing, and maintain-



ing a friendly and patient approach when dealing with the public. He directed officers to monitor societal developments closely, gather intelligence, and address complaints with tolerance and care. He reiterated that those who break the law must

be dealt with firmly and without exception. The inspection was attended by West Zone DCP Rajamahendra Naik, A. SP Mannan Bhatt, ACP Bhim Sharma, and other senior police personnel, including sub-divisional officers, inspectors, and SIs.

# How Can a Physics Professor Conduct an Education Test EDCET?

- ▶ Student Organizations Oppose Appointment of EDCET Convener

Warangal, 18 December : Telangana State Higher Education Council (TGCHE) Chairman announced that TGCEETS-2025 will be organized efficiently, focusing on facilitating admissions to professional courses in UG and PG programs through the respective Common Entrance Tests (CETs). To ensure smooth conduct of CETs, an action plan has been prepared with consultation from education experts and officials. The CETs will be organized with comprehensive measures, keeping in mind accessibility, fairness, and convenience for candidates. Special emphasis is laid on ensuring transparent and efficient evaluation systems.

Mahatma Gandhi University (MGU) has been entrusted with the responsibility of conducting the EDCET examination, which is aimed at admissions into B.Ed (Bachelor of Education) courses across Telangana state. However, it is important to note that MGU does not have an education department. To address this, an education professor was deputed from Osmania University to MGU and appointed as the convener for EDCET. This arrangement ensured that the examination was overseen by a qualified professional with expertise in education. In contrast, the situation with Kakatiya University (KU) raises significant concerns. The Telangana State Council has partially appointed a convener for EDCET at KU. A major question arises regarding how a Physics professor has been appointed to conduct the EDCET, an examination specifically related to the field of education. If KU is to conduct the EDCET, it is necessary that a regular education subject professor be deputed from any of the other universities to KU and then appointed



as the convener for EDCET. Without following this protocol, the appointment of a Physics professor appears illegal and biased. This development has sparked criticism and concerns over procedural irregularities. Already, Kakatiya University has faced scrutiny due to the ICET scam, and now similar issues are surfacing with EDCET. Such instances reflect how certain KU professors appear to be engaging in lobbying to influence appointments and processes. This undermines the credibility of the examination system and raises questions about the transparency and fairness of the entire process.

### Demand for cancel the EDCET convener appointment

Student organizations are strongly opposing the appointment of the current EDCET convener and are demanding its immediate cancellation. They are urging the authorities to depute a qualified education professor from any university to Kakatiya University (KU) and appoint them as the EDCET convener. The students argue that the appointment of a professor from an unrelated subject, such as Physics, is inappropriate and undermines the integrity of the

examination. They emphasize that only a professor specializing in education should oversee the process to ensure fairness and credibility.

### Caste Bias in EDCET Convener Selection?

The intellectuals are also raised question on this appointment which is caste biased. Concerns have been raised regarding the appointment process for the EDCET convener at Kakatiya University (KU), with allegations of favoritism and caste-based bias. Critics point out that the Registrar of KU belongs to the Reddy community, and the Vice-Chancellor (VC) of KU also belongs to the same community. Furthermore, the State Council Chairman is from the Reddy caste, and now the newly appointed EDCET convener, a Physics professor, is also from the Reddy community. Student organizations and critics are questioning why the Reddy VC has proposed or nominated another Reddy professor from an unrelated subject, Physics, for the position of EDCET convener, instead of ensuring a fair and merit-based appointment. These developments have sparked widespread opposition, as students and other stakeholders demand transparency and question the impartiality of the entire process.

## PICTALK

In the Annual General Meeting of Telangana Co-operative Union Limited held at Sundarayya Center, Lingampally, Hyderabad Bagh, Telangana Co-operative Union to give membership to Warangal Gangaputra Housing Society in Telangana Co-operative Union. Telangana Gangaputra Sangam State Secretary Warangal Gangaputra Housing Society Director Tunguturi Rajesh Khanna Gangaputra Anantaramu who presented the petition to Union Chairman Mohan Reddy State Secretary of Telangana Gangaputra Association Warangal Gangaputra Housing Society Director Tunguturi Rajesh Khanna Gangaputra spoke and said that housing societies in Telangana should be given membership and brought up on a single platform.



# Rain forces Gabba Test to end in draw

Brisbane, Dec 18 (GNS) Rain had the last word at the Gabba, as was widely expected, but only after Australia and India conjured up the most intriguing of what-ifs in the 22 overs that were possible on the fifth day of the third Border-Gavaskar Test match.

After taking the final India wicket four overs into the day's play and securing a 185-run first-innings lead, Australia made one final push for victory, going hard at India's bowling, losing quick wickets in the process, and declaring at 89 for 7 after 18 helter-skelter third-innings overs. That left India with a target of 275 in a theoretical 54 overs.

Only 2.1 were possible, as bad light drove the players off the field before rain came back down to signal an early finish. Australia's brief innings on day five gave a glimpse of all the possible rain-free finishes this match could have had.

There was pronounced seam movement and uneven bounce, and Jasprit Bumrah, Akash Deep and Mohammed Siraj ripped out five wickets in the space of 11 overs. But some of the wickets also came from Australia's intent to score quickly. They promoted Mitchell Marsh to No. 4, batted Travis Head above Steven Smith, and kept going for their shots. The runs came at a fair rate too, with the pace of the

► Australia 445 (Head 152, Smith 101, Carey 70, Bumrah 6-76) and 89 for 7 dec (Bumrah 3-18) drew with India 260 (Rahul 84, Jadeja 77, Cummins 4-81, Starc 3-83) and 8 for 0



pitch allowing Head, Alex Carey and Pat Cummins to rattle off a combined 59 off 49 balls. Given all the help for the new ball, Australia could have envisioned bowling India out. Given the scope for run-scoring, and the fact

that Australia were without one of their three fast bowlers, India could have imagined making a bid for victory if they managed to see off the early overs relatively unscathed. As it happened, the draw may have been the best result



for the series going forward, with two Tests to go and the teams locked 1-1 on Boxing Day. Australia's declaration harked back to the 1950 Test on this same ground, when England declared at 68 for 7 and then Australia at 32 for 7

as both teams tried to make the best of a sticky pitch after a spell of rain. Such events are exceedingly rare in the days of covered pitches, but something not too dissimilar happened on this day with Australia declaring at 89 for 7.

## 1st ODI (D/N) : Ayub and Agha the heroes as Pakistan ace tense chase

► Pakistan 242 for 7 (Ayub 109, Agha 82\*, Baartman 2-37) beat South Africa 239 for 9 (Klaasen 86, Agha 4-32, Abrar 2-32) by 3 wickets

Paarl, Dec 18 (GNS) Saim Ayub's dream debut season soared to new heights as a magnificent hundred from the Pakistan opener helped seal a thrilling win in the first ODI over South Africa in Paarl. Taking charge of a game that looked a lost cause when Pakistan lost four early in a chase of 240, he struck up a 141-run partnership with Salman Agha, whose all-round contribution began with a four-wicket haul and culminated in an unbeaten 82 as he held his nerve in a tense late stand with Naseem Shah to get Pakistan over the line with three balls and as many wickets to spare.

All of this appeared a world away when Pakistan stumbled badly in pursuit of what should have been a below-par first-innings effort from South Africa. Marco Jansen cleaned up Abdullah Shafique with a pearler first up, swinging it back in to brush off stump. Babar Azam muddled through for a turgid 23 that does little to allay concerns over his own form, with Ottneil Baartman - who began with two maiden overs, drawing him into a miscue that went straight to the cover fielder.

It was swiftly followed by captain Mohammad Rizwan being cleaned up off the pads, and a flustered Pakistan were in a generous enough mood to gift South Africa another wicket when Kamran Ghulam set off for a run Ayub had no interest in. Pakistan's long tail continues to be a problem, and Irfan Khan's teething problem continues, so when the visitors found themselves at 60 for 4 in the 20th over, the Ayub-Agha partnership was their last realistic shot at an unlikely victory.



## Ace spinner Ashwin announces retirement from international cricket



Brisbane, Dec 18 (GNS) India's premier off-spinner R Ashwin on Wednesday surprised the cricketing world by announcing his retirement with immediate effect in the middle of the Test series against Australia here.

Ashwin retires from the game as the second highest wicket-taker for India in Tests with 537 scalps in 106 games, leaving him only behind Anil Kumble (619 wickets). He will continue to play club cricket.

"I won't take too much of your time. Today will be the last day for me as an India cricketer," Ashwin said at the end of the drawn third Test here in a joint press

conference with captain Rohit Sharma during which he declined to take any questions and left after making the announcement.

The 38-year-old played the day-night Test in Adelaide and picked up one wicket. "He was very, very sure of his decision. We should stand by what he wants," said Rohit after Ashwin left the stage.

He was seen sharing an emotional moment with star batter Virat Kohli in the dressing room hours before the announcement. "A name synonymous with mastery, wizardry, brilliance, and innovation," said the BCCI in its tribute post on X.

## Chelsea close gap on Liverpool with win

► Amad Diallo struck a 90th-minute winner as Manchester United staged a stunning late comeback to beat Manchester City 2-1 in the Premier League.

Manchester, Dec 18 (GNS) Amad Diallo struck a 90th-minute winner as Manchester United staged a stunning late comeback to beat Manchester City 2-1 in the Premier League.

Four-time defending champions City led the Manchester derby 1-0 going into the 88th minute at the Etihad Stadium.

But the game was turned round in dramatic fashion as Bruno Fernandes leveled from the penalty spot and Diallo sealed victory for United — prompting head coach Ruben Amorim to declare "something magic happened". "It was a very tough match but we believe until the end. We managed to score.

We needed that win. It was important for us and for our fans," Amorim said. City fans jeered at the final whistle as their once dominant team's woeful run of form extended to one win and eight losses in 11 games.

"I'm the boss, I'm the manager and I'm not good enough. It's as simple as that," Guardiola said. It was a first derby victory for new United head coach Ruben Amorim, who led Sport-



ing Lisbon to a 4-1 win against City in one of his last games in charge of the Portuguese club in November. Chelsea, in second, closed the gap on Liverpool to two points after a 2-1 win against Brentford.

It's now seven straight wins in all competitions for Enzo Maresca's team, which is unbeaten in 10. Their last league defeat was in October — a 2-1 loss

to Liverpool. Marc Cucurella scored in the 43rd and Nicolas Jackson made it 2-0 in the 80th for his ninth goal of the season. Chelsea are four points ahead of third-place Arsenal.

Injury-ravaged City were far from their best at the Etihad but appeared to be on course for a vital win as the clock ticked down against their neighbours before they self-imploded. Di-

allo intercepted a careless back pass from Matheus Nunes, leading to the Portuguese midfielder fouling the United winger in an attempt to recover possession. The situation sees Guardiola's side now positioned fifth in the table, outside the Champions League qualification spots, trailing nine points behind Liverpool, who hold a match in hand.

## BSF edge out Hawks in Liberals hockey



Patiala, Dec 18 (GNS) On the second day of the 47th Liberals hockey tournament at PPS Nabha, ITBP beat West Central Railway 4-1, BSF edged out Hawks Rupnagar 1-0 and Hockey Chandigarh prevailed 2-1 over SAI Kurukshetra. In another match, PSPCL drew 1-1 with Mata Sahib Kaur Hockey Academy, Jarkhar. Rohit (14th minutes), Jaswinder Singh (26th) and MC

Meetei (39th, 54th) scored for ITBP, while Amandeep (51st) got one goal for West Central Railway. BSF had to work hard to get past defending champions Hawks with the winner scored by Harmandeep Singh in the 14th minute. Rajveer Singh (7th, 33rd) scored for Hockey Chandigarh, while Gurmukh Singh (11th) got a goal for SAI Kurukshetra.