

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Sunday 31 December, 2023

UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

Modi puts in all his efforts to fulfill the guarantees he gives: PM

"Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses public meeting in Ayodhya, Light Shri Ram Jyoti on 22nd January in every household: PM"



Ayodhya
Modi's guarantee has so much power because Modi does what he says. Today the country has faith in Modi's guarantee because Modi puts in all his efforts to fulfill the guarantees he gives. This city of Ayodhya is also a witness to this, said Prime Minister Narendra Modi while addressing a public meeting near Maharishi Valmiki International Airport here on Saturday. Prime Minister Modi reached Ayodhya on a one-day visit, where he inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 46 projects worth Rs 15700 crore. Along with inaugurating

Dham Junction and Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, PM Modi also flagged off 6 Vande Bharat and 2 Amrit Bharat trains. On this occasion, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and both the Deputy CMs of the state welcomed and felicitated the Prime Minister by presenting him with the statue of Bal Ramlala. The Prime Minister also watched documentaries about Ayodhya Dham Junction and Ayodhya's transformation. In his speech, the Prime Minister reassured the people of Ayodhya that

every effort will be made for the development of this sacred place. The Prime Minister said that the world is eagerly waiting for 22nd January. "I am a devotee of every particle and person of India, I too am eagerly awaiting the day of Pran Pratishtha at the upcoming Ram Temple.

"The Prime Minister said that the campaign of Viksit Bharat is getting new energy from Ayodhya. He said that if any country in the world wants to reach new heights of development, it will have to

take care of its heritage. "Our heritage inspires us.

Shows us the right path. Present-day India is progressing by seamlessly blending the old and the new. There was a time when Ramlala resided in a tent in Ayodhya. Today, not only has Ram Lalla found a permanent abode, but also four crore impoverished citizens of the country have been provided with homes." The Prime Minister further said that while India is beautifying its pilgrimages, India is also immersed in digital technology.

'Far bigger picture will unfold': PM Modi on 'final destination' of his vision

New Delhi

Providing a rare glimpse into his approach to governance, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he takes initiatives with a clear endpoint in mind but avoids revealing the final destination or blueprint at the start. In an interview, Prime Minister Modi shed light on his distinctive approach to leadership and governance, especially when faced with challenging sectors like cleanliness and sanitation. "Makkhan par lakir to sab karte hain. Karni hai to pathar par lakeer karo. Kathin hai to kya



hua, shuruat to karein (It is easy to draw a line in butter. If you have to, draw a line in stone. It is hard, but let's make a beginning)," the magazine quoted the PM as saying. When asked about his satisfaction with his government's performance in 2023, PM Modi cautioned

against assessing his journey through a single year. "When I start something, I know the endpoint. But I never announce the final destination or blueprint in the beginning. So, what you see today is not what I've worked on. A far bigger picture will unfold finally. I work on

a big canvas. Like an artist, I start from one point, but at the time the final picture can't be seen," he added. The prime minister illustrated this approach with the example of the Statue of Unity in Gujarat, a project initially perceived as a political manoeuvre.

"When I announced that we would build an 182-foot statue, many thought it had to do with 182 seats in the Gujarat Assembly. Some sections thought this was done to please a community ahead of the elections."

Telangana orders judicial probe into Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project

Telangana

The Telangana government has ordered a judicial investigation into alleged engineering lapses in the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project on the Godavari river. The project, worth 1 lakh crore (\$13.5 billion),

has suffered damages including sinking pillars and leaks. The government estimates the financial burden on the state due to the project to be 15,000 crore (\$2 billion) per year, with 10,000 crore (\$1.3 billion) in pending bills.

A technical experts committee has declared one of the barrages "completely useless" in its current condition. The government plans to hold those responsible accountable. Hyderabad The Telangana govern-

ment on Friday said it has initiated steps for a judicial investigation, led by a sitting high court judge, into alleged engineering lapses in the construction and operations of the Kaleshwaram lift irrigation project on the Godavari river.

'Elon Musk looking at Gujarat as first choice for Tesla factory', says minister



New Delhi

Gujarat govt 'very hopeful' of Tesla setting up plant in state, says minister Gujarat minister Rushikesh Patel on Thursday said his government was "very hopeful" that Elon Musk-led Tesla will choose the state to set up a plant and informed communication was on with the firm in this regard. Patel was responding to queries based on news reports suggesting that the US-based electric vehicle maker was planning to set up a manufacturing plant in Gujarat. "The state government is very hopeful of Tesla coming to Gujarat. Even Elon Musk is looking at Gujarat as his first choice. Gujarat is in his mind ever since he began a survey in India to find a suitable location to set up the plant," said Patel, who is health minister and spokesperson of the state government. "Perhaps, very soon, an official announcement will be made in this regard (Tesla's entry. Let us hope Tesla comes to Gujarat. We will definitely welcome it and provide all necessary support, just like we gave Tata, Ford and Suzuki in the past," Patel told reporters in Gandhinagar. Patel said communication (with Tesla) was on and this may be the reason such news (of firm planning factory in the state) was published. Notably, Elon Musk, chief of the world's largest electric car producer Tesla Inc, met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in June in New York. Musk, after meeting the Prime Minister, had said he plans to visit India in 2024.

Peace deal fetches BJP brownie point ahead of Lok Sabha polls

GUWAHATI:

The recalcitrant anti-talks Ulfa(l) led by Paresh Baruah and the Kamtapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) remain the last stumbling blocks in Assam's road to a militancy-free era after four decades of living under the sword of armed insurrection. For BJP, which came to government in Assam for the first time in 2016, tripartite peace accord



with the pro-talks next year. Ulfa faction headed Before this, the by Arabinda Centre and the Assam Rajkhowa fetched government took more than a brownie fruitation negotiations point ahead of the with another major Lok Sabha elections outfit - the NDFB -for

what is called the third Bodo accord. Barring Ulfa(l) and KLO, all militant outfits of the state have disbanded. Ulfa's birth in 1979 happened in the shadow of the anti-foreigner movement. The outfit's stated objective of secession from India meant its methods were violently militant, sparking a cycle of bloodshed that led to two Army operations.

Uddhav camp taunts BJP over Ayodhya buzz, says may declare Lord Ram as poll candidate

Mumbai: Shiv Sena (Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray)

leader Sanjay Raut on Saturday took a swipe at the Bharatiya Janata Party over the politicization of Ram Temple in Ayodhya, saying the only thing left for the BJP is to announce Lord Ram as their candidate for the 2024 Lok Sabha



elections. Raut's remarks came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to the riverside town of Uttar Pradesh, where he is sched-

uled to launch several mega projects. "Now, the only thing left is that the BJP will announce that Lord Ram will be their candidate for

"Kashi Tamil Sangamam celebration of our diverse identities"

"Kashi Tamil Sangamam furthers the spirit of 'Ek Bharat'. Exploring and rediscovering the links between Kashi and Tamil Nadu can lead to the creation of important bodies of knowledge, both in the intellectual and practical realms," he said. The minister asserted that this exchange is a celebration of "our diverse identities and a commitment to preserving them".

The second edition of the sangamam, organised by the Union education ministry, began on December 17 and will conclude on Saturday. It is being attended by 1,400 delegates from Tamil Nadu, and Puducherry.

India, Russia talk small modular reactors, pushes for Kudankulam completion



New Delhi

India and Russia have decided to expand their civilian nuclear cooperation, with Moscow willing to share technology for a small modular reactor used in power generation, even as both sides are pushing towards the completion of Phase 1 the of 6,000MW Kudankulam nuclear power project in Tamil Nadu. The small modular reactors - these are advanced nuclear reactors -- have a power generation capacity of 75MW to 300MW.

India's external affairs minister S Jaishankar completed his five days visit to Russia today, and the people cited above said that the two sides are pushing to commission Reactors 3 and 4 while speeding up the work on Reactors 5 and 6 at the Kudankulam nuclear project at a time when the US Westinghouse-supported 6,600MW Kovvada nuclear project and the French Areva-supported 9,900 MW Jaitapur nuclear project are stalled over price negotiations.

Vodafone Idea shares jump 20 per cent, hit one-year high after massive deal worth 233 crore

New Delhi

During the last market session of 2023, the share prices of telecom company Vodafone Idea jumped up by 20 per cent despite bleak profits over the last few months. Up by over 20 per cent, VI shares hit their one-year high on December 29. Vodafone Idea shares have

hit their 52 week high on the stock market. Vodafone Idea shares have hit their 52 week high on the stock market. During the last trading session of the year, Vodafone Idea shares hit the upper mark of 23 per cent, touching their 52-week high on the market. This spike in the share prices is due to a

major deal recently announced by the telecom company. Vodafone Idea shares jumped from 13 to 16 on Friday, jumping over 20 per cent during the trading session. While this has become the company's 52-week high, VI share prices' 52-week low was recorded at 5.70.

Centre declares Canada-based gangster Lakhbir Singh of Babbar Khalsa as 'terrorist'

NEW DELHI: Lakhbir Singh Landa, a gangster operating from Canada, has officially been declared a terrorist by the ministry of home affairs, amidst ongoing diplomatic tensions between New Delhi and Ottawa. The 34-year-old is associated with the Khalistani organization Babbar Khalsa International (BKI). He is a son of Niranjan Singh and Parminder Kaur, originally hails from VPO Harike in Punjab's Tarn Taran district, which is close to the Pakistan border. The development follows Canadian PM Justin Trudeau's earlier allegation of Indian complicity in the assassination of the noted Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh Nijjar in



Canada.

The MHA has issued a notification mentioning that Lakhbir Singh Landa has close associations with pro-Khalistan elements in Canada. This includes links with Gurbatwant Singh Pannu, the leader of Sikhs for Justice, and Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the leader of the Khalistan Tiger Force, among others. As per

the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the central government is authorized to list individuals in the Fourth Schedule if they are suspected of involvement in terrorism, the MHA explained in its statement. Currently residing in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada, Landa is identified as a member of the Babbar Khalsa International, a group

recognized as a terrorist organization under the said Act. The MHA accuses Landa of orchestrating a rocket-propelled grenade attack on Punjab's State Intelligence Headquarters in Mohali and supplying Improvised Explosive Devices (IEDs), weapons, and explosives for terrorist activities in Punjab.

Additionally, Landa is implicated in numerous criminal cases involving terror module creation, extortion, and murders. He is also accused of smuggling weapons and narcotics to finance terrorist activities in Punjab and other parts of India.

The MHA further states that Landa and his associates have been active-

ly plotting to destabilize peace in Punjab through targeted killings, extortions, and other subversive acts. An open-ended warrant has been issued against Landa, who has been on a look-out circular since June 2021.

This decision follows the NIA's earlier identification of Landa as the key planner behind multiple terrorist attacks in Punjab, including the 2022 RPG attacks on the Punjab Police

Headquarters and the Sarhali police station.

In August, an NIA Special Court ordered the seizure of Landa's property in Kirian village, Tarn Taran district. He was declared a Proclaimed Offender in July 2023.

Money laundering case: ED writes to Jharkhand CM Soren seeking his availability for questioning

RANCHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has issued a letter-cum-summons to Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren seeking his availability for questioning in a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam, official sources said on Saturday. Soren, 48, has been asked by the central agency to inform the investigating officer of the case about the date, venue and time of his choice so that his statement can be recorded under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), they said.

The agency has sought a response from the chief minister by December 31, failing which it will initiate further legal action under the provisions of the anti-money laundering law. This is



out of malice and false allegations had been levelled against him with the sole motive of creating political uncertainty and unrest in Jharkhand. The probe pertains to a "huge racket of illegal change of ownership of land by the mafia" in Jharkhand, according to the ED.

The agency has arrested 14 people in the case, including 2011-batch Indian Administrative Service (IAS) officer Chhavi Ranjan who had earlier served as the director of the state social welfare department and deputy commissioner of Ranchi. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) leader was questioned by the ED in November last year in another money laundering case linked to alleged illegal mining in the state.

Soren had claimed in the High Court that the summons was issued

8 Navy vets may face 3 to 25 years jail in Qatar as Doha yet to ratify transfer pact

NEW DELHI: A bilateral agreement with Qatar for transfer of sentenced persons, which might have allowed the government to bring the eight imprisoned Indian Navy veterans back to India, is yet to be ratified by Doha. India has ratified the treaty that was signed during Qatar Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani's visit to India in 2015. Following commutation of the death sentence awarded to the Navy vets to imprisonment, the government reiter-



ated on Friday that it's discussing the next course of action with the legal team and family members. The government also continues to raise the issue diplomatically with Qatar. Neither India nor Qatar has confirmed the

specifics of the jail term but relatives, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said while one among them faced 25 years in jail, others had their death sentence commuted to jail terms between 3 and 15 years.

Isro to kick off New Year with Jan 1 launch of XPoSat to study black hole, neutron stars



NEW DELHI: ISRO will usher in the New Year by launching X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), which aims to study 50 brightest sources in space, including pulsars, black hole X-ray binaries, neutron stars, and non-thermal supernova remnants, from the Sriharikota spaceport on January 1. The rocket PSLV-C58, which will carry XPoSat, will also host 10 other payloads in its last stage after injecting the main satellite into the desired orbit. With XPoSat, India is on the verge of a groundbreaking leap in space-based X-ray astronomy. Unlike previous missions that focused predominantly on imaging, time-domain studies, and spectroscopy, XPoSat will be India's first dedicated polarimetry mission that

aims to explore the polarisation of intense X-Ray sources, introducing a novel dimension to X-Ray astronomy, the space agency said. X-Ray polarisation serves as a crucial diagnostic tool for examining the radiation mechanism and geometry of celestial sources. The XPoSat spacecraft is designated for observation from Low Earth Orbit, carrying two scientific payloads. With these two payloads, the XPoSat mission is capable of simultaneous studies of temporal, spectral and polarisation features of the bright X-Ray sources. "The primary payload, POLIX (Polarimeter Instrument in X-rays), developed by the Raman Research Institute (RRI), focuses on measuring polarimetry parameters in the medium X-ray energy range.

Clicking selfie, newlywed falls into gorge, dies Four

NAVI MUMBAI: A 24-year-old newly married woman from Pune died after slipping about 200 feet into a gorge from atop Prabalgaad Fort while clicking a selfie on Thursday afternoon. Panvel taluka police have registered an accidental death case. The deceased woman was identified as Shubhangi Patel, a resident of Dattawadi in Pune. Shubhangi and her husband Vinayak Patel (27) had got married on December 8. They left for Lonavala for their honeymoon on Wednesday, and on Thursday morning, the couple went to Machi Prabalgaad Fort for trekking. "Around 2.30pm, Shivangi started clicking selfie while standing on the edge of the gorge. This is when she accidentally slipped, lost her balance and fell into the gorge," said.



Travels bus mishap in Raigad, 2 women dead, 55 passengers injured

NAVI MUMBAI: Two women died and 55 passengers suffered injuries after the private travel bus they were traveling in from Pune to Mangaon toppled sideways in Tamhini Ghat on Saturday around 7:30 am. The injured have been admitted to Panvel sub-district hospital. Traffic flow has been restored to normalcy after the bus was towed away, Raigad SP Somnath Gharge informed.

'Upto Rs 1.2cr paid to agents': Hunt on for masterminds in France 'donkey flight' case

NEW DELHI: The Gujarat Police on Friday said that they are making efforts to track down the masterminds behind a human smuggling network, which came to light when French authorities halted a planeload of passengers, mostly Indians, bound for Nicaragua. The aircraft, an Airbus A340, carrying 303 Indian passengers was grounded in France, where it had stopped for refuelling. The chartered plane had arrived from the United Arab Emirates and was halted after an anonymous tip-off that it was carrying potential victims of human trafficking. The Police said most of the passengers on the plane were from Banaskantha, Patan, Mehsana and Anand districts in Gujarat. Most of the flight's other passengers were from Punjab where police said they were also conducting a probe. Passengers had paid "four million to 12.5 million rupees" to agents to help them reach the southern border of the United States from South America, Gujarat state police superintendent Sanjay Kharat told AFP. "We want to know how these people came in contact with the agents, or whether the agents contacted them, and what their plan was after reaching Nicaragua," he said. The official said they will also try to find out how many people have been flown abroad this way, and who all are seeking to travel in this manner. The CID has so far received "raw information" regarding the agents involved in the incident and will be able to find out more only after questioning the passengers concerned, he said. Kharat further said different agents involved in illegal immigration work in tandem.

"The agents working at the village and district levels are small players controlled by a kingpin who works at the international level," he added. The Gujarat police will investigate and get a clear picture of how they operate, he said. Meanwhile, the ministry of external affairs said that most of the Indians who were travelling in the flight have landed in India and those who remained in France would be given consular assistance if they require assistance from New Delhi.

5000 acres grabbed through 'land jihad' freed: CM Pushkar Singh

DEHRADUN: CM Pushkar Singh Dhami on Friday said the Uttarakhand government has freed 5,000 acres of land encroached in the state through "land jihad". While attending a 'Ram katha' in Delhi's IP Extension, Dhami said, "For the betterment of the Himalayan state we

had to take some tough decisions, an important one being removing encroachment from government lands. We were successful in freeing land by getting rid of land jihad and the drive shall continue till all illegal and forceful possessions are removed." Following repeated complaints

of encroachment on government land, the chief minister had directed the state police and forest department to identify all illegal structures. According to data provided by the state government, till May 2023, a total of 3,793 such locations were identified by the state authorities.

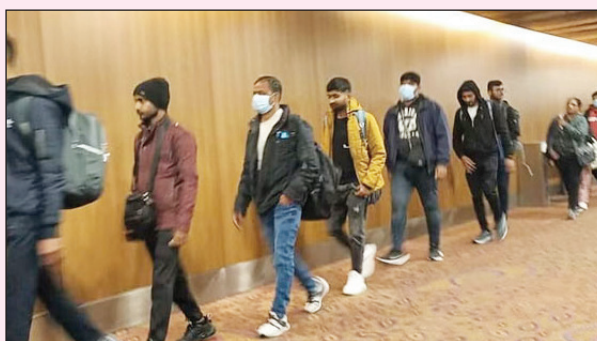
India, Hong Kong unearth laundering racket using synthetic diamonds, 8 held

NEW DELHI: The Directorate of Revenue Intelligence, assisted by the Hong Kong Customs, has unearthed a huge money laundering network of diamond traders engaged in importing synthetic diamonds to India and sending out remittances which are 100 times more in valuations, by "misdeclaring" the imports as natural diamonds. Eight have been arrested in the case, four in India and four in Hong Kong, after searches were carried out on premises of the syndicate by Hong Kong authorities, who seized assets worth \$1

million. "Last week, Hong Kong Customs undertook an operation unearthing a large-scale transnational laundering syndicate that had laundered about \$65 million using diamond trade. During the operation, customs officials raided eight premises and arrested four persons suspected to be connected with the case and freed \$1 million assets," the DRI said. According to DRI, an Indian SEZ-based firm has been found involved in running the money laundering racket while the mastermind of the syndicate was based in Hong Kong.

Gujarat police question 20 passengers of Nicaragua-bound flight sent back by France

AHMEDABAD: At least 20 passengers from Gujarat who were on the Nicaragua-bound flight which was sent back mid-route from France have been quizzed by police in a bid to unearth a suspected illegal immigration network operating from the state, a senior official has said. The Nicaragua-bound aircraft, an Airbus A340 carrying 276 passengers, was grounded in France for four days over suspected human trafficking. It landed in Mumbai in the early hours of December 26. According to a senior state Crime Investigation



Department (CID) official, those passengers included at least 60 from Gujarat, who have already reached their respective native places in the state. They are being questioned by the department to find out whether they had any plans to cross into the United States of America illegally after reaching Latin America,

the official said on Friday. "They were sent back from France. There was a rumour they had planned to enter the US illegally after landing in Nicaragua. In their statements, they told us they were going there as tourists. We are going into the details to find out who were the agents behind their trip," said S P Rajkumar,

Additional Director General of Police, CID - Crime and Railways. Of the 60 who returned, some 20 have been grilled already by the agency, he added. "We are verifying their documents to ascertain whether they used genuine or forged documents to proceed to Central America. We will also check their financial transactions because, ideally, they should not have paid more if they were going there as normal tourists and not with any other intention," said the senior IPS officer. "Though we have started questioning, no one is divulging facts.

27% drop in Eway deaths due to anti-speeding steps'

MUMBAI: Road accident deaths on the Mumbai-Pune Expressway dropped by 27% -- from 83 to 61 -- and crashes reduced by 23% from January to November compared to the same period last year, as per traffic police data released on Friday. Officials say proactive measures by the highway police and transport department squads helped bring down deaths. A senior traffic police official attributed a combination of enforcement, awareness and engineering changes for the drop. At Urse toll naka towards Pune, for instance, speeding vehicles would often crash



into parked vehicles from the rear. The traffic police started to ensure that no vehicles were parked on the stretch.

They also coordinated with the concerned infrastructure agency to get rumblers installed to control speeding. Expressway accident

deaths were the same in 2019 and 2022, at 92, but were lower in the intervening years, mainly because of Covid. Experts have demanded that there should be checks on speeding round the clock as many deaths occurred late at night or during the early hours.

Also, lane cutting or overtaking from the left resulted in many crashes. "To prevent crashes late at night, there is a need to take corrective measures such as proper infrastructure, good road conditions and signages, speed-calming measures and overnight enforcement checks with CCTV cameras on speed limits to prevent fatalities," an expert said.

Sanjeev Dey, a motorist who regularly uses the Expressway, pointed out that despite appeals from enforcement agencies and several cases against truckers, heavy vehicles continue to flout the rule and drive on the rightmost lane

reserved for smaller fast vehicles. This results in overtaking from the left and subsequent crashes.

Among the reasons for the drop in Expressway fatalities was installation of more CCTV cameras with speed guns to capture vehicles violating speed limits, sources said.

A campaign by the transport department from January to July resulted in the booking of 17,425 persons for serious traffic violations, which included 4,930 motorists booked for speeding (driving beyond 100 kmph), 5,795 for lane cutting and 4,032 for not wearing seatbelts.

Tata Hospital with Bangalore lab develop India's first oral suspension for leukemia

MUMBAI: Doctors from Mumbai's Tata Memorial Centre in collaboration with IDRS Labs in Bangalore have developed India's first and only chemotherapy drug, 6-mercaptopurine (6-MP), to be available in a syrup form. This drug is crucial to combat Acute Lymphoblastic Leukemia (ALL), the commonest form of blood cancer affecting children. Approximately 10,000 children in the age group of 1-10 years

diagnosed with ALL are expected to benefit from the drug annually. The oral suspension effectively tackles various challenges associated with the existing tablet formulation, including issues related to dosage precision, flexibility, and tolerability. Liquid formulations of 6-MP have been available in Europe and US for a long time, but children in India and other developing countries didn't have access to it, Tata doctors said. The child friendly for-

mulation is available in the form of a powder for oral suspension, commercially available under the trade name PREVALL. Tata doctors said that it can be reconstituted into a 100 ml oral suspension at a concentration of 10mg/ml. "Up until now, less-than-ideal practices such as tablet crushing or resorting to alternate day dosing were employed to meet the specific dosing needs in children," said Dr S D Banavali, director-academics.

Strike by water tanker contractors over dues compounds DJB's woes

New Delhi: Delhi Jal Board is now faced with a new crisis. The water tanker contractors have gone on strike over non-payment of bills for several months. "DJB assured us payments after the finance department recently released funds but nothing has been disbursed. In such a scenario there is no option but to go on strike and

stop all work," said Naresh Jain, president, DJB Contractors' Welfare Association. According to government officials, this strike is already having an impact in unauthorised colonies, urban villages and some areas where water distribution through tankers is necessary. At Rohini, Shilendra Baranwal, resident of

Sector 30, said, "For four days, there has been no supply of water from tankers. I have been living in the area for one and a half years and DJB hasn't been able to lay pipelines. The water tanker is our only hope."

Baranwal added though that following a complaint to DJB, a water tanker arrived in the locality.

2024 to unlock new jobs; over 3 lakh new Gen AI jobs to be created by '25



Hyderabad: With Artificial Intelligence (AI) and now Generative AI taking over, some of the hottest skills in the tech world in the coming year are expected to pivot around this rapidly evolving space, point out staffing experts. While skills in Generative AI, prompt engineering, machine learning, data sciences, big data and IoT will continue to be some of the most sought after jobs in 2024, a new wave of job roles are emerging as AI technologies advance and industries continue to integrate AI into their operations, say hiring firms. These include roles such as AI ethics specialists, AI solution architects, robotics engineers, chatbot developers, AI curriculum developers, com-

pliance specialists, customer experience analysts, supply chain optimisation specialists, among others, forecasts tech staffing and solutions provider TeamLease Digital. Reports estimate that the market AI in India, which stood at \$4 billion in 2023, is projected to reach \$15 billion by 2030. "India, which contributes 16% of the global AI talent pool and leads in skilled expertise, had approximately 4 lakh AI-skilled professionals in 2023 as against a demand for nearly 6 lakh professionals. Despite remarkable advancements in AI, there exists a substantial gap of 51% between the current demand and supply of AI professionals in India," says TeamLease Digital business head Krishna Vij.

Telangana: Cyber crooks looted Rs 700 crore, victims got Rs 7 crore

Telangana: Cyber crooks looted Rs 700 crore, victims got Rs 7 crore in the cases of violation of NDPS Act, the conviction rate was 20% as against the 19% recorded in 2022. Victims of cyber crime in Telangana lost 707 crore in 2023. Of this, police managed to freeze the transaction of 114 crore while 7.29 crore was refunded to the victims. Director general of police, Ravi Gupta, during the annual press meet held on Friday said that there is an increase of 8.97% in the overall crime rate in the state and the jump is mainly due to cyber crime, which comprises 17.59% of total crime. Predictably, apart from curbing the drug menace, the biggest challenge facing the police force in 2024 will be to arrest the rate of cyber

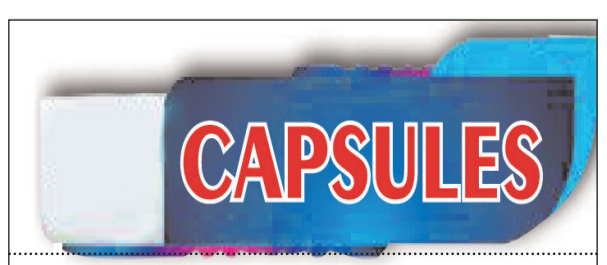


crime, he said. Already, the process of strengthening the Telangana State Cyber Security Bureau (TSCSB) along with the TS-Anti Narcotics Bureau (TS-NAB) has been started, the DGP added. While there has been a glitch in 1930 — the a distress call centre number for cyber crime victims — since December 28 due to overload of calls, Gupta said that temporary alternative arrangements have been made using the SMS service, for people to reach the

police and lodge complaints. This year, police received 85,030 cyber crime complaints — 65,877 financial complaints and 19,153 non-financial complaints — while officials registered 12,317 First Information Report (FIRs). "The process of refunding the seized money to the victims is being done in a phased manner," the official said. On the drugs front, the DGP said that police wants to crackdown on both the supply and demand chains.

Dense fog, cold conditions in NW India likely in next 2 days

New Delhi: Dense to very dense fog and cold day conditions are likely to continue in many parts of northwest India, including Punjab, Haryana, Delhi and Chandigarh, during the next two days, said the Met department on Friday. Though fog in the region may gradually decrease after Sunday, the minimum temperatures may not see any significant change during the next five days (till January 3). The Met department has also predicted that New Year's Day in parts of UP, MP and Chhattisgarh is likely to begin with light rainfall. It may also rain on Monday in, Kerala and L a k s h a d w e e p. Himachal and Uttarakhand will see "light isolated rainfall/snowfall" on Saturday due to the "influence of a feeble Western Disturbance".



Task fraud: College dropouts from Gujarat make Rs 60 crore in 3 months

MUMBAI: Two college dropouts amassed Rs 60 crore in three months by cheating people whom they had lured with the offer of money to carry out online tasks. The kingpin is believed to be holed up in London. The police arrested Rupesh Pravikumar Thakkar (33) and Pankajbhai Govardhan Oad (34), both from Gujarat, and froze Rs 1.1 crore in a bank account maintained by them. The police scrutinised 32 bank accounts and found that there were transactions of Rs 60 crore and more in just two to three months. Thirty-three debit and credit cards, 32 bank accounts all over India, six high-end mobile phones, 28 SIM cards, rubber stamps, fake agreements and various other documents have been recovered from them. The police stumbled upon the scam while probing an online fraud case of Rs 2.45 lakh. The victims are spread across the country. The police said that the money had been deposited by several gullible victims from across India. A 19 year old student of VJTI, Krish, lodged a complaint in October. He had been asked if he was interested in a part time online job. His job was to review some restaurants. The message he received also spoke about a test task and mentioned a bonus of Rs 3,000-5,000, which would be settled daily. The offer was for those in the age group of 25 to 55 years. The fraudsters offered a basic salary allowance of Rs 10,000 per week for working just one to two hours every day. The payments were to be made through online banking. Krish opened the link provided by them, where a woman identified herself as Maria and gave him the task. She asked him to invest Rs 1,000, for which she said he would get a profit of Rs 300. She said if he invested Rs 2,000, he would earn Rs 600, and if he invested Rs 3,000, he will make a profit of Rs 900. "Krish invested Rs 1,000 and after the completion of the task Krish received a message that he had earned a sum of Rs 1,650 against his investment. In various instalments Krish invested Rs 2.45 lakh and he got messages of his earnings, but when he really tried to withdraw his earnings he was unable to do so," senior inspector Deepak Chavan of the Matunga police station said. Krish lost the money he had been given by his parents for his expenses. The cyber cell led by Chavan and with Sanjay Pardeshi, Santosh Pawar and other staff started tracing the bank account into which Krish's money was transferred. "When we traced the bank account it was in the name of a company which had already closed. It transpired that Rupesh Thakkar had opened the account by submitting bogus documents and Pankaj Oad was helping him and both of them were getting huge money. Thakkar said they are not the key players. The kingpin of the fraud is one Alex, who is operating from London," an officer said.

Ahead of Ayodhya event, Telangana BJP to be part of sacred rice distribution

HYDERABAD: After planning to take devotees on a trip to Ayodhya Ram temple, Telangana BJP will also be part of the outreach programme taken up by Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh to cover all the households across the state to distribute 'akshintalu' (sacred rice) ahead of Ram temple consecration on January 22. The outreach programme will be taken up from January 1 and continue till January 15. The idea of the campaign, titled 'Grah sampark abhyan', will connect every household with the consecration cere-

mony by asking people to celebrate the occasion from their homes and visit Ayodhya once the temple is opened to the public. Sangh parivar is taking out 'shobha yatras' in villages with 'kalash' full of 'akshat' and the yatras would conclude on December 31. "Once the kalash reach nyaya panchayats under the supervision of committees, each formed at the district and village levels, by December 31, sangh parivar volunteers will start distributing the sacred rice from January 1 with a photograph of lord Ram to households."

Bullet train work site at BKC gets notice for air pollution



Officials said this was because of a rise in wind speed and a decline in moisture in the air. "The bullet train site is huge and a lot of dust is generated there. Upon inspection, we found they were not using mist-spraying guns. We have given them opportunities to comply with norms in the

past," said a senior civic official. "The Metro 3 project site may be fined a substantial amount after receiving response to the show-cause notice." Deputy municipal commissioner Ranjit Dhakane and H-East ward officer Swapnaja Kshirsagar had inspected both sites.

MUMBAI: The BMC on Friday issued a stop-work notice to the contractor of the Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project at BKC for not adhering to the civic body's air pollution mitigation norms. While a notice was served to the project before, this is the first time it has been given a stop-work notice. The BMC also issued a show-cause notice to the contractor of the Metro 3 BKC site, which mentions a substantial fine running into several lakhs, said a senior official. Meanwhile, Mumbai's average air quality index (AQI) improved to 173 on Friday from above 190 that prevailed before.

High Ammonia Content In Yamuna: Atishi Blames Haryana, Writes To CS

New Delhi: Water minister Atishi on Friday accused the BJP government in neighbouring Haryana of allowing unrestricted discharge of pollutants into the Yamuna, leading to an alarming rise in the ammonia levels in the river.

Atishi said the high level of ammonia in the raw water was impacting the production capacity of the Chandrawal and Wazirabad water treatment plants, which led to the scarcity of water in nearly one-fourth of Delhi on Wednesday.

Editorial

Talent wars and decoding ethics of corporate poaching

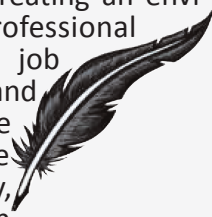
As late December unfolds, a bitter battle is brewing in the world of software, revolving around a critical element — talent. At the centre of this conflict is Cognizant, a prominent US-based software giant that appointed Ravi Kumar as its new CEO earlier in the year. However, Kumar's aggressive recruitment strategy, involving the hiring of around 20 vice presidents and four senior vice presidents, has sparked controversy and legal actions from rival companies Wipro and Infosys. Wipro and Infosys have taken legal action against departing executives accusing Cognizant of engaging in poaching — the act of hiring employees from competitors. Poaching is a common practice in the corporate world, where rival companies vie for the best talent to gain a competitive edge. However, the ethical implications of poaching have long been a point of contention.

Understanding poaching

Poaching, in a corporate context, is the act of recruiting employees from competing companies. It's a strategy employed by organisations to strengthen their workforce by acquiring skilled professionals from rivals. Though legal, it is often deemed unethical and immoral by companies who believe in traditional notions of loyalty. The term "poaching" carries dual meanings — the corporate practice and the illegal hunting or catching of animals. While the former is legal, it remains a subject of ethical debate within the business community. Companies argue against poaching, citing loyalty and moral concerns, but the underlying issue lies in the traditional mindset that values company loyalty over individual career growth. Despite the frowning upon poaching, studies show that approximately 30 per cent of job changes can be attributed to this practice. Companies must recognise that employees, like market forces, respond to demand and supply dynamics. The price of an individual's work is determined by their skills and experience and if a competitor is willing to pay a higher price, employees may choose to make a move.

Data supports employee choices

Surveys conducted in the United States reveal that 32 per cent of job changes occur for better pay and 23 per cent for more opportunities. These numbers highlight the importance of financial incentives and career growth in employee decision-making. If a competitor offers better prospects, it becomes challenging for the current employer to retain talent without matching these offerings. Corporate leaders must adopt a more hands-on approach, engaging with employees to understand their needs and expectations. Instead of resorting to legal actions, companies should focus on talent retention by addressing the concerns that prompt employees to consider external opportunities. In the digital age, where talent is readily visible and accessible, companies need to adapt their approach. Living in fear of poaching is counterproductive. Instead, organisations should concentrate on nurturing talent and creating an environment that fosters professional growth. In this evolving job market, both companies and employees should embrace change and navigate the landscape collaboratively, recognising the value each brings to the table.



Wars in Ukraine and Gaza shaped 2023, but will they continue to un-make the world next year too?

The world was largely peaceful until early 2022. There were small but controllable skirmishes between nations, political tensions containing considered adversaries, increased terrorism, but no wars involving nuclear powered nations. February 2022 witnessed the commencement of the Ukraine conflict with Russia launching its 'special military operation'. It dominated headlines for most of 2022, up until the Hamas attack on Israel's Be'eri Kibbutz on October 7 this year. The retaliation by Israel pushed the Ukraine conflict onto the side-

lines. After nearing two years of conflict, funding fatigue has begun to set in for most of Ukraine's supporters, despite Volodymyr Zelenskyy, the Ukrainian President, claiming Kiev is blocking Russian expansion into Europe.

At the commencement of the conflict, the West announced it has imposed 'crippling' sanctions on Russia, while providing military and economic support to Ukraine. These did little to curtail the war. Russia's economy remains resilient, while large parts of Ukraine lie devastated. The much-touted

Ukrainian counteroffensive achieved nothing. Its failure only highlighted the split between Zelenskyy and General Valery Zaluzhny, the army chief. The army chief admitted that the counteroffensive had achieved nothing substantial, while Zelenskyy disagreed. This added to funding fatigue.

Patience running out

The coming year could either witness a new Russian offensive or talks to end the war. Patience running out on Ukraine was evident when in the US, the senate blocked

funds for it. In Europe, nations seem to possess similar views. Poland's new government has stopped providing military equipment to Ukraine. Hungary has blocked EU's 50 million Euro aid to Ukraine, post commencement of EU-Ukraine talks, while in Romania, an anti-Ukraine funding political party is gaining ground. Geert Wilders, whose party won the recently concluded Netherlands election stated, 'We believe we shouldn't give military support to Ukraine while we are unable to defend our own country.'

Defence minister strikes right chord in his message on winning hearts and minds

Thirty-four years of sponsored proxy war in Jammu and Kashmir has seen all kinds of situations. We were taken by surprise by the ferocity of terrorism let loose on the state in 1989. The situation then was then extremely conducive to conflict initiation. The Indian Army responded with energetic intent, employing kinetic power and neutralising the separatists and local terrorists. It forced Pakistan to reframe its strategy and induct foreign terrorists to fight the proxy hybrid war, confident that a local insurrection and militancy would be insufficient. It knew that sooner than later an army as professional as the Indian Army, would taper its kinetic operations and balance its approach with adopting a 'hearts and minds' campaign. Such a campaign if run professionally and with the same vigour as a military operations campaign stood the greatest chance of upsetting the Pakistani intent and strategy. It would wean away the local content isolating the foreigners whose number therefore needed to be high to maintain control of the proxy war.

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh, during his visit to Jammu and Rajouri on 27 December, in the wake of the terrorist ambush of 48 RR's reinforcement team



near Bafliaz, has conveyed the same message very clearly. "I want to make a very special request to you" he told the troops at Rajouri. He said, "While fulfilling the responsibility of defending the nation you also have a bigger responsibility of winning the hearts of your countrymen on your shoulders". What the defence minister was saying was a reiteration of the time-tested policy of military civic action (MCA) in counter insurgency/counter terrorism (CI/CT) operations, accompanied by military soft power to win 'hearts and minds'. For the uninitiated who perceive that such operations are won by the barrel of the gun by the extermination of the last terrorist, this statement is something to mull over.

Eliminating the last terrorist takes a humongous effort in which too many mistakes can be made, especially if drills and SOPs are not tailored to the situation. Perceiving that one set of guidelines applies to all operations, from initiation to termination, is the surest way to failure. Calibrated operations are the winning way and it involves the incorporation of MCA and soft power in a strategy of balanced proportions. The defence minister's message — ".....success can be achieved by meeting the people, listening to their problems and raising those issues at an appropriate level for redressal" could not have been more appropriate. These words were accompanied by the advice that there would be zero tol-

erance towards terrorism.

At conflict initiation, kinetic power takes priority with a higher percentage of effort allocated towards it. This tapers as the security forces succeed and the strength of terrorists is brought down to more manageable proportions. In our case, in Jammu and Kashmir, the strength of terrorists was brought down from a high of over 3,000 terrorists to as low as 600 by 2006 and subsequently, the number kept dwindling. We calibrated our doctrine in the most effective way.

There is no better example of the employment of military soft power than the 1997 adoption of Operation Sadbhavana as the core of the MCA campaign of the Indian Army. There were two purposes behind this. First, the civil administration was incapable of addressing all the administrative needs of the people, especially in the border districts, due to the ongoing violence related to terrorism. The army could easily supplement the efforts in the fields of education, medical aid, small infrastructure, sports and recreation, women empowerment and national integration. Second, this afforded a chance for greater interaction with the people of the state, to understand their sensitivity, local faith and culture; all so essential

for the generation of goodwill. The army went on to virtually declare the 'awam' (people) of Jammu and Kashmir as the centre of gravity of the counter-terrorist campaign. If the people would not support terror then terrorists would be isolated without being extended the support of the people. Operation Sadbhavana had different functional levels with some projects at the Corps level and the majority at the unit and sub-unit level.

Subsequently, it was realised that the material benefits of Operation Sadbhavana were by themselves insufficient. A deliberate outreach to the people was also necessary to remove all perceptions of separatism and the goodwill generated by Operation Sadbhavana was to be extended to gain their willing support. This outreach enabled the local administration to bandwagon on the shoulders of the army to go anywhere and later even the elected political representatives joined in to reach out to their constituencies to give more meaning to democracy. The 'hearts and minds' campaign model is exactly what has enabled the government to create stability and peace in the Valley after the removal of Article 370.

The gigantic, unnoticed economy of products you return

The end-of-year sales are the best thing about the month of December. E-commerce websites are a shopper's paradise right now. But do you know that every time you hit the return button, an unseen, reverse supply chain comes to life? The returns or reverse logistics industry is worth 627 billion dollars. Its basic job is to sort out the returns. But sometimes, companies don't have the technology or the time to handle returned products. Even if they did, returns are shipped, driven, and flown all over the world. Sometimes and quite a few times for a single item. So returns are expensive for sellers. They often cost more than the items themselves. So companies get rid of them. They try selling the returns

cheaply to discounters. This is the most profitable option for returns. But that strategy doesn't work with all items, especially apparel. So there is a quicker way to handle matters, like dumping the returns in landfills. It may sound absurd, but this is the reality. With a simple click on the return button, treasure turns to trash. Everyone is not part of the problem like the Japanese, they seldom return anything, unlike the Americans who are the world's leading purchase returners. They return about 20 percent of all online purchases. Every year, Americans return about 3.5 billion products, out of which, only 20 percent are actually defective. Last year, they returned products worth 816 billion dollars. That is

more than the US defence budget! Now, America may be the biggest but it isn't the only contributor to this returns' logistic industry. Germans return more than half — 52 percent — of what they buy online. As many as 25 percent of the UK's online orders are returned. Same for India.

This is a global problem, and it has given birth to an invisible scam — an organised retail crime — called "Wardrobing". Shoppers buy something only to wear it once and then return it. Like buying an expensive dress to wear on Christmas and then returning it afterwards. Wardrobing is so common that it makes up about half of the returns. And it doesn't apply to just clothes.

Vikshit Bharat 2047: PM Modi's reform drive boosts 2024 electoral prospects

Narendra Modi's successful back-to-back terms as India's Prime Minister have catalysed transformative growth domestically and elevated the nation's standing globally. On the 75th Independence Day, Modi introduced Amrit Kaal or 'The Era of Elixir,' outlining his vision for 'New India' by 2047. This comprehensive plan aims to reshape India over the next 25 years, focussing on rapid profitable growth, improved living conditions, infrastructural advancements, and the restoration of global trust. Amrit Kaal strives to lay the foundation for a restructured Indian economy and society, emphasizing inclusivity, technological progress, and sustainable development. The vision aspires to position India as a formidable global leader, addressing challenges and garnering international respect. The Panch Pran or the five fundamentals of Amrit Kaal include the:

1. goal of developing India
2. elimination of any trace of the colonial mindset
3. honour and pride in our roots
4. development of unity, and
5. a sense of duty among the citizenry

These initiatives under Narendra Modi's lead-



ership contribute to establishing a holistic, sustainable paradigm of development that transcends sectors and societal segments. While the vision aligns with international standards, it distinctly reflects India's cultural essence, aiming to foster a profound sense of national pride among its citizens. Modi's strategic approach involves transforming challenges into opportunities, steering India toward an intense and inclusive trajectory of development. This forward-looking, long-term perspective underscores the commitment to shaping a future that not only meets global benchmarks but also preserves and celebrates India's rich cultural heritage.

Tech-savvy PM Modi has a bold vision: AI, ethics and transformation Inclusive development supplants piecemeal reforms of earlier governments: Launched on 24 April, 2023, during the National Panchayati Raj Day Programme, the

Inclusive Development (Samaveshi Vikaas) campaign spearheaded by the prime minister marks a strategic initiative. With a thematic emphasis on high-impact value and significant public participation (Jan Bhagidari), the campaign adopts a "whole of society approach". Prioritising areas such as employment generation, health, social inclusion, social security and livelihood creation, each participating ministry/department ensures a comprehensive outreach, aiming for 100 per cent coverage of the campaigns' beneficiaries. This concerted effort underscores the commitment to fostering inclusive development by addressing critical aspects of societal well-being.

The pursuit of inclusive development is rooted in the primary objective of establishing a sturdy foundation for macroeconomic stability, aiming to benefit broader segments of society—an inherently legitimate goal.

India got consular access to Baby Ariha in Berlin last month, officials celebrated Diwali with her



NEW DELHI: Last month, Indian officials in Berlin commemorated Diwali with Ariha Shah, a baby girl who has been under foster care in the German capital for over two years. Ariha was entrusted to the care of Germany's Youth Welfare Office (Jugendamt) on September 23, 2021, following an accidental injury when she was just seven months old. Since then, she has remained in foster care. Arindam Bagchi, spokesperson for the External Affairs Ministry, announced on Friday that Indian embassy officials had been granted consular

● "Our efforts have been focused on facilitating the child's cultural integration. We have provided the German authorities with resources related to Indian festivals, customs, and practices"

access to Ariha in the second week of the previous month, during which they celebrated Diwali with her. India has been actively advocating for Ariha's prompt repatriation, emphasizing the significance of her being raised in an environment that reflects her linguistic, religious, cultural, and social

heritage. "This matter is of great importance. We are continuously overseeing it... After gaining consular access, we shared with the child various items to promote her engagement with Indian culture, alongside ongoing efforts to safeguard her rights," Bagchi stated during his weekly media briefing, in response to an inquiry about Ariha. He added, "Our efforts have been focused on facilitating the child's cultural integration. We have provided the German authorities with resources related to Indian festivals, customs, and practices."

Arcelor Mittal on verge of exiting state

BENGALURU: The state government, after persisting with steel behemoth ArcelorMittal for the last 14 years, will now have to find an alternative to the steel company's project as it is being learnt that it is on the verge of exiting Karnataka. Having already placed on record in the Supreme Court that it is willing to forgo the deposit of Rs 267 crore, which it had given to Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB), and also "desirous" to return the entire 2,643 acres, the Karnataka government is caught in a fix over what to do with the land when it is returned.



The situation was discussed in detail by CM Siddaramaiah, the industries department and a delegation of the land losers in Belagavi earlier this month during the legislature session. "With enhanced compensations being awarded by the Supreme Court, ArcelorMittal is more than happy to return the land. They are trying to extricate themselves from this project with no intent of pursuing the same," said senior

officials from the CMO and the government. The Congress regime is concerned by the situation as it is neither good for the investor climate nor does it help it with such large tracts of land being returned without any alternative purchaser. "The government can only hope for a third party to come forward and take the land for setting up a similar industry," said another official.

ED seizes 7 crore assets in Juhu slum rehab case

MUMBAI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached properties worth Rs 6.9 crore of a builder, Shailesh Savla, in a money laundering case connected to the rehabilitation of slum-dwellers at Juhu Taj

slum society. Savla had allegedly sold 133 flats to Bollywood celebrities, retired army officers and police officers. This is one of the oldest pending money laundering cases registered by the ED after the Prevention of

Money Laundering Act (PMLA 2005) came into force. On, the ED issued a press release stating that the attached properties included a residential flat in Victorian Anchor building, Parel, and fixed deposit of Savla and his wife Jayshree.

CAPSULES

India-UAE ties transcend to multilateral level in 2023

DUBAI: The already strong India-UAE ties transcended to a truly multilateral level in 2023 with the announcement of the strategically important India-Middle East Economic Corridor and the expansion of the BRICS grouping to include the key Gulf nation. The bilateral ties have witnessed qualitative and quantitative progress with Prime Minister Narendra Modi giving top priority to enhance India's relations with the UAE and its top leadership. The BRICS summit in August, during which the UAE joined the group, and the announcement of the India-Middle East Economic Corridor (IMEEC) in New Delhi during the G20 summit in September were the highlights of the level of cooperation. The new member nations will become part of BRICS (Brazil-Russia-India-China-South Africa) with effect from January 1, 2024. The inclusion represents a strategic step for the UAE and consolidates its global economic and diplomatic engagements. The proposed IMEEC will comprise an eastern corridor connecting India to the Gulf region and a northern corridor connecting the Gulf region to Europe. India will be linked to Europe by a railway line and existing ports through UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and Israel. Throughout 2023, the India-UAE relationship saw significant advancements, especially in trade, defence, and multilateral cooperation. The India-UAE Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA), implemented on May 1, 2022, significantly impacted bilateral trade. In the fiscal year 2022-23, trade between the two countries reached a historic high of around USD 84.5 billion, marking a year-on-year increase of 16 per cent.

Year-end rush: Nandi Hills sees 33k visitors in 1 day

● "The Chikkaballapur district administration has banned visitor entry to the hills from the evening of December 31"



NANDI HILLS (CHIKKABALLAPUR): With the holiday season heading towards the dawn of the New Year, there's a spike in the number of people flocking to Nandi Hills, 60km from Bengaluru, for a vacation. About 33,000 visitors descended on the hill station. Confirming the huge footfall, Manjunath, special officer, Nandi Hills, said the numbers have been high for the past

week and are increasing by the day. Rush prompted many people to return after waiting at the gates for a couple of hours, a visitor said. Manjunath said mist and foggy conditions coupled with the decrease in temperature have made the hills a more attractive destination. Enthusiastic visitors are reaching the foothill as early as 2am

to catch the sunrise from the vantage point atop the hill. There are also visitors arriving late in the evening to get a glimpse of sunset, he added. He said personnel working at the hill station are of the view that the rush this year-end has been unprecedented. On Friday, more than 4,600 two-wheelers, 3,600 four-wheelers, and 60 buses, including 30 KSRTC ones ferrying school-children, had arrived at the hill station, Manjunath said.

Ban on visitors: The Chikkaballapur district administration has banned visitor entry to the hills from the evening of December 31 till early January 1. This decision has been taken to prevent law and order issues during NYE revelry.

Fog blankets Delhi; flights, trains delayed due to low visibility

NEW DELHI: Various areas in Delhi-NCR experienced prevailing cold weather conditions coupled with moderate fog, with the national capital recording a minimum temperature of 10.7 degrees Celsius on Saturday. A red alert for dense fog in North India has been issued by the India Meteorological Department (IMD). "Dense Fog Advisory for Punjab, Haryana, Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, north Rajasthan and north Madhya Pradesh: Be careful while driving



or outing through any transport. Use fog lights while driving. Be in touch with airlines, railways, and state transport for your journey schedule," IMD said in a post on X. The IMD cautioned about challenging driving conditions, anticipating slower journey times, and potential diver-

sions on airports, highways, and railway routes. Concurrently, travelers to and from the national capital encountered significant challenges as the fog persisted. Ongoing delays and diversions of flights and trains persisted due to the reduced visibility caused by the foggy

weather conditions. According to sources, approximately 80 flights faced delays until 8:30am on Saturday at Indira Gandhi International Airport in Delhi, attributed to adverse weather conditions. According to an IMD report, visibility figures recorded at 5:30pm on Saturday were as follows, "Pantnagar - 200; Punjab: Ludhiana - 200; Haryana: Bhivani - 500; Delhi: Safdarjung - 500; UP: Bareilly, Bahraich, and Prayagraj - 200 each.

'Wagh nakh will be brought to state, no need to doubt it'

Kolhapur: The wagh nakh claimed to have been used by Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj to kill Adilshahi general Afzal Khan will definitely be brought to Maharashtra and no one should have any doubt about it, said state cultural affairs minister Sudhir Mungantiwar speaking at Sangli on Friday. The minister said that the process of seeking the permission from the British government is going on and the wagh nakh will be in Maharashtra for three years. The wagh nakh are currently kept in Victoria and Albert Museum of London. Earlier, Mungantiwar had said that the wagh nakh would be brought to the state by December. Later he had said that they would be brought by March next year and displayed in five state museums.



The opposition had often targeted Mungantiwar over the frequent delays. Mungantiwar said, "I visited London and the agreement has been signed with the museum. The historic weapon will be brought to Maharashtra for three years and we will try for its permanent custody as it belongs to Maharashtra." He added that some are trying to mislead people. "However, I want to assure that wagh nakh will be brought to Maharashtra and the process to seek the permission of British government is under-

way." "If Rahul Gandhi speaks, it helps BJP garner votes' Mungantiwar, also senior Bharatiya Janata Party leader, said that opposition has no Prime Ministerial face for upcoming election and slammed Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut's statement that Rahul Gandhi, Congress MP is quite fit to be become the PM of India. "Narendra Modi through his dedication and work and oratory skills attracts the people to vote for the BJP. If Rahul Gandhi speaks, then the people have no other choice than to vote for the BJP."

Ram Mandir entrances to be equipped with 'tyre killers'

NEW DELHI: Security measures for the January 22 event at the Ram Janmabhoomi Mandir in Ayodhya include the installation of boom barriers, bollards, and CCTV cameras at all entrances. Boom barriers, also known as tyre killers, serve to prevent unauthorised vehicles from entering a property, effectively blocking roadways and access points to various establishments such as hotels and offices. CK Srivastava, Uttar Pradesh Government Construction Corporation general manager, said that the security equipment aims to thwart any intrusion during the significant event, which is expected to draw a large crowd, including VIPs and dignitaries like Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "As soon as any vehicle on the road passes over Janmabhoomi Path, the vehicle will be immediately scanned from inside. If it is carrying any item not allowed inside, then the vehicle will be stopped," he said. "If a vehicle hits the boom barrier, our bollard will automatically come up



from ground level within three seconds along with tyre killers. Then the security personnel would nab the intruder," he said, adding that a provision has been made to install this type of equipment in all the entrances of Ram Temple. In terms of surveillance, extensive CCTV coverage has been established, with a central command control center in both yellow and red zones. These centers store footage from cameras throughout the city, with a 90-day recording capacity. The consecration ceremony will span over seven days from January 16, culminating in the consecration of the Ram Lala idol on January 22. The ceremony is anticipated to attract

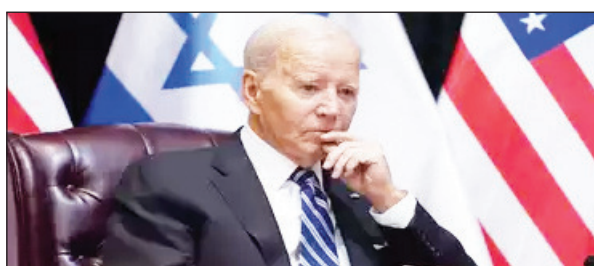
visitors from across the country. Union minister Anurag Singh Thakur expressed the culmination of a 450-year wait for the completion of the grand Ram Temple. "Those who have received the invitation on January 22 must go for darshan, and after that, as soon as the temple opens to the public, people must come for darshan. There should not be much crowd on the first day because there will be an event there. No one should be inconvenienced. People should go to Ayodhya for the darshan of Lord Shri Ram only after getting information," he said. Thakur highlighted the Modi government's efforts in promoting religious tourism. "In the last 10 years, the Modi government has opened the Kartarpur Corridor, built the ropeway to Hemkund Sahib, and constructed the Buddhist Circuit. After the divine and grand Somnath Dham, Kashi Vishwanath Dham, Kedarnath Dham, and Mahakal Lok, now the divine and grand Ayodhya Dham has been constructed."

UP adds most stock market investors in 2023

MUMBAI: Uttar Pradesh has added the most number of new stock market investors for NSE in 2023, followed by Maharashtra and Gujarat, data from the bourse showed. In percentage terms, Mizoram, at 55% showed the biggest jump but it came on a low base of 9,564 investors. The top states in terms of total number of investors - Maharashtra, UP and Gujarat - retained their positions. While Maharashtra now has nearly 1.5 crore investors, UP has nearly 90 lakh and Gujarat has close to 77 lakh investors. During 2023, UP gained 23.1 lakh investors, followed by Maharashtra's addition of 21.8 lakh and Gujarat's 11.3 lakh. NSE's total investor base currently stands at close to 8.5 crore, up 1.6 crore from a year earlier, the data showed.

The Biden administration bypasses Congress on an emergency weapons sale to Israel

WASHINGTON : For the second time this month the Biden administration is bypassing Congress to approve an emergency weapons sale to Israel as Israel continues to prosecute its war against Hamas in Gaza under increasing international criticism. The State Department said Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken had told Congress that he had made a second emergency determination covering a \$147.5 million sale for equipment, including fuses, charges and primers, that is needed to make the 155 mm shells that Israel has already purchased function. "Given the urgency of Israel's defensive needs, the



secretary notified Congress that he had exercised his delegated authority to determine an emergency existed necessitating the immediate approval of the transfer," the department said. "The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to US national interests to ensure Israel is able to defend itself against the threats it faces," it said. The emergency determination means the purchase will bypass the

congressional review requirement for foreign military sales. Such determinations are rare, but not unprecedented, when administrations see an urgent need for weapons to be delivered without waiting for lawmakers' approval. Blinken made a similar decision on Dec. 9, to approve the sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition worth more than \$106 million. Both moves have come as President Joe Biden's

request for a nearly \$106 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs remains stalled in Congress, caught up in a debate over US immigration policy and border security. Some Democratic lawmakers have spoken of making the proposed \$14.3 billion in American assistance to its Mideast ally contingent on concrete steps by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to reduce civilian casualties in Gaza during the war with Hamas. The State Department sought to counter potential criticism of the sale on human rights grounds by saying it was in constant touch with Israel to emphasize the

importance of minimizing civilian casualties, which have soared since Israel began its response to the Hamas attacks in Israel on Oct. 7. "We continue to strongly emphasize to the government of Israel that they must not only comply with international humanitarian law, but also take every feasible step to prevent harm to civilians," it said.

"Hamas hides behind civilians and has embedded itself among the civilian population, but that does not lessen Israel's responsibility and strategic imperative to distinguish between civilians and Hamas terrorists as it conducts its military operations," the department said.

'Exhausted' Gazans desperate for war to end as Israel presses offensive

Gaza After nearly three months of deadly strikes, incessant displacements and sputtering humanitarian aid, "exhausted" Gazans say they are desperate for an end to the fighting as Israel's war against Hamas looks set to grind on into the new year. The World Health Organization, meanwhile, warned of the growing threat of infectious diseases as fighting displaces more and more Gazans, forcing them ever further south towards the already-overcrowded city of Rafah. 'Exhausted' Gazans desperate for war to end as Israel presses offensive After nearly three months of deadly strikes, incessant displacements and sputtering humanitarian aid, "exhausted" Gazans say they are desperate for an end to



the fighting as Israel's war against Hamas looks set to grind on into the new year. The Israeli army kept up its campaign across the length of the Gaza Strip on Friday in the face of mounting international pushback, with UN chief Antonio Guterres reiterating his call for "an immediate humanitarian ceasefire", and South Africa initiating a case against Israel in international court. The World Health Organization, meanwhile, warned of the growing threat of infectious diseases as fight-

ing displaces more and more Gazans, forcing them ever further south towards the already-overcrowded city of Rafah. "Enough with this war! We are totally exhausted. We are constantly displaced from one place to another in cold weather," said 49-year-old Um Louay Abu Khater from a camp in the southern border city. "The bombs keep falling on us every day and night. We expect missiles (at any moment), while others are preparing for New Year's Eve celebrations."

Sam Bankman-Fried will not face a second trial

NEW YORK: The US prosecutors said they do not plan to conduct a second trial against Sam Bankman-Fried, who was convicted last month of stealing from customers of his now-bankrupt FTX cryptocurrency exchange. In a letter filed on Friday night in federal court in Manhattan, prosecutors said the "strong public interest" in a prompt resolution of their case against the 31-year-old former billionaire outweighed the benefits of a second trial. Prosecutors said that interest "weighs particularly heavily here," given that

Bankman-Fried's scheduled March 28, 2024, sentencing will likely include orders of forfeiture and restitution for victims of his crimes. Jurors on Nov. 2 convicted Bankman-Fried on all seven fraud and conspiracy counts he faced. Prosecutors had accused him of looting \$8 billion from FTX customers out of sheer greed. Lawyers for Bankman-Fried declined to comment. Bankman-Fried had faced six additional charges that had been severed from his first trial, including campaign finance violations, conspiracy to commit bribery, and conspiracy

to operate an unlicensed money transmitting business. He had been extradited in December 2022 from the Bahamas, where FTX was based, to face the seven earlier charges. The Bahamas has yet to grant its consent for a trial on the remaining charges, however, leaving the timetable uncertain, prosecutors said. Bankman-Fried's verdict came nearly one year after FTX filed for bankruptcy, erasing his once-\$26 personal fortune in one of the fastest collapses of a major participant in U.S. financial markets.

Israel says regrets 'unintended harm' to civilians in December 24 strikes that killed 106



Israel says regrets 'unintended harm' to civilians in December 24 strikes that killed 106. The Israeli military said that it had caused "unintended harm" to "uninvolved civilians" in two airstrikes in the central Gaza Strip on Dec. 24, which according to health officials in the enclave killed 106 civilians. It was a rare admission of fault regarding a specific event during a war that has so far claimed more than 20,000 lives, according to the Gaza health ministry. The Israeli military said in a statement that it "regrets the harm to uninvolved individuals, and is working to draw lessons from the incident". Referring to

strikes in Al Maghazi neighbourhood, the military said that as part of its operations in the area, Israeli jets had struck two targets adjacent to where "Hamas operatives" were located. An unidentified military official told Kan News, Israel's public broadcaster, on Thursday that an improper choice of weaponry was to blame. Israel has come under growing international pressure to scale back its heavy air and ground campaign in Gaza. Much of the criticism has been not just about the extent of the bombing, but also about the weapons being used, including US-provided 2,000-pound bombs.

Xi Jinping continues with purge in China, abruptly ousts 9 military lawmakers

On's top legislative body revoked the lawmakers' membership during a Friday meeting, the official Xinhua News Agency reported. Their ouster adds to a series of recent removals that are raising questions about how such turmoil will affect the smooth operations of China's military. Five of those cut came from the nation's secretive Rocket Force, including former commander Li Yuchao who was earlier reported to be subject to a corruption investigation. At least two hailed from the Equipment Development Department, which this summer opened a corruption investigation into hardware purchases going back to 2017. The dates of that inquiry overlapped with former defense minister.

Officer killed while answering burglary call shooter being sought, police say

OAKLAND: An Oakland, California, police officer was shot and killed Friday while answering a report of a burglary at a marijuana dispensary, authorities said. Tuan Le, 36, was one of several who responded to a report of a burglary in progress at the cannabis business near Jack London Square at

about 4:30 a.m., about 3 1/2 hours after an earlier burglary was reported at the same business, authorities said. The arriving uniformed and plainclothes officers saw several people leaving the business and one opened fire several times, hitting the officer, who was in plainclothes and driving an unmarked car, interim

Police Chief Darren Allison said at a news conference. Other officers took the wounded officer to a hospital, where he was pronounced dead about four hours after the shooting. "Officer Le was surrounded by his wife, mother, and members of his OPD family when he died," a statement from the city said.

Google agrees to settle \$5 billion lawsuit over 'incognito' mode

SAN FRANCISCO: Google has agreed to settle a consumer privacy lawsuit seeking at least \$5 billion in damages over allegations it tracked the data of users who thought they were browsing the internet privately. The object of the lawsuit was the "incognito" mode on Google's Chrome browser that the plaintiffs said gave users a false sense that what they were surfing online was not being tracked.

mode were being followed by the search and advertising behemoth for measuring web traffic and selling ads. In a court filing, the judge confirmed that lawyers for Google reached a preliminary agreement to settle the class action lawsuit - originally filed in 2020 - which claimed that "millions of individuals" had likely been affected.

Lawyers for the plaintiffs were seeking at least \$5,000 for each user it said had been tracked by the firm's Google Analytics or Ad Manager services.

Baloch Liberation Army claims responsibility for attacks in Balochistan's Noshki, Turbat

BALOCHISTAN: The Baloch Liberation Army (BLA), a 'pro-independence' armed group, has claimed responsibility for the attacks in Balochistan's Noshki, Turbat, and Buleda, as reported by the Balochistan Post. The Balochistan Post publishes news and articles on developments that have a particular impact on Balochistan and its political and social aspects. These attacks have led to the death of at least one Pakistani soldier and caused injuries to several others. BLA spokesperson Jeeyand Baloch said in a statement on Wednesday that the BLA fighters targeted Pakistani forces post in the Balghani, Keshangi area of Noshki using snipers and heavy weapons. According to the Balochistan Post, the assault resulted in



the immediate death of one soldier and injured two others.

The BLA statement further detailed that on Thursday, in the Aabsir area near Balochi Bazaar in Turbat, their fighters executed an attack using grenade launchers. Spokesperson Jeeyand Baloch claimed that this attack led to heavy losses for the Pakistani

forces. Moreover, on the evening of December 24, the BLA targeted a Pakistani forces checkpoint in Buleda with a grenade attack. The Balochistan Post reported. According to the spokesperson, this resulted in severe injuries to two soldiers at the checkpoint. At the end of the statement, Jeeyand Baloch emphasised the group's determination to continue such attacks until their goal of a free homeland is achieved. As of the time of this report, Inter-Services Public Relations (ISPR) has not issued any statement regarding these attacks. Such attacks on defence personnel and government employees are not uncommon in Balochistan.



Maine secretary of state who opted to keep Trump off primary ballot is facing threat of impeachment

PORTLAND: Maine's top election official could face an impeachment attempt in the state Legislature over her decision to keep former President Donald Trump off the Republican primary ballot. At least one Republican lawmaker has vowed to pursue impeachment against Democratic Secretary of State Shenna Bellows despite long odds in the Democratic-controlled Legislature. Bellows said that she had no comment on the impeachment effort, but said she was duty-bound by state law to make a determination on three challenges brought by registered Maine voters. She reiterated that she suspended her decision pending an anticipated appeal by Trump in Superior Court.

"Under Maine law, I have not only the authority but the obligation to act," she said. "I will follow the Constitution and the rule of law as directed by the courts," she added. Bellows' decision Thursday followed a ruling earlier this month by the Colorado Supreme Court that removed Trump from the ballot under Section 3 of the 14th Amendment. That decision is on hold until the US Supreme Court decides whether Trump violated the Civil War-era provision prohibiting those who "engaged in insurrection" from holding office. "In 150 years, no candidate was kept off a ballot for engaging in an insurrection. It's now happened twice to Donald Trump in the last two weeks. There will be major pressure on the Supreme Court to offer clarity very soon," said Derek Muller, a Notre Dame Law School professor and election law scholar. In Maine, state Rep. John Andrews, who sits on the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee, called the decision "hyper-partisanship on full display" as he pressed for an impeachment proceeding. He said he sent a notice to the state revisor's office for a joint order to set the wheels in motion ahead of lawmakers' return to Augusta next week. "There is bipartisan opposition to the extreme decision made by the secretary of state. She has clearly overstepped her authority. It remains to be seen if her effort at voter suppression will garner enough Democrat support to remove her from her position," said House Republican leader Billy Bob Faulkingham.

The decision exposed Bellows to hate and vitriol on social media - along with posts showing support - and her office said Bellows and members of her staff were subjected to threats, something she called "unacceptable."

"My obligation is to the Constitution and the rule of law. It's the Constitution and the rule of law that make our Democratic Republic so great. No one should be threatened for doing their job," she said Friday evening.

"I hope those people who are engaging in angry and threatening communications consider the

'There is a question mark': Former India batter raises concerns over Gill's Test form

NEW DELHI: Cricket commentator and former Indian player Aakash Chopra has pointed out a "slight technical deficiency" in Shubman Gill's batting, suggesting that while this style may be effective on flat pitches and in white-ball cricket, it falls short in the challenging conditions of Test cricket.

Gill has played 19 Test matches for India since his debut in 2020 against Australia in Melbourne. Despite accumulating 994 runs in 35 innings with an average of 31.06, a closer examination reveals his struggles against formidable Test opponents like New Zealand, England, and now South Africa.



In his encounters against these teams, Gill has managed only 140 runs in five matches at an average of 17.50. Specifically facing New Zealand, he has accumulated 180 runs in three matches, maintaining an average of 30. Hosting JioCinema's

daily sports show '#AAKASHVANI', Chopra spoke about Gill's struggle in Test and said, "Gill was impressive in the series against Australia when India toured, and looked like a player for the future. He's batted well in ODIs which is his favourite format

and done modestly in T20s. But in Tests, against England, New Zealand, South Africa and West Indies, I don't think he has performed well. So, there is a question mark." He started off as an opener.

Then he batted at No 3. Eventually, he wants

to bat at No. 4 is what I feel. But he needs to start scoring runs. There's a slight technical deficiency in his batting, too. He's a player who likes to play mostly with his hands and does not rely mainly on his feet. So, this approach may suit flat pitches and white ball cricket. But that does not work in Test cricket," Chopra added.

BCCI retires MS Dhoni's Iconic Jersey No 7 to honour his contribution to Indian cricket. India suffered a defeat by an innings and 32 runs in the first Test of the two-match series against South Africa. The visitors scored 245 in their first innings, thanks to a tenacious KL Rahul century.

'Warner is not a selector': Aussie head coach

NEW DELHI: While David Warner has publicly supported Marcus Harris as his potential successor for the opening slot in Tests, Australia's head coach Andrew McDonald has indicated that they are exploring multiple options, and Cameron Green is also being considered. Warner is set to retire from Test cricket following the third match against Pakistan in Sydney starting on January 3. The debate over Warner's replacement has sparked discussions about players like Harris, Green, Matt Renshaw, and Cameron Bancroft. "Davey's not a selector. I remember back to when Davey endorsed Matt Renshaw so I think the next one will probably be Cam Bancroft and then Cameron Green and he'll have all bases covered. "But it's great when a fellow player endorses someone else



internally. It means that they've probably excluded other players as well, but he was asked his opinion and we're happy with him expressing that," McDonald was quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. Australia's next Test assignment is against West Indies and McDonald said a decision on Warner's successor will be taken well in time for that series. "All options will be considered. We're not going to make the decision until the dead-

line, which will be the West Indies game. "Cameron Green, as a discussion around who are the best six batters, has definitely been in the conversation," McDonald said. McDonald also confirmed that Warner will miss the ODIs and T20Is against the Windies in early February in order to play for the Dubai Capitals in the ILT20 in the UAE. He said Cricket Australia has been looking into the NOC (No-Objection

'They don't win anything': Michael Vaughan

NEW DELHI: With India unable to land an ICC trophy in over a decade now, former England captain Michael Vaughan labeled the side as most under-achieving cricket teams in the world. Vaughan pointed out that despite the talent and resources at its disposal, India haven't been able to produce noteworthy performances. India's last ICC trophy came in 2013 when MS Dhoni led the side to Champions Trophy triumph. While talking in a Fox Sports panel discussion during the sec-



ond Test between Australia and Pakistan at the MCG, Vaughan started the conversation thread on the Indian team, posing a question to former Australian batsman Mark Waugh. "Do you think, in terms of cricket, India are one of the most underachieving sports teams in the

world," Vaughan asked Waugh. But the Aussie preferred to deflect the question back to Vaughan.

"They haven't won much in recent times. I think they are (an underachieving side). They don't win anything. When was the last time they won something? With all the talent they have, all the skill-set (they should have achieved more," said Vaughan. The 2005 Ashes-winning England captain conceded that India's series clinching efforts in Australia were stupefying.

Pakistan played better cricket than Australia, says team director Mohammed Hafeez



NEW DELHI: Although Pakistan fell to a 79-run series-defeat against Australia on Friday, team director Mohammed Hafeez emphasized that their performance outshone the Aussies' in the second Test. Australia captain Pat Cummins claimed five wickets as Pakistan, chasing 316 for victory at the MCG, was dismissed for 237 runs in their second innings. "We played better cricket as a team. I'm proud of that. The way the team had the courage to attack this game in the best possible way. Our batting intent was better, and while bowling, we were hitting the right areas. "We made some mistakes that cost us the game but as a team I believe that there were a lot of pos-

itives, enough to win the game but unfortunately at the end we didn't win the game," Hafeez was quoted as saying by ESPN Cricinfo. Marsh went on to make 96 and added 153 runs for the fifth wicket with Steve Smith. However, Hafeez defended Shafique. "As a team, you always back your teammates if something is not going well for them. But we made this decision thinking if he's not feeling comfortable (at slips), Babar (Azam) is a better slip fielder, so why not make the change? "He (Babar) should take the lead and go to first slip. I think that also worked out very well for me as a director because I could see the right person was doing that job.

Djokovic taking it 'season by season'



PERTH: World number one Novak Djokovic is hoping his latest trip to Australia is not the last, but admits that at 36 he is now taking it "season by season". The Serbian superstar is the king of the Melbourne Park hard courts, winning the Australian Open a record 10 times, with an 11th in his sights next month. He gets his preparations under way in Perth at the ATP-WTA United Cup on Sunday after another incredible season that brought three more Grand Slam titles for a record 24.

Rafael Nadal 'feeling good' but plays down Australia expectations

BRISBANE: Rafael Nadal said on Friday he was "feeling good" but played down any chance of winning tournaments in the near future as he returns from a near year-long injury absence. The 37-year-old has not played since a second-round loss at the Australian Open this year, undergoing two rounds of hip surgery on the long road back.



It raised fears his career could be over, but he will again grace the courts at the Brisbane International starting on

Sunday ahead of the Australian Open in Melbourne. "I am feeling good," the Spaniard, who has previously indicated it could be his farewell season, said at a promotional event in the city. "I can't complain. I feel much better today than what I expected one month ago, but for me, it's impossible to think about winning tournaments today.

Nepal cricketer Sandeep convicted of raping a minor

NEW DELHI: Nepal's former national cricket team captain Sandeep Lamichhane was on Friday convicted by a court in Kathmandu for the rape of a minor. Earlier in January this year, Lamichhane was released by the court after being arrested over allegations from a 17-year-old girl, claiming the cricketer assaulted her in a hotel room in Kathmandu. The 23-year-old Lamichhane stands as Nepal's most prominent cricketer and is the first-ever player from the country to feature in the Indian Premier League (IPL). Lamichhane made his IPL debut with the Delhi Capitals franchise in

2018. Judge Shishir Raj Dhakal, presiding over a single bench, delivered the verdict following the completion of the final hearings that commenced the previous Sunday, according to the Kathmandu Post. The Kathmandu District Court on Friday convicted Lamichhane of rape. The next hearing will determine the jail term for the senior member of the national team, the report said. On January 12, the Patan High Court ordered the release of the cricketer. Responding to a review petition filed by Lamichhane, a joint bench of judges Dhruva and Ramesh Dahal ordered Lamichhane's release on a bail bond.

Task cut out for Satwik-Chirag in Olympic Year after record-breaking 2023

New Delhi

The formidable badminton duo of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty can reflect with pride on the achievements of 2023. Breaking a 60-year dry spell, they secured India's first badminton gold at the Asian Games. Additionally, they made history by becoming the first Indian pair to attain the top spot in world rankings, the first to clinch a Super-1000 tournament, and the first to secure the Asian title. Their accomplishments in the past year have been remarkable, and it appears they are only at the beginning of their impressive journey.

The crack badminton combination of Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty have reason to look back fondly at 2023. The duo ended a 60-year drought to win the first badminton gold for



India at the Asian Games, became the first Indian pair to top the world rankings, the first Indian pair to win a Super-1000 tournament and first to win the Asian title. They have ticked many boxes last year and they are just starting.

Ever since they burst on the international scene by winning their first Super-500 title in Thailand in 2019, the explosive pair has stunned almost all the

top teams in the world. Despite the Covid restrictions in 2020-2021, the duo found ways to train together when outdoor play was prohibited. During one such makeshift practice session in Mumbai, they zeroed in on Mathias Boe as their coach. The Dane, a silver medalist at the 2012 London Olympics, had retired from the game and was in Mumbai on a personal visit. Chirag convinced him to be their coach.

They reached great heights with Boe, winning their first World Championships medal (bronze) in 2022 and produced a string of fine results. Even PV Sindhu and Saina Nehwal are yet to win the Asian title, considered as good as the World crown. Satwik-Chirag did it twice in 2023 - they won gold at the Asian championships in April and the Asian Games in September.



PCB to take up Rizwan's dismissal during Melbourne Test with ICC



NEW DELHI: Following the contentious dismissal of Mohammad Rizwan in the second Test against Australia, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has opted to address concerns regarding umpiring decisions and the use of technology with the International Cricket Council (ICC). During the match, the on-field umpire initially rejected Australia's appeal for a caught behind against Rizwan, but the decision was overturned through the Decision Review System (DRS). Despite the 'Snickometer' indicating a spike just above Rizwan's wrist, the Pakistan camp expressed dissatisfaction with the reversal of the decision. A credible insider from the PCB revealed that the board's head Zaka Ashraf engaged in a discussion with team director Mohammed Hafeez. During their conversation, Hafeez conveyed specific concerns regarding the umpiring decisions and the application of technology in the Melbourne Test, which Pakistan lost by 79 runs. Consequently, the PCB is prepared to bring these issues to the attention of the global governing body. All rules and regulations governing cricket and the use of technology on the field is approved by the ICC Executive Board after being vetted by the MCC Cricket Committee and ICC Cricket Committee. Hafeez was visibly upset during the post-match press conference at the MCG on Friday, while stressing on the need to highlight inconsistent umpiring and the challenges of technology which had influenced the outcome of the Test. "If you look at the entire game, there were very inconsistent decisions by the umpires. We play this beautiful game of cricket with natural instinct, and we all know the basics of the game. However, at times, it feels like the focus is more on technology than on the actual cricket being played. I believe this is an area that needs to be addressed," he Hafeez had said. The former also reiterated the need for clarity and certainty in the sport. "I am not against technology in the game. But if it brings doubt and confusion, it is not acceptable. Some decisions were not understandable. The ball hitting the stumps is always out. I will never understand why there is an umpire's call," he detailed. Hafeez said he had a talk with Rizwan and the wicketkeeper batter told him that the ball did not touch his gloves, and there should be conclusive evidence to overturn the decision of the on-field umpire.

'Fighter': Hrithik springs into action after Bosco Martis

Bollywood's renowned choreographer, Bosco Martis has called out the Bollywood film industry for excluding choreographers' names in film or song promos. The matter caught the attention of actor Hrithik Roshan, who took on steps to address the issue and make the necessary change with his film, 'Fighter.' Hrithik swiftly took action, engaging in discussions with the director Siddharth Anand. Consequently, the YouTube version of the film's song, 'Ishq Jaisa Kuch', now appropriately credits the choreographer's team, including Bosco-Caesar, Remo D'Souza, and Piyush-Shazia. The report further detailed that Roshan, a skilled dancer himself, was uncomfortable with his choreographers not receiving the acknowledgement they deserve. Meanwhile, Bosco took to his social media handle to express his gratitude to Hrithik with a dance tribute. On Friday, Bosco shared a reel on Instagram where he and



Rajkumar Hirani is all praise for Shah Rukh for doing 'Dunki'; calls him a 'very brave actor'

Ace filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani, who is currently enjoying the success of his recently released 'Dunki', opened up on how it was a long-time wish that came true to work with Shah Rukh. The filmmaker also

his team are dancing to the song 'Ishq Jaisa Kuch' from 'Fighter'. In his post, he wrote down his 'oath to the future of choreographers'. "It's been 22 years we've been doing choreography and still find it a struggle to have our

tagged the superstar as 'brave'. Elaborating further, the filmmaker added that he was aware that 'mass films are working well' at the box office in recent years, but he still chose to do 'Dunki'.

names included in any promotional material for movies. Despite songs and dances being celebrated nationwide and worldwide, it's disheartening that nobody recognizes the choreographers until we actively promote our names."

KL Rahul opens up about wife Athiya 'superstitions' during his cricket

In India, cricket is much more than a sport, and whenever there is a big match, everyone has gets a little superstitious. Bollywood actress and Cricketer KL Rahul's wife Athiya is no different. In fact, recently, KL Rahul shed some light on Athiya's intriguing superstitions during the World Cup 2023. Speaking to Star Sports, KL Rahul revealed that despite his invitation for Athiya to witness the match final at the stadium, the actress opted to stay home, citing her 'superstitious' inclination. Revealing the peculiar yet endearing quirk, KL Rahul explained that Athiya has a designated



lucky spot at home, much like her father, Suniel Shetty, who famously watched matches while sitting on the floor. So basically, **Athiya doesn't move from the spot when Rahul bats**

Beyond the realms of superstitions, KL Rahul opened up about the crucial role Athiya plays

in his life. Acknowledging the impact of her unwavering support, he emphasized the importance of a balanced state of mind in his performance. Athiya, according to KL Rahul, encourages him to push boundaries and invest more effort, making their bond a cornerstone of his success on the cricket field.

All the work I've done this year is because of Laal Singh Chaddha'

Delhi : As soon as I meet Mona Singh, I tell her I won't be exaggerating if I pronounce 2023 as her year. She laughs and responds, "And I won't be modest about it either." With three shows - Kafas on SonyLIV, Made in Heaven Season 2 on Prime Video India, and Kaala Paani on Netflix India -

Mona has registered her presence across platforms, genres, and did that throughout the year. The winning streak has not only allowed her to move on from the failure of Laal Singh Chaddha, but also translated into more work she's excited but tight-lipped about. As army kids, we stayed in the most

palatial bungalows when my dad was commanding. We've also stayed in the most broken, shackled, temporary accommodations. So army kids are like water, we take the shape of whatever we are kept in. Meeting people from different cultures, languages, going to different schools.

Farah praises Shiv Thakare; says "Today, Shiv danced with his deepest emotion"

This weekend, celebrity dance reality show, Jhalak Dikhhla Jaa 11, will see the participants deliver breath-taking performances, bringing their A-game to the dance floor as they welcome the New Year in style. The episode, titled 'New Year Special', will bring viewers top-notch entertainment and will see the celebrities grapple with a unique challenge with the 'Adla Badli' of choreographers. The celebrity contestants will be paired with new choreographers, who will present them in a new avatar, showcasing different styles and facets of their talent. Adding to the excitement will be the Captains of Superstar Singers - Pawandeep Rajan,



Arunita Kanjilal, Salman Ali, Sayli Kamble, and Mohammad Danish, who will join the new year celebrations. And in an interesting twist to the show - the competition will get even more fierce as makers reveal the first glimpse of wild contestants - Awez Darbar, Dhanashree Verma, Manisha Rani, and

Nikhita Gandhi. The reality star and Amravati's rockstar, Shiv Thakare, will showcase his versatility as a dancer with his performance on 'Pehle Bhi Main'. Paired with choreographer Anuradha Iyengar this week, Shiv will deliver a spectacular performance that will leave the judges surprised. Impressed by the performance, Judge Farah Khan said, "Today, Shiv danced with his deepest emotion, and Anuradha, I would give you some credit for that. The way you did lifts, the floor work, the way you acted, I would say, for me, this was your best performance. Because I always feel Shiv takes things casually, but there's something else inside him."

Sharib reflects upon how 2023 was, talks about his next 'Fighter' and drops an update on 'Family Man 3'

Actor Sharib Hashmi had a great 2023 with nearly half a dozen releases. The actor is quite elated as he also celebrated a personal milestone. Reflecting on the year gone by, Sharib tells, "2023 has been amazing personally and professionally. I had five releases and I got so much love for all of them, especially, 'Tarla' and 'Afwaah'. I'm so happy I got to work with some amazing talent. And personally, I got a house in Mumbai this year and I even hosted an award show for first time this year. I also went for Umrah this



year, so, it's been quite overwhelming and special. Overall this year has been really enriching for me. Personally and professionally, I am really looking forward to 2024 now." While it's been a great year, it has taken a while for the actor to start getting his

due and break stereotypes. Ask him how he was so patient and Sharib says, "Your confidence gives you patience. If I don't have the confidence, then why will someone else have? I had this faith in myself that people will recognise it and I will

get opportunities that I'm looking for. Sabra bohot zaruri hai. I've shown a lot of patience in my career. People are ready to stereotype. I got 12-15 offers similar to JK's part when I did 'The Family Man'. I don't mind getting stereotyped but those parts were not written well."

Recently spoke to Manoj Bajpayee, he had named Sharib as the co-star that he misses working with and stated that they will soon start working on 'The Family Man 3'. Reacting to it, Hashmi says, "Manoj sir is like a blessing.

Pakhawaj maestro Pandit Bhavani passes away due to cardiac arrest

Pandit Bhavani Shankar who is known as the Pakhawaj maestro passed away on December 30, 2023, on Saturday. His family has confirmed the news and said that his 'rasam kriya' will take place on December 31, from 12pm onwards in Borivali. Shankar had a chest pain in the afternoon and unfortunately he passed away on



the spot and the family couldn't even rush him to the hospital. Vocalist Soma Ghosh pays a tribute to Bhawani. She told "Bhavani Shankar ji is synonymous with the "Pakhawaj", like Ust Bismillah Khan was with the "Shehnai". I had the good fortune of working with him when we worked on the one & only bhajan album "Aradhana", composed by the Shehnai Legend, Bharat Ratna Ust Bismillah Khan. Recently, last month, I met Bhawani ji again and thereafter he

called me a number of times, saying that we have to work again on a project! I guess this one last wish will remain unfulfilled. The world will miss this warm hearted maestro - Rest in peace dear Bhawani Shankar ji!!" Shankar was born into a musical family, beginning his study of pakhawaj and tabla at the age of eight. He had played with many Indian artists including bansuri player Hariprasad Chaurasia, santoor player Shiv Kumar Sharma and tabla players Zakir Hussain and Anindo Chatterjee.

Sunny says he walked out of the theatre during THIS scene of Bobby Deol in 'Animal'

Sunny Deol says he walked out of the theatre during THIS scene of Bobby Deol in 'Animal': 'I just couldn't take it' Ranbir Kapoor, Bobby Deol, Anil Kapoor, Rashmika Mandanna starrer 'Animal' is the talk of the town ever since the movie released. While it has made huge box office numbers and proved to be one of the biggest hits this year on the lines of 'Gadar 2', 'Jawan' and 'Pathaan', it was also a film which got immense criticism and created a stir on the internet. Bobby got a lot of love for his role, despite the fact that he didn't even have a dialogue as his character was mute and he was just there in the movie for 10-15 minutes. Bobby's brother Sunny has reacted to the movie and said that it's a nice film and people are loving it. There were bits from the movie which he didn't like, but there are also things which he doesn't like about his own movies, which is fine. But Sunny has now revealed during a chat that there was a scene where he walked out of the theatre. It was the scene where Bobby's character was being killed and



Priyanka Chahar supports close friend and Udaariyaan co-star Abhishek Kumar

Abhishek Kumar, locked in the Bigg Boss house, is surrounded by controversies due to constant fights. Priyanka Chahar Choudhary, his co-star and close friend, supports him and asks him to be strong. Fans express concern and support for Abhishek. The intense game affects Abhishek emotionally.

Sunny just got out of the seat. He just couldn't take it. So, he wanted to just go out and do something that time. Sunny also spoke about the success

and accolades which Bobby is getting now. The proud elder brother says that it was long overdue. He became successful with 'Aashram'.

Search intensifies for missing beauty queen Catherine Camilon

Filipina beauty queen Catherine Camilon, a contestant in Miss Grand Philippines 2023, mysteriously disappeared on October 12 after informing her family of a meeting at a gas station in Bauan, Batangas. Since then, there has been no communication from the beauty queen, prompting growing concern from her family and local authorities. According to Catherine's mother, Rosario, her daughter was meticulous about informing them of her whereabouts, making this sudden disappearance highly unusual. She stated, "There was never a day when she didn't tell me where she was." Unfortunately, attempts by local law enforcement to review CCTV footage from the gas station proved fruitless, as the cameras were non-operational. Catherine's family has turned to the public for assistance in their search for answers.