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

'More forces deployed in Rajouri-Poonch after spike in terror attacks'

"The situation over the past five to six months in Rajouri-Poonch was "a cause for concern"



NEW DELHI: The Army has deployed additional troops in the Rajouri-Poonch area of Jammu region after studying the military-style tactics of terrorists in laying ambushes, while it strengthens intelligence network and outreach to local population to tackle the major spike in terror attacks in the two border districts in which 20 soldiers have been killed over the past one year. Army chief General Manoj Pande also said that he had given "unambiguous" directions to his force that human rights have to be respected at all costs and there will be

"zero tolerance" for any violations in the backdrop of the alleged custodial torture and death of three civilians a day after four soldiers were killed in a terrorist attack in Poonch on December 21. While three officers, including a brigadier, have been shifted out and "attached" for the inquiry that is under way, the Indian Army has "adopted" the village of the three dead civilians for developmental activities. Acknowledging the situation over the past five to six months in Rajouri-Poonch was "a cause for concern", General Pande said

"human intelligence" and "technical intelligence". "Our counter-infiltration and counter-terrorism operations will continue in a relentless manner to ensure normalcy returns at the earliest there," General Pande said, adding that the Army was working closely with other agencies and the Jammu and Kashmir Police to set up a more robust intelligence gathering and sharing mechanism in the area. In terms of statistics, the Army chief said 45 terrorists had been killed in the Jammu-Rajouri-Poonch region in the last three years, which also involved five infiltration bids being thwarted. Overall, 71 terrorists were killed in J&K last year, which included 52 in the valley. But the troubling figure is that while seven soldiers were killed in Kashmir in the period, 20 were ambushed and killed in Rajouri-Poonch area.

Indore ranked cleanest city for 7th time, shares spot with Surat

NEW DELHI: Indore and Surat emerged as the cleanest cities in India while Howrah was the dirtiest among cities and municipal areas having more than one lakh population, according to the annual urban cleanliness rankings for 2023 released on Thursday. While Indore made it to the top of the list for the seventh time in a row, Surat emerged as the joint winner with the same score for the first time since the ranking at national level started in 2016. As per the survey, the bottom 10 municipal areas in



the one lakh-plus population category cities and municipal areas were from West Bengal. This was for the first time cities and urban local bodies (ULBs) of West Bengal participated in this exercise. Except Kolkata and Bhatpara, the remaining eight municipal areas in

scored less than 1,000 out of the maximum score of 10,000. Shillong in Meghalaya and Bihar's Khagaria and Sitamarhi also occupied bottom spots. The emergence of Surat as the cleanest city shows how it has come a long way from being one of the dirtiest cities

that saw the epidemic of plague nearly three decades back. Indore's leapfrogging to cleanest city in 2017 from 25th rank in 2016 and maintaining that position for seven years is an indication that once people embrace cleanliness, it can become a part of their lives. The results of Swachh Suvekshan 2023 were released by President Droupadi Murmu. She said about one-third of India's population lives in urban areas and cleanliness of cities and towns is essential for their health and development.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi to throw open today India's longest sea-bridge

MUMBAI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate Atal Setu, or Mumbai Trans Harbour Link (MTHL), on Friday by travelling on the sea-bridge from INS Shikara in Colaba to Navi Mumbai. In Navi Mumbai, he

will address a public meeting where he will dedicate three other infrastructure projects, and lay the foundation stone for one more. The 21.8km sea-bridge, the longest in the country, will be opened to commuters from

Saturday. The sea-bridge will, as of now, primarily help people travelling between south Mumbai and Navi Mumbai, cutting the journey short. Its real potential, though, will be unleashed once the

Sewri-Worli elevated corridor, the Eastern Freeway-Marine Drive tunnel, the proposed Chirle-Palaspur connection with the Mumbai-Pune Expressway, and the international airport in Navi Mumbai are completed.

'All 4 Shankaracharyas to miss Ram temple event', two support ceremony

NEW DELHI/LUCKNOW: Amid reports of the four Shankaracharyas deciding to stay away from the Ram temple 'pran pratishtha' (consecration) ceremony on January 22 in Ayodhya, two of them have now gone public to extend their support to the event. VHP working president Alok Kumar on Thursday said statements of Dwarka and Shringeri Shankaracharyas welcoming the 'pran pratishtha' are already in the public domain. The Puri Shankaracharya is also in favour of the ceremony, he added. "They have said that they will come for darshan of Ram Lalla at an opportune time," he added. "Only Jyotirpeeth Shankaracharya has made remarks against the ceremony, but the remaining three Shankaracharyas have made it clear that statements attributed to them were misleading as they are in full support of the ceremony." "Duty of seers to ensure religious scriptures are properly followed" Shankaracharya of Shringeri Peeth, Swami Bharati Teerth, and Shankaracharya of Dwarka Peeth, Swami Sadananda Saraswati, said it was a matter of joy for the followers of Sanatan Dharma. A written statement issued by Dwarka Peeth says that statements published in a section of media were without Shankaracharya's permission. Similarly, a statement from Shringeri Peeth says that some social media outlets have shared posts that give the impression that the Shankaracharya is against the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony. "Shringeri Shankaracharya has not given any such message. It's propaganda by enemies of religion," the statement says. "The Shringeri Shankaracharya blesses all the believers to take part in this pious occasion..." it adds. In a video message earlier, Jyotirpeeth Shankaracharya Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati had said that none of the four Shankaracharyas will attend the ceremony in Ayodhya as it was being done before the completion of temple construction work.

SC: Article 30 on minority institutes not intended to ghettoise communities

NEW DELHI: A day after saying the absence of Muslim majority in the administration of Aligarh Muslim University undercuts its claim to be a minority educational institution (MEI), Supreme Court on Thursday attempted to strike a balance by remarking that the intent of Article 30 of the Constitution was not to ghettoise



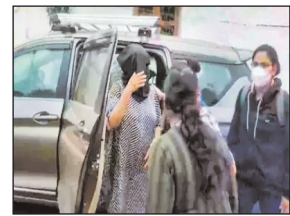
minorities by insisting they had the upper hand in administration of the institution. The explanation from a seven-judge bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud and

Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Surya Kant, J B Pardiwala, Dipankar Datta, Manoj Misra and Satish Sharma came after AMU Old-Boys Association's counsel Kapil Sibal made a spirited pres-

entation about interpretations to be given to Art 30(1), which gives a special right to minority communities, both religious & linguistic, to establish and administer an educational institution of their choice. Sibal said a minority community may establish an educational institution but may not have the expertise to run it.

Cops: Note points to custody battle as Bengaluru startup CEO's murder motive

PANAJI: A six-line note scribbled by data scientist and startup founder Suchana Seth on a crumpled tissue found inside the suitcase bearing the body of her murdered four-year-old son points to her state of mind and assigns a possible motive for the killing, police said on Thursday. "Court and my (estranged) husband pressuring me to give custody of my son, and I cannot take it anymore," says the



note, written with an eyeliner. "My ex-husband is violent... he used to teach bad manners to (my) son. I don't want to give even a day's custody to the father." Investigators said Suchana "sang a lullaby" to her son in an attempt to get the child to sleep before alleged-

ly murdering him. "The note we have attached is a crucial piece of evidence in the case, establishing her mental condition," an officer said. "The issue of custody of her son must have been at the back of her mind for many days, triggering the drastic step." Police will send the note for forensic verification of the handwriting. "She was in touch with her doctor, a parental therapist, before committing the crime.

Speaker's ruling likely to deny Uddhav group 'sympathy factor'

MUMBAI: In an election year, assembly speaker Rahul Narwekar's decision to not disqualify any of the Sena's (UBT) 14 MLAs, despite the ruling that Shinde faction was the real Shiv Sena, could help mitigate the 'sympathy factor' that Uddhav faction was riding on since the split in Sena in June 2022, the political



observers have said. They added that it will also leave the doors open for remaining (the now

not disqualified) Uddhav faction to jump ship ahead of the LS polls in May or the assembly polls slated for October. Shiv Sena (UBT) has said it will move Supreme Court against Narwekar's decision. The observers added that the sympathy wave has been diffused a little, even though it may still be there and the option for a further influx of MLAs is also kept open.

Microsoft beats Apple to become the world's most valuable tech company

The title of the world's most valuable company now rests with Microsoft — even though it may be for a short while. The Satya Nadella-led company overtook Apple as its market valuation hit the \$2.87 trillion mark. This isn't the first time Microsoft has overtaken Apple as the same happened in 2018 and 2021.



Microsoft's market capitali-

sation eclipsed Apple's by a narrow margin. The company's cloud computing platform, Azure, has become a dominant force, challenging Amazon Web Services for market share. Azure's revenue soared 40% year-over-year in the last quarter, showcasing its robust growth and attracting major clients across industries.

Direction of lights changed, Pench tiger reserve to be India's first Dark Sky Park

NAGPUR: Pench Tiger Reserve in Maharashtra has earned the distinction of being named India's first International Dark Sky Park within a tiger reserve for earmarking areas around the park that restrict light pollution for stargazers to access pristine dark skies. The certification was given by the International Dark-Sky Association, a global dark sky movement to promote astronomy. "The land of tigers will now inspire stargazers who seek to study and imbibe a deeper understanding of the universe. Pench has bagged the prestigious title of the first 'Dark Sky Park' in India and fifth in Asia," said Prabhu Nath Shukla, deputy director of PTR.

LAC situation 'stable but sensitive', maintaining high state of preparedness: Army chief



NEW DELHI: India is maintaining a "high state of preparedness" along the Line of Actual Control in eastern Ladakh, Army chief General Manoj Pande said amid ongoing military tensions with China. Addressing a press conference ahead of Army Day, General Pande also spoke about the situation along the Pakistan border, saying that terrorist activities in J&K's Rajouri and Poonch in the last 5-6

months have been an "issue of concern". During his address, the Army chief said that the situation along the China border remains "sensitive but stable". He added that both India and China will continue to hold military and diplomatic level talks to find a resolution to the remaining issues. The Army chief said that the Indian troops are maintaining adequate reserves to confront any security.

'Acknowledge ground reality, accept you are weak in West Bengal'

NEW DELHI: The Trinamool Congress wants the Congress leadership to acknowledge that the grand old party is weak in West Bengal and let Mamata Banerjee lead the fight against the BJP in the state. The Trinamool is not keen to hold any talks with the Congress on seat sharing for Lok Sabha elections in West Bengal, according to party sources.

"The Congress leadership should acknowledge the ground reality in Bengal.

They are weak. We are ready to lead the fight in West Bengal, we are committed to the INDIA bloc and to defeating the BJP. Our position is clearly spelt out with data, so there is no need for one to go to Delhi and have another discussion," a TMC leader told news agency PTI on condition of anonymity.

The Congress panel for seat-sharing talks, which includes Mukul Wasnik, Ashok Gehlot and Bhupesh Baghel



among others, has already met several INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) partners from different states. TMC sources said the Congress contacted party leaders for such a meeting and has been conveyed that they are not keen on sending any representative for talks.

According to reports, the Trinamool Congress has offered two seats to the Congress out of the 42 Lok Sabha seats in the state. These are the seats which the grand old party won in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress has said the offer is too low and difficult to accept. In fact, West Bengal

Congress president Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury had reacted strongly to the reports and had said "the Congress does not need Mamata's mercy." Adhir says the Congress had won the two seats on its own and is capable of fighting and winning more seats in the state. Notwithstanding his claims, data shows that the Congress has struggled in the state of West Bengal. In the last nine Lok Sabha elections, the grand old party has managed a maximum of nine seats and that too in the year... The Trinamool Congress says its offer of two seats to the Congress is based on the grand old party's voteshare in previous

assembly and Lok Sabha polls. In at least 39 out of 42 seats in West Bengal, the Congress had less than five per cent vote share in the past.

In West Bengal, the Congress got a vote share of 2.93 per cent in the 2021 assembly polls, 12.25 per cent in the 2016 assembly polls, and 5.67 per cent in the 2019 Lok Sabha polls. The TMC is also looking at fighting from one seat in Meghalaya and at least two in Assam, party sources said. They added that while the local unit of TMC had an aspiration to fight from one seat in Goa, where it got around five per cent vote share in the 2021 assembly polls, it will not press for it and support the Congress in the coastal state. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the TMC won 22 seats in West Bengal, the Congress won two, and the BJP made an impressive performance by bagging 18 seats.

In a 1st, Chhattisgarh offers Maoists unconditional talks

RAIPUR: The Chhattisgarh government has invited Maoists to hold unconditional talks, suggesting "video calls if they are reluctant to come for physical meetings". "We are prepared to provide Naxalites an online platform to express their grievances, ideas and desires. I am open to discussions with the young cadres any time, 24x7, without any conditions. I am available for any topic the Naxalites wish to discuss, but they must be willing to engage," Chhattisgarh deputy chief minister Vijay Sharma, who holds the home portfolio, told TOI on Thursday. "...if they regret their decision to join the outfit or wish to reintegrate with mainstream society, I extend my hand to them and urge them to lead a peaceful life and serve the country," Sharma said, adding that it's a step towards restoring peace and stability in Bastar. Last month, after a



string of Maoist IED attacks and ambushes, seemingly a challenge to the newly-elected government, chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai ordered security forces to step up the offensive. Government is holding out an olive branch but has made it clear there will be no softening of stance. The deputy CM issued a warning: "If they fail to grasp the importance of dialogue, they will have to pay for the pain they have inflicted on our people ('dard ka hisaab hoga'). They must understand that peace talks cannot occur with guns and bullets. A well-ordered society is not governed

by firearms." "We want to discuss what they desire, why they carry weapons, why they mislead and trouble people, why they oppose progress in villages, and why they do not support the establishment of hospitals, schools, water facilities, and anganwadis," he said. Every time past governments offered talks, Maoists set conditions, like release of "innocent tribals". Asked about this, Sharma said the "law governs those in jail". Talks will be based on the same legal framework under the Constitution that guides all governments, he added.

"If Naxals feel they have something to contribute to society, they should step forward and communicate instead of enduring a difficult life in forests. Discussions should take place in every possible manner, allowing them to share their perspectives on our 'shortcomings', which we will consider. Young Maoist cadres should not feel isolated from society," Sharma said. On Maoists' call to save tribals' 'jal, jungle aur jameen' and opposition to mining activities, Sharma said mining is important for progress of any region and expressed his willingness to discuss alternative approaches to minimise damage and explore measures for the development or conservation of the environment in mining regions. Previous state governments too had proposed talks, but they never materialised as Maoists refused to accept the first condition - that they lay down arms.

Friction in Uddhav Thackeray's Sena over poor handling of EC affairs



MUMBAI: Uddhav Thackeray on Thursday called for an urgent meeting of Shiv Sena (UBT) leaders at his residence Matoshree to review Speaker Rahul Narwekar's disqualification order. While UBT Sena is expected to move Supreme Court, a section of leaders are reportedly upset over the party backroom operators' failure to get the party's amended 2018 constitution on Election Commission's records and the Speaker's office. Sources said internal friction was seen among leaders over the poor handling of the EC affairs. UBT Sena functionaries said handling the affairs of EC and legislature was the responsibility of MP Anil Desai and ex-minister Subhash Desai. The fact that the party's 2018 constitution was not on EC's records and Narwekar held the 1999 constitution as valid proved to be a key issue in Narwekar declaring the Shinde faction as the real Shiv Sena and rejecting disqualification petitions against them. Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut was among those who attended meeting. Sena (UBT) MLC Anil Parab said all documents of the 2018 amendments were given to EC and will be given to the SC. "There is no internal friction," he said. UBT camp MP Arvind Sawant said Uddhav Thackeray was made party chief in 2013. "In the national executive meeting (in 2018), we elected Uddhav Thackeray to the post of party chief. Who gave Shinde the AB form... who gave him the post of leader of opposition? So far EC has never said the constitution is invalid. There was no friction (between Sena UBT leaders) at all. It was discussed that we will go to SC. A legislative party has limits of terms. This is nothing but making a cruel mockery of the constitution. In 2018, Shinde was given the post of leader. We have submitted all the changes in the constitution to EC, we have the evidence.

Jaishankar discusses West Asia, Ukraine with Quad counterparts

NEW DELHI: Foreign minister S Jaishankar spoke to his two Quad counterparts, US secretary of state Antony Blinken and Australian foreign minister Penny Wong, and discussed bilateral cooperation and regional and global issues like the conflict in West Asia and the Ukraine war. The Quad countries are looking to finalise dates for the 2024 summit which India



has to host. "A good discussion this evening with my friend US @SecBlinken. Our conversation focused on maritime security challenges, especially the Red Sea region. Appreciated his insights on ongoing situation in West Asia, including Gaza," said the minister in a post on X.

"Exchanged perspectives on developments pertaining to the Ukraine conflict. Looking forward to realising our extensive cooperation agenda for 2024," he added. Prime Minister Narendra Modi had joined UAE President Mohamed Bin Zayed Al Nahyan in their bilateral meeting earlier this week in calling for an early humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza.

Govt may announce hike in support scheme for farmers in interim budget

NEW DELHI: Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman may announce an increase in income support to farmers under the flagship PM-Kisan scheme, which is currently fixed at Rs 6,000 annually, providing a boost to nearly 11 crore land-holding farmers across the nation. The scheme, which was announced



ahead of the 2019 elections, and was, along with the quota for economically weaker sections, seen as a game changer, may be revamped in the interim budget to be presented on February 1. Official sources told that various options are on the

table, which range from increasing the annual payment to either Rs 8,000 or Rs 9,000. Govt may raise PM-Kisan aid for women farmers. The payment may be disbursed in four instalments of Rs 2,000 each in case of total annual amount of Rs 8,000 or in three instalments of Rs 3,000.

Gang-raped for interfaith affair, Karnataka woman tells court

HAVERI: A Karnataka woman who was allegedly hounded by seven men from her community over an interfaith relationship told a judicial magistrate on Thursday that she was gang-raped by the group that barged into her hotel room in Hangal taluk, 80km from Hubli, four days ago. The complainant, who was with her male companion at the time, said she was dragged to a forested area near Nalkuru Cross of Hangal and sexually assaulted by all seven men. Her companion was allegedly beaten up. A separate video statement of her plight is also circulating



on the social media. "I pleaded with folded hands, but they were in no mood to listen. Three of them later dropped me at a bus stop, from where I reached my home," the woman said. "I don't know their names, but will be able to identify them if paraded before me."

Three of the seven suspects - identified as Aftab Maqbul Ahmed Chandanakatti, Madarasab Mohammad Isak Mandakki, and Abdul Khader Jafersab Hanchinamani - were arrested on Thursday. SP Anshu Srivastava confirmed that the survivor's account, as recorded by the magistrate, matched her video statement to the media. Based on the new information, what was a case of alleged moral policing will now be treated as a serious crime. "We are recasting the FIR that was initially filed, based on information available at the time.

Book parents of kids with nylon manja: HC

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR: Aurangabad bench of Bombay high court has directed authorities to register offences against people who fly kites using nylon strings, reports Prasad Joshi. In a recent order, HC directed that strings should be confiscated if children are found using nylon strings and investigation held to find their source. If parents are found involved in procuring them, offences must be registered against them, it said, adding that shops selling nylon strings should be sealed. "Police authorities and the local administration in the state should commence combing operations and raid all premises where nylon threads are being sold," said a two-member high court bench during a fresh hearing of a suo motu PIL, which the court had initiated in response to TOI reports in 2020.

Congress seeks to drive distinction between ideology and faith

NEW DELHI: In declining government's invitation to attend the Ram temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya, Congress sought to emphasise two things - one, that it would not endorse or participate in a "political event" organised by RSS-BJP, the organisations it has consistently been critical of; and two, that religion is a personal matter that should not be used for political gains. It was no surprise then that though the top leadership including Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge, former chief Sonia Gandhi and Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury declined to attend the official ceremonies, the party's Uttar Pradesh unit - led by general secretary in-charge Avinash Pande, PCC chief Ajay Rai and 100 other office bearers - will head to Ayodhya on Makar Sankranti to take a dip in Sarayu river and then visit Hanumangarhi and the makeshift Ram Temple to pay obeisance. The UP unit is not alone. As many leaders pointed out that VHP's invitation to the consecration was sent out selectively to individuals, not parties, several Congress leaders appeared to be going the UP way, making a clear distinction between the party's ideological position - not an official diktat to keep away.

सूचना

मेरा वास्तविक नाम रामअनूप द्विवेदी पुत्र रामभद्र द्विवेदी निवासी रौलीकल्याणपुर थाना भरतकूप तहसील कर्बी जिला चित्रकूट है। आधार कार्ड में फूलचन्द्र द्विवेदी चढ़ गया है। मेरा नाम फूलचन्द्र द्विवेदी से आधार कार्ड में रामअनूप द्विवेदी परिवर्तित करवाना है। मेरा वास्तविक नाम रामअनूप द्विवेदी पुत्र रामभद्र द्विवेदी है। इसे ही जाना व समझा जाये। मेरा मोबाइल नम्बर- 8957722194 है।

CAPSULES

Netflix pulls film after cops register FIRs on complaint of saffron outfits

BHOPAL/JABALPUR/MUMBAI: Police in Jabalpur have registered an FIR against actor Nayanthara and makers of Netflix movie "Annaporani" after Hindu Seva Parishad filed a complaint accusing them of hurting religious sentiments. The film was no longer available on Netflix at the time of going to print on Thursday. In Mumbai, two separate police complaints were filed by Bajrang Dal and Hindu IT Cell activists against the actor and others associated with the film for remarks about Lord Ram and for allegedly promoting "love jihad". PTI quoted an official as saying a complaint was submitted by Bajrang Dal activists to the Oshiwara police station two days ago, and an inquiry was underway. Another complaint was filed at the Lokmanya Tilak Marg police station by Hindu IT Cell founder Ramesh Solanki who alleged the film demeans Lord Ram and was intentionally released to hurt religious sentiments of Hindus. In Jabalpur, Omti police station filed a case under IPC Sections 153 (wanton provocation with intent to cause riot) and 34 (common intention) following a complaint from the Jabalpur-based outfit on Wednesday. Apart from Nayanthara, the FIR names Zee Entertainment CEO Punit Goenka, director Neelesh Krishna, producers Jatin Sethi and R Ravindran, Sariq Patel and Monica Shergill of Netflix India. Hindu Seva Parishad president Atul Jaiswani alleged the film had "inappropriate references" to Lord Ram and promoted "love jihad". In a scene, the daughter of a priest is shown wearing a hijab to cook biryani and is shown offering namaz. Lord Ram is depicted as eating meat after hunting animals during his exile, the complaint says. Solanki also cited few scenes he claimed hurt religious sentiments, including those cited in the Jabalpur complaint. In another scene, PTI quoted his complaint as saying, Farhaan, the friend of Nayanthara's character, brainwashes her into cutting meat and says Lord Ram and Sita had also consumed meat.

NIA carries out multi-state crackdown against Khalistan terror group, Bishnoi gang

NEW DELHI: The National Investigation Agency - in a fresh, multi-state crackdown against the banned outfit Babbar Khalsa International (BKI), Lawrence Bishnoi crime syndicate and other terrorist organisations/criminal gangs - raided 32 locations on Thursday, seizing illegal arms and ammunition, cash and 'incriminating' documents. The crackdown covered raids at 16 locations in a case relating to the activities of BKI chief and members, seven locations linked to a case registered against the organised criminal gang run on the directions of Bishnoi and his Canada-based associate Goldy Brar, and nine in a third case relating to terror and criminal conspiracies hatched by proscribed terrorist organisations and criminal gangs based in India and abroad. The 32 locations searched on Thursday span five states - Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP and Delhi - as well as Union territory of Chandigarh. The seizures made by the NIA teams during the searches included two pistols, two magazines and ammunition, cash amounting to Rs 4.6 lakh, documents and digital devices.

"The terror hardware is being used by operatives/members of terror outfits and organised criminal syndicates for carrying out bomb explosions, targeted killings, extortions, terror funding of terror outfits, etc. in various parts of the country," NIA said in a statement.

SC extends Malik's bail

NEW DELHI: SC on Thursday extended the interim medical bail granted to Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Nawab Malik by another six months after his plea was not opposed by Enforcement Directorate (ED). He was first granted bail on medical grounds in August last year. A bench of Justice Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal after Additional Solicitor General S V Raju, appearing for ED, did not object to Malik's request for extension of bail. ED had arrested the former minister in February 2022 in a money laundering case registered over the Goawala compound property in Kurla, allegedly linked to fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim. On August 11 last year, SC had granted him bail for two months and it was further extended on October 13. "Temporary medical bail of petitioner extended by six months as prayed for. List the main matter after six months," apex court said.

Canadian envoy's advice to Trudeau admin amid row with India

NEW DELHI: Canada's high commissioner to India Cameron Mackay expressed optimism about the strong alignment of strategic interests between India and Canada, despite recent diplomatic tensions. Speaking at a seminar on 'India-Canada Business: The Way Forward' at the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, Mackay emphasized the importance of the bilateral trade and investment relationship. He praised the annual gathering of investors as a platform to strengthen business and people-to-people ties. While acknowledging the past tensions between the two countries, Mackay highlighted the leader-



ship and vision of the business community present at the seminar. He urged both governments and the business community to focus on trade and investment, as it would support job creation, technology partnership, and mutual prosperity. "In the past months it has been a time of some tensions between our two countries. It is no secret. But I am encouraged by leadership and vision of business community

present here and outside the room to continue with trade and investment relationship which is in the interest of both of our countries," Mackay said. Mackay stressed that Canada's strategic interest and India's strategic interest were "absolutely aligned" in the long term. He urged everyone to let the governments handle diplomacy while fostering business-to-business ties to restore

friendly relations. "My advice to my government and that to the Indian government and business community on both sides is to let the governments do what they are doing, let the government do diplomacy but everyone knows that in the long term, Canada's strategic interest and India's strategic interest are absolutely aligned," the high commissioner said. The diplomatic row has not affected business relations between India and Canada, Mackay said, adding that over 100 Indian companies have invested in Canada, while more than 600 Canadian companies are present in India.

Nagara-style architecture: 20 must-know points about newly-built Ram Temple in Ayodhya

NEW DELHI: With anticipation for the sacred consecration ceremony of the Ram Mandir reaching a feverish pitch, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra has shared key features of the newly-built temple in Ayodhya. On January 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi and other special invitees will lead the Pran Pratishtha of the temple before it opens up for devotees around



the world. Here are 20 points about the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya ...

1. The temple is being built in traditional Nagara style.
2. The length of the temple (from east to

west) will be 380 feet, width will be 250 feet and height will be 161 feet.

3. The temple will be three-story tall. The height of each floor will be 20 feet. There will be a total of 392 pillars
4. There will be a child form of Lord Ram (deity of Ram Lalla) in the main sanctum and Shri Ram Darbar on the first floor.
5. There will be 5 pavilions in the temple: Dance Pavilion, Color Pavilion, Sabha Pavilion, Prayer Pavilion and Kirtan Pavilion.
6. Statues of Gods and Goddesses are being carved on the pillars and walls.

CEC asks state election officials to focus on 'spotless' polls

NEW DELHI: Chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar on Thursday told chief electoral officers (CEOs) of all states and Union Territories to focus their energies on delivering a "spotless" general election, the thrust of which would be "to ensure the best possible experience for the voters". Addressing a conference all the CEOs, which over its two-day duration saw the CEOs from states where polls were held recently sharing their experi-

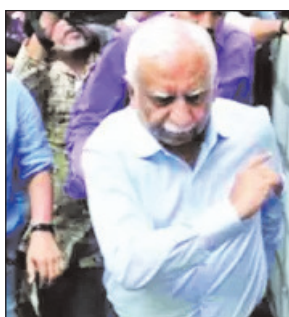


ences, best practices and lessons learnt, Kumar said the "road to the elections is a journey of duty and resolve" and expressed confidence in the readiness of the election machinery with all the necessary interventions to make the electoral experience of

all stakeholders a pleasant one. The EC brass and the CEOs brainstormed on various themes like election planning, expenditure monitoring, electoral roll, IT applications, data management and electronic voting machines and voter education and awareness. Election commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey said the CEOs conference is the culmination of the exercise that started with various conferences, workshops, trainings.

Court allows Jet Airways founder Naresh Goyal to visit private doctors, meet ailing wife

MUMBAI: Observing that health is precious, getting proper treatment is his valuable right and that ED cannot oppose the same, a special PMLA court on allowed 74-year-old arrested Jet Airways (India) Ltd founder Naresh Goyal's plea to visit his private doctors. Additionally, on humanitarian grounds, Goyal was allowed to meet his ailing and bedridden wife - co-accused Anita Goyal - at their home in south Mumbai on Saturday and be there from 10.30 am until jail closing time. "His only



daughter is also reportedly not well to look after her mother. In this way, accused and his wife have become orphan. In such situation, feeling to meet the ailing wife once is quite natural. No prejudice will be caused to ED if the

same is allowed," special judge MG Deshpande said. The judge further said that considering this exceptional situation, to meet ends of justice on humanitarian grounds and empathy, warrants consideration of Naresh Goyal's prayer. "ED can depute their staff to monitor this process, so that there will be no activity which would be allegedly detrimental to their case," the judge said. Lodged in Arthur Road jail since his arrest in a money-laundering case in September.

NEW DELHI: Howrah in West Bengal is the dirtiest city in India, according to the recently released annual cleanliness survey, 'Swachh Survekshan'. Notably, the 10 dirtiest cities with a population of over 1 lakh are all from West Bengal. Kalyani, Madhyagram, Krishnanagar, Asansol, Rishra, Bidhannagar, Kanchrapara, Kolkata and Bhatpara are the dirtiest cities in the country after Howrah in the category, the survey found. Except Kolkata and Bhatpara, the remaining eight cities have a cleanliness score of less than 1,000.

Shillong in Meghalaya as well as Khagaria and Sitamarhi in Bihar also occupied the bottom spots in the rankings. These cities were evaluated for their cleanliness and sanitation practices. Meanwhile, Madhya Pradesh's Indore, for the seventh consecutive time, clinched the title of the cleanest city in India. It was followed by Surat (Gujarat), Navi Mumbai (Maharashtra), Visakhapatnam (Andhra Pradesh) and Bhopal (Madhya Pradesh). Among the states, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and

Chhattisgarh were determined the cleanest in India with high sanitation standards. Arunachal Pradesh, Mizoram, Rajasthan and Nagaland were found to be the least clean. The Mhow Cantonment Board in Madhya Pradesh secured the top rank in the category of the cleanest cantonment boards while Nainital Cantonment secured the bottom rank. The Swachh Survekshan Awards 2023 were declared in a ceremony presided over by President Droupadi Murmu and saw many other dignitaries.

Is Lakshadweep ready for tourist rush?



The turquoise waters of the Laccadive Sea caress silvery, palm-fringed beaches. Sunrises and sunsets are just a turn of the head away from a wooden cottage. Curious dolphins swim alongside boats, cosying up to snorkellers exploring the marine life in coral reefs and lagoons. Lakshadweep shares much with the Maldives, but it's more alluring as it remains somewhat unexplored. This tropical archipelago of 36 atolls and coral reefs, situated 406km west of Kochi in Kerala, has been basking in newfound attention ever since PM Narendra Modi paid a visit recently and his snorkelling picture went viral. The Maldives controversy that followed made the Union Territory trend further. It has since found a place on the bucket lists of several celebrities.

No people on most islands

Lakshadweep, which covers an area of 32sq km, has 10 inhabited islands, with Bangaram, Kadmat, Kavaratti, Kalpeni, Minicoy, Agatti, Cheriya, Thinnakara and Suheli open for tourism. Bangaram is the most popular destination while Suheli, where a Taj resort is set to open in 2026, is only visited by fishermen and has untouched lagoons. AM Hussain, assistant director of tourism in Lakshadweep, describes Suheli's beauty as "out of the world". Depending on the lagoon's depth and the time of day, visitors can witness four or five hues in the waters. Currently, there are 97 ready units, including 61 cottages, across three islands.

This includes 31 new wooden cottages in Bangaram, 20 cottages at Minicoy, and a 16-bed resort at Kavaratti. Refurbishments are in progress for approximately 15 off-white tensile tents at Thinnakara that are expected to open by the next season. The upcoming Taj property at Suheli will have 110 rooms in 60 beach villas and 50 water villas, while the hotel at Kadmat will have 110 rooms, including 35 water villas.

On a mission against petrol, diesel: Gadkari

NEW DELHI: Union road transport minister Nitin Gadkari said on Thursday that he is on a mission to drive out petrol and diesel from India like 'Quit India' movement.

Speaking at the Vibrant Gujarat summit, the minister said there is a need to increase production and use of clean and alternative fuels to check air pollution and reduce India's dependence on imported crude. "I travel in hydrogen,



electric and flex-fuel cars to advertise alternative fuel. Like we had a Quit India movement to drive away Britishers, I am on a mission to drive out petrol and diesel from the country," he said. Gadkari said the country is facing air pollu-

tion and transport sector contributes nearly 40% to it.

"Huge import bill to get crude to meet our requirement is an economic challenge. We need to find pollution free and indigenous fuel that's cost effective," he said.

Swachh Survekshan rankings 2023: These are the 10 dirtiest Indian cities

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Editorial

China's rare earth strategy and India's future

Antonio Gramsci and **Robert Cox** have extensively discussed the concept of hegemony, particularly how states wield it through various means, including economic strategies. They argue that hegemony goes beyond mere dominance, encompassing an arrangement of power where the dominant state shapes norms and institutions in a way that its interests are seen as universal interests. However, sometimes some hegemonic states tend to dictate terms to others. Trade, as a tool, plays a crucial role in this dynamic. Powerful countries often use trade relationships to cement their hegemony, leveraging their control over vital resources as a means of influence. For instance, imposing export bans on critical resources can be a strategic move to assert dominance and control over global supply chains, thereby reinforcing a state's hegemonic position. This theory is vividly illustrated by the recent actions of China's Ministry of Commerce. On 21 December 2023, the ministry announced a ban on the export of technologies critical for extracting and separating rare earth elements, along with certain rare earth magnets. This decision follows Beijing's earlier restrictions on gallium and germanium exports—two elements crucial in semiconductor manufacturing. China holds a significant command over the global supply chain for transforming rare earth ores into high-powered permanent magnets. It controls an impressive 85 per cent of the processing capabilities and a staggering 92 per cent of the total production of these magnets. Further, China holds the largest reserves of rare earths globally, with its stockpiles accounting for over 36 per cent of the world's total. In a move to consolidate its dominance, China's State Council merged three state firms to form the China Rare Earth Group.

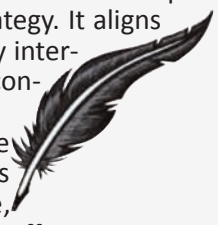
This has been viewed as a significant step in bolstering the country's production dominance. Historically, Beijing has utilised its dominance in the rare earth sector as a means of political influence, employing its control over these critical resources as leverage in international politics.

Over the past 30 years, Beijing has established and maintained strong control over the global supply chain for rare earth elements. This dominance is so extensive that almost all rare earth materials, irrespective of their mining location worldwide, are sent to China for processing and refinement.

This step is crucial before these materials can be integrated into various technologies. China's control over this process means it plays a pivotal role in the production of a wide range of high-tech and strategic products. By being the primary hub for refinement, China not only influences the availability and pricing of these materials but also holds a significant strategic advantage in the global technology sector. As the foremost processor of rare earths, this decision cements China's dominance, allowing it to dictate market terms soon.

This will also prove to be a negotiating tool as China and EU are currently in a tussle over the flooding of Chinese EVs in the EU. This action is not merely an economic move but forms part of a broader geopolitical strategy. It aligns with China's national security interests and serves to fortify its control over critical minerals.

The ban could enable China to forge new alliances and counter US influence, simultaneously impeding US efforts to rejuvenate its rare earth sector.



Navy emerges as India's go-to diplomatic tool

The recent foiling of a piracy attempt by shift action of an already deployed Indian warship, INS Chennai, in the Arabian Sea highlights the long reach of the Indian Navy and its emergence as the preferred instrument of Indian diplomacy.

The Navy has been ensuring that the waters off the Strait of Hormuz as well as the Horn of Africa are safe for transit through the deployment of a flotilla since 2008. The Navy's presence in distant waters allows for prompt response to emerging threats, disaster relief, and collaborative exercises, fostering goodwill and partnerships but going beyond as a deterrent signature of India worldwide. The Indian Navy has inherited the British Royal navy legacy of the control of the sea from Aden to Singapore and has extended to the South China Sea. The developing Indo-Pacific presence is a new and increasing footprint for the force.

In that sense the Indian Navy is unique. Unlike the continental defensive mindset, the Navy defines outreach. It is the very embodiment of the great theorist of the oceans, Alfred Mahan, and his advocacy of the control of the sea as the centre-piece of security. This has included operating aircraft carriers since the 1960s. It



was demonstrated by the stunning raid using OSA class missile boats that set Karachi harbour alight in 1971 and put fear of the almighty among the believers in Pakistan. The Indian fleet's total control of East Pakistan through deployment of the aircraft carrier battle group in Bombing Dhaka in 1971 was instrumental in the creation of a new nation — Bangladesh. More recently during the Kargil war the Indian Navy locked up the sea facing Pakistan forcing the Pakistan Navy to stay put in its harbour.

As Make in India gathers force in defence, the Navy has been doing the project for years.

At a recent media interac-

tion Admiral R Hari Kumar the chief of the naval staff said that out of 67 ship-building projects 65 are being built by Indian Shipyards. He pointed out that approximately 90 per cent indigenisation in the Surface ships complemented by 60 per cent in the freight segment, and about 50 per cent indigenisation in the air arm. From Submarine design to aircraft carrier ski jumps down to the hull of massive missile destroyers the Indian Navy is building it all at home.

The gathering storm Even with these impressive achievements storm clouds are gathering. For one thing the most critical of the Indian Navy's responsibility is to have a proven second-

strike nuclear weapon capability vis a vis China. This is crucial because India has professed a doctrine of no first use of nuclear weapons that calls for a crippling nuclear second strike to annihilate the enemy. This capability is only possible through a nuclear-powered submarine with long-range nuclear warhead-equipped missiles. That project is facing technological hurdles and delays. There is a developing time gap in testing of India's homemade nuclear submarine and missiles which is a major worry. The lack of rigorous time bound and sufficient testing of the submarine INS Arighat and a missile such as K4 which will have a 3,500 km range puts the nuclear triad under a shadow of doubt. This is a shadow India can ill afford. New technology is testing old doctrines of the Indian navy.

Access denial weapons from cheap drones to missiles are bringing back in fashion a man who wrote the theories of sea denial. The Navy is confronted — like all big navies with the resurgence in interest in the theories of Julain Corbett. Corbett had proposed that the object of a sound Navy strategy is defensive. To deny the enemy space and it is apparent in the new strategies of Houthis in the

Red Sea for example that try with \$20,000 suicide drones and \$200,000 missiles to threaten and put multimillion-dollar warships and container ships at risk. The proliferation of sensors hypersonic missiles and drones can complicate India's strategy of controlling the seas through forward deployment of aircraft carrier battle groups soon. The Indian Navy has opted for a third aircraft carrier in a fast-changing threat and technology environment. This could be the last aircraft carrier in the navy given that we need to build on the vast achievement of capabilities that built our home-made aircraft carrier. India needs three of these \$5 billion a ship as at any given time one may be undergoing maintenance. For the Navy to be future-ready it may have to choose between more submarines and emerging technologies and smaller weapon-packed platforms rather than giant warships. As with other parts of Indian defence India needs to spend more on defence and should aim at 3 per cent of GDP from about 2 per cent currently within this decade. That money will need a strategic reorientation of priorities to ensure it is well spent. The Indian Navy is a good place to begin.

Two controversies that may decide how Taiwan votes

As Taiwan gears up for a crucial election this weekend, the island is grappling with two major controversies that have cast a shadow over the democratic process. In the final days of campaigning, issues surrounding the outgoing President Tsai Ing-wen and an independent candidate, Ma Chih-wei, have stirred significant debate and raised concerns about foreign interference.

Controversy 1: President Tsai Ing-wen's audio recording scandal

In the midst of her last days in office, President Tsai Ing-wen faces a serious challenge in the form of an audio recording that has surfaced during the election campaign. The 41-minute recording allegedly features President Tsai engag-

ing in conversation with a Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) lawmaker, discussing a range of issues. One particularly contentious exchange involves Taiwan's current Foreign Minister, Joseph Wu. The lawmaker accuses Wu of disrupting the hierarchy in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by promoting "unqualified officials" linked to the Kuomintang (KMT), Taiwan's main opposition party. The KMT, once the ruling party in mainland China, is now perceived as pro-China and seeks closer ties with the mainland. The audio leak, details of which can be found here, alleges interference in the foreign ministry's promotions, causing tensions between the DPP and the KMT "What is the

future of cross-strait relations? I think it should be consistent with the principles of democracy. This is taking the joint will of Taiwan's people to make a decision. After all, we are a democratic country, on what course to follow on relations with China have to follow the democratic process," said President Tsai Ing-wen at a press conference a few days ago. However, President Tsai is yet to comment on the authenticity of the recording and its implications remain a subject of debate. The second controversy involves independent candidate Ma Chih-wei, running for office in Taoyuan. Shocking revelations have emerged, suggesting that Ma was planted by China to contest the election.

Why PM Modi has invested so much in India-UAE ties

Bilateral relations between nations are often gauged by the substance of their interactions, the chemistry between leaders and the diplomatic pomp that accompanies high-profile meetings. While few countries manage to tick all these boxes, India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stand out as a noteworthy example. In a recent visit, UAE President Mohamed Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, commonly known as MBZ, landed in India, signalling the depth of the relationship between the two nations.

BRICS Expansion: Five including Iran, Saudi Arabia & UAE join bloc. The personal rapport between Prime Minister Narendra Modi and President MBZ is evident in their frequent meetings. Having met four times in just seven months, their warm relationship is highlighted in various pictures that capture the camaraderie shared by the two leaders. Prime Minister Modi personally welcomed President MBZ in Gujarat, Modi's home state, emphasizing the significance of their connection. President MBZ's visit to Gujarat was tied to his attendance at the Vibrant Gujarat Investors Forum. In reciprocation, Prime Minister Modi is scheduled to travel to the UAE, participating in two key events. The first, "Ahlan Modi,"



echoes the success of the "Howdy Modi" event in the US, with an expected attendance of 50,000 Indians. The second event involves the inauguration of a temple, a significant moment as the land for the temple was a gift from President MBZ, showcasing both chemistry and diplomatic pomp. The India-UAE relationship holds strategic importance for India driven by three major factors. Firstly, trade and investments between the two nations have surged with the UAE emerging as a crucial supplier of oil to India. Non-oil trade is also flourishing, marked by a free trade deal signed in 2022, making most goods tariff-free. Investments from the UAE have positioned it as the fourth-largest investor in India.

Secondly, the relationship serves as a strategic outreach for India. Amid international scrutiny of India's secular credentials, the support from the UAE and other Gulf nations, especially concerning Muslim-related issues, counters criticism and reinforces India's standing as a friend to the Muslim world.

The third major reason behind India's investment in the India-UAE relationship is to counterbalance Pakistan's influence. By establishing itself as indispensable to Gulf nations, India mitigates the risk of these nations supporting Pakistan on global platforms, particularly regarding issues like Kashmir.

Over the years, the India-UAE relationship has evolved from addressing immediate concerns to tackling long-term goals. From countering Pakistan to securing energy supplies, the partnership has matured. Looking ahead, as the world transitions towards an oil-free era, both nations are exploring avenues to diversify their relationship. As Prime Minister Modi and President MBZ lay the roadmap for the future, they aim to diversify and strengthen the India-UAE relationship. With both leaders enjoying stable political tenures, there is ample opportunity to cement the ties between the two nations, transcending immediate concerns and securing a promising future for India-UAE relations.

Why toys shouldn't be about 'pink for girls, blue for boys'

Over a decade ago, an 11-year-old girl named Antonia Brown visited McDonald's and ordered a Happy Meal, expecting a toy traditionally associated with boys. However, she received a girl's toy, sparking a chain of events that would lead to a significant shift in the way toys are categorised and marketed. Brown's experience at McDonald's prompted her to question the practice of assigning toys based on gender. Dissatisfied with the response, she wrote to the CEO, asking if it would be legal for the fast-food giant to inquire about gender prefer-

ences in job interviews. This inquiry gained attention sparking a conversation about gendered toys in mainstream media.

McDonald's policy change

As a result of the public scrutiny, McDonald's decided to revise its policy. Today, the fast-food chain provides toy choices not based on gender but rather on themes. This change set a precedent influencing other major toy retailers to reconsider their practices. Brown's activism had a lasting impact inspiring other toy retailers to reevaluate their approach to gendered

toys. In subsequent years, major players in the toy industry, including Toys R Us Sweden (2013), Marks & Spencer (2014), and Target (2015), followed suit by adopting gender-neutral policies.

Transformation of toy retailers

Toys R Us in Stockholm, Marks & Spencer and Target eliminated signs designating toys for boys or girls opting for a more neutral presentation. This shift challenged traditional norms associated with gendered marketing within the toy industry. In recent years, major toy manufacturers such

as Mattel have introduced gender-neutral Barbies, challenging conventional stereotypes associated with specific toy categories. Lego has also taken steps to reduce gender bias in its products, reflecting a broader trend toward inclusivity in toy design. France pioneered the introduction of a toy charter demanding that toymakers avoid gender stereotyping. More recently, California enacted a state law requiring toy retailers with at least 500 employees to have a gender-neutral toy section, emphasizing inclusivity in the retail space.

Used car and two wheeler prices go up with demand uptick



CHENNAI: New car and two-wheeler buyers opt for more premium varieties and models. This trend is beginning to leave an imprint on the used vehicle business as well. According to Vinay Sanghi, CEO, CarTrade group, average ticket prices in the used car market has gone up to Rs 6-6.5 lakh, up from Rs 3-3.5 lakh in the last 2-3 years. "Since new car ticket size has also gone up by around 30%, it's spilling over to the used car market too as in all types of cars, people opt for buying the top-end variant," he said. That trend is also true for used two-wheelers which is witnessing the

"Around 18 months ago, two-wheelers faced a dip in rural demand but now that is seeing a bounce back," said Sanghi.

kind of premiumization that the passenger vehicle market is going through. "There is growing demand for higher end two-wheelers including Royal Enfield models and Pulsars with a 30%-40% rise in ticket sizes in the last 2-3 years," said Sanghi. Part of the reason for prices firming up is the demand

bounce back. "Around 18 months ago, two-wheelers faced a dip in rural demand but now that is seeing a bounce back," said Sanghi. The real reason for the two-wheeler demand revival is the contribution of last mile delivery segment to urban demand. "Delivery is now a huge segment comprising 10% of the total market and that is an urban demand," he said. "It cuts across all product categories." Both used cars and two-wheelers are witnessing robust growth with the used passenger vehicle market currently at 5.5 million units.

TCS Q3 results: India's largest software major sees 2% rise in profit to Rs 11,058 crore

Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) announced its Q3 financial results, reporting a 2% YoY growth in net profit to Rs 11,058 crore. However, the profit fell short of expectations. TCS's revenue increased by 4% to Rs 60,583 crore, surpassing analysts' predictions. TCS Q3 results: India's largest software major sees 2% rise in profit to Rs 11,058 crore

TCS Q3 results: Tata Consultancy Services Ltd (TCS) has announced its financial results for the quarter ending December 2023. While

the company's revenue exceeded expectations, its profit fell short. TCS, India's largest software service provider, recorded a 2% year-on-year growth in consolidated net profit, amounting to Rs 11,058 crore. The company's revenue also increased by 4% to Rs 60,583 crore. Analysts had predicted a revenue of Rs 60,119 crore and a profit of Rs 11,446 crore. On a sequential basis, the company's revenue grew by 1.5%, while the profit dropped by 2.5%. This decline in profit can be attributed to a one-time charge of

Rs 958 crore incurred by TCS for the settlement of a legal claim, according to an ET report. In constant currency terms, TCS's revenue in the quarter grew by 1.7%, which was in line with expectations. In addition, TCS's board has recommended a special dividend payout of Rs 18 per share and an interim dividend of Rs 9 per share. During the third quarter, TCS secured deals worth \$8.1 billion, which is lower than the \$11.2 billion worth of deals it secured in the previous quarter.

Net direct tax collection grows 19% so far in FY'24 to Rs 14.70 lakh crore

NEW DELHI: The net direct tax collection so far this fiscal rose 19.41% to Rs 14.70 lakh crore, reaching about 81% of the full-year target, the income tax department said. The government has budgeted to collect Rs 18.23 lakh crore from direct taxes (personal

income tax and corporate tax), 9.75% higher than Rs 16.61 lakh crore mopped up last fiscal. "Direct Tax collection, net of refunds, stands at Rs 14.70 lakh crore which is 19.41% higher than the net collection for the corresponding period of last year. This collection is

80.61% of the total Budget Estimates of Direct Taxes for FY 2023-24," the Central Board of Direct Taxes (CBDT) said in a statement. Refunds amounting to Rs 2.48 lakh crore have been issued during April 1, 2023 to January 10, 2024.

Fireside Ventures invests in mental health startup

"The organisation was founded by psychiatrist and healthcare entrepreneur Dr Amit and joined by social entrepreneur"



NEW DELHI: Amaha, formerly InnerHour, announced securing a substantial investment of over Rs 50 crore as an extended series A round. This round of funding was led by Fireside Ventures investing Rs 36.4 crore as well as additional investment of Rs 15+ crore by other strategic investors, says a company statement. The Amaha mental health ecosystem provides treatment

and care for a range of mental health conditions like anxiety, depression, bipolar disorder, ADHD, OCD, schizophrenia, and addictions.

The organisation was founded by psychiatrist and healthcare entrepreneur Dr Amit Malik and joined by

social entrepreneur Neha Kirpal as co-founder, to address the mental health treatment gap prevalent in India with a commitment to making quality mental healthcare and support accessible to a wider population across geographies.

Maersk to bypass Panama Canal amid drought

AP Moller-Maersk will use rail transport to avoid the drought-hit Panama Canal, the Danish shipping giant said late on Wednesday, as low water levels have caused one of the world's main maritime trade routes to reduce crossings. The Panama Canal Authority (ACP) has reduced the amount and weight of vessels passing through based on current and projected water levels in Gatun Lake, the rain-fall-fed principal reservoir that floats ships



through the Panama Canal's lock system, Maersk said. AP Moller-Maersk will use rail transport to avoid the drought-hit Panama Canal, the Danish shipping giant said late on Wednesday, as low water levels have

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in Gatun Lake, the rain-fall-fed principal reservoir that floats ships through the Panama Canal's lock system, Maersk said. "The vessels that utilised the Panama Canal before will now omit the Panama Canal and use a "land bridge" that utilises rail to transport cargo across the 80 km (49.71 miles) of Panama to the other side," the firm said in an advisory to its customers. Panama's drought has decreased transit slots at the canal.

US consumer inflation jumps more than expected to 3.4 per cent

WASHINGTON: Consumer inflation in the United States rose more than anticipated in December, government data showed Thursday, although underlying pressures still appear to be ebbing. The Department of Labor's consumer price index (CPI), a key measure of inflation, was up 3.4 percent from a year ago and higher than November's figure. However, a "core" metric that strips out volatile food and energy prices cooled to 3.9 percent in the last month of 2023. While analysts do not expect Federal Reserve officials to base their rate-setting off of one month's data, accelerating inflation could add pressure to the central



bank. Policymakers rapidly lifted interest rates beginning in early 2022 and have held them at a high level, seeking to ease demand and sustainably lower inflation. The aim is to ease demand by making it more appealing to save rather than spend. Despite the CPI uptick in December, inflation has come down significantly from the 9.1

percent peak in June 2022, while consumer spending and the jobs market remained resilient. This has fueled hopes of a so-called "soft landing" for the world's biggest economy, where inflation cools without a damaging recession. From November to December, CPI rose 0.3 percent, up from the prior month as well.

Infosys Q3 results: IT major reports net profit of Rs 6,106 crore, down 7% YoY

Infosys Q3 results: IT giant Infosys reported a consolidated net profit of Rs 6,106 crore for the quarter ended December, showing a 7% decrease compared to the previous year's quarter. The revenue from operations in the third quarter saw a 1% increase to Rs 38,821 crore. Infosys has revised its revenue guidance for constant currency terms to 1.5%-2% from the previous 1%-2.5%. Stay tuned for more updates on this story. Infosys Q3 results: IT major reports net profit of Rs 6,106 crore, down 7% YoY



ended December 2023, showing a 7% decrease compared to the previous year's quarter. This figure was slightly below the estimated profit of Rs 6,140 crore. The revenue from operations in the third quarter saw a 1% increase to Rs 38,821 crore, as opposed to Rs 38,318 crore in the same quarter last year. Infosys has revised its revenue guidance for constant currency terms to 1.5%-2% from the previous 1-

2.5%. For the fiscal year 2024, the company has raised its revenue estimate to 1.5% but has slightly lowered the upper end to 2%. However, Infosys has maintained its operating margin target of 20-22%. During the third quarter, the revenue in constant currency terms experienced a 1% YoY decline. The operating margins for the same period also fell by 1% YoY. In the December quarter report, the IT major secured deals

amounting to \$3.2 billion Total Contract Value (TCV), with 71% stemming from newly acquired deals. CEO and MD, Sailil Parekh, expressed satisfaction with the third-quarter performance, highlighting resilience. He attributed the large deal wins to the strength of their portfolio, encompassing generative AI, digital solutions, cloud services, and initiatives focused on cost, efficiency, and automation. Financially, the third quarter demonstrated steady cash generation, with Free Cash Flow (FCF) witnessing a YoY growth of 17% to reach Rs 5,548 crore. The FCF conversion to net profit for Q3 stands at an impressive 90.6%.

China 'Snowball' derivatives worth \$13 billion near loss levels

China's stock market rout threatens \$13 billion worth of snowball derivatives, putting pressure on brokerages to liquidate hedge positions and raising market volatility. About \$4.2 billion of structured products tied to the CSI 1000 Index are near levels that trigger losses at maturity. In addition, \$27 billion worth of derivatives, including autocallables, are at risk. Regulators have tightened their grip on these products to prevent them from being marketed to retail investors as fixed-income products. China's relentless stock market rout is putting pressure on \$13 billion worth of snowball derivatives, threatening to raise market volatility as brokerages are pushed to liquidate hedge positions. About 30 billion yuan (\$4.2 billion) of those structured products tied to the CSI 1000 Index are near levels that trigger losses.

CAPSULES

DealShare's co-founder Medda quits; Co elevates Kamaldeep Singh to the position of CEO

MUMBAI: Troubled e-commerce startup DealShare's co-founder Sourjyendu Medda has quit the firm. Medda is the third co-founder to exit the startup. Last year, other co-founders Vineet Rao and Sankar Bora had quit the company. In a statement on Thursday, the company said that it has appointed Kamaldeep Singh as the new CEO of the company. Singh had joined DealShare as the president of the company's retail business in December 2022. "As the company embarks on this next phase of growth, the Board and Investors have appointed Kamaldeep Singh as the new CEO of the company. The move comes after a six-month exhaustive and rigorous selection process by a leading global executive search and leadership consulting firm. The firm met both internal and external candidates who were suitable for the role," the company said in a statement. Medda will continue to be one of the key shareholders of the company, the firm said. "In the past one year, the board and the leadership at DealShare have been working closely to find the right business model to ensure a faster route to profitability. With a strong push on offline retail, the company is in the process of transitioning from an online-only model to a hybrid model that combines both online and offline operations," the startup said.



Consecration of the new idol of Shri Ramlala is a historic occasion of immense faith, joy and happiness: Chief Minister

Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with senior government officials, reviewed the preparations being made by Police Commissioners, Divisional Commissioners, District Magistrates and Superintendents of Police on Thursday regarding strong law and order and facilities for the devotees in view of the upcoming festivals. The Chief Minister issued the necessary guidelines. In the special meeting, Divisional Commissioners of Ayodhya, Gorakhpur, and Prayagraj delivered individual presentations, apprising the Chief Minister of their preparations and seeking guidance from him. Major guidelines given by the Chief Minister in the review meeting: A much-awaited ceremony for the consecration of the

new idol of Shri Ram Lalla in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya is scheduled to take place on January 22. Distinguished individuals from diverse fields such as religion, politics, industry, science, cinema, literature, and arts, both nationally and internationally, are anticipated to witness this significant event. Concurrently, events like the Khichdi Mela in Gorakhpur and Magh Mela in Prayagraj are poised to commence from Makar Sankranti. The tradition of Kalpavas is observed in Farrukhabad, and Uttar Pradesh Diwas will be

Yogi govt to run a statewide cleanliness campaign ahead of Ram Temple inauguration

Lucknow

In line with preparations of the consecration ceremony to be held in Ayodhya on January 22, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will launch a mega cleanliness campaign starting from Makar Sankranti in Ayodhya. Following this, an extensive cleanliness campaign will be carried out in every village, city, and locality of the state. The responsibility for this has been entrusted to the Urban Development and Panchayati Raj Departments. Instructions issued for Urban Development and Panchayati Raj Department. Instructions have been issued by State Chief Secretary Durga Shankar Mishra to the Urban

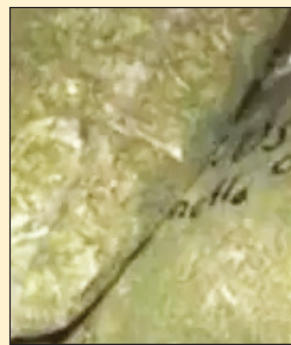
● **"The Department of Food and Civil Supplies has been directed to inspect and ensure the cleanliness of all toilets"**

Development Department and Panchayati Raj Department regarding the upcoming inauguration of the Ram temple. The command of the cleanliness campaign, which is set to begin on January 14, will be led by the Chief Minister himself. Following this, an extensive cleanliness campaign will be carried out in every part of the state for the next nine

days. Not only that, local representatives will also take charge of special cleanliness campaigns in every district headquarters of the state. Each drain will be cleaned. In addition to the main roads, directives have been given to completely clean the routes from the railway station and airport to the temples in Ayodhya. Instructions further include the cleaning of every drain and drainage, and a large team of sanitation workers, consisting of 3800 old and 1500 new members, will be deployed for this purpose. The Department of Food and Civil Supplies has been directed to regularly inspect and ensure the cleanliness of all toilets,

Blade, ganja packet found in stomach of undertrial prisoner

HYDERABAD: An undertrial prisoner from Chanchalguda jail was found to have various pieces of metal and even a packet of ganja in his stomach after he complained of stomach pain and was admitted in Osmania General Hospital (OGH) on Monday. The doctors removed all the foreign objects after a surgery. The undertrial prisoner, Sohail (19), is in prison for multiple theft cases. He also had a PD Act slapped on him which was lifted recently. OGH superintendent Dr B Nagender said the prisoner admitted to ingesting the objects due to 'anger and frus-



tration'. An x-ray revealed a nail, a shaving blade, screws, a few other objects and the ganja packet. "He was brought here with severe abdominal pain. Although it is not uncommon among prisoners to ingest such things, in this case it was a large number of foreign bodies. All of it

were removed through an endoscopic surgery. He is out of danger now," said Dr Nagender. Prison officials said that they are probing how he managed to get all these objects. "We suspect he might have got the objects a day earlier when also he had complained of unbearable pain and was taken for medical examination. He must have swallowed the articles then. He was taken to the hospital then as prison authorities were being careful with an undertrial's health. But the very next day he complained of stomach ache and had to be admitted to OGH," a jail official said.

Bengaluru-Ayodhya airfares rise by nearly 400% to Rs 30,000

BENGALURU: With flights from Bengaluru to Ayodhya packed around the day of consecration on January 22, a flood of visitors from the IT hub is expected to throng the areas adjoining the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple site on the weekend preceding the

opening of the temple. For a one-way flight from Bengaluru to Ayodhya on January 20, the cheapest ticket is priced at Rs 24,000. Most flights around that weekend are almost sold out, with only a handful of seats available at the time of going to press. For

January 20, the priciest ticket is going for Rs 29,700 - marking a 395% increase - for a flight departing Kempegowda International Airport in Bengaluru at 1 pm and reaching Ayodhya at 11 pm, after a five-hour layover in Ahmedabad.

CM Yogi launches Indigo's air service between Ayodhya & Ahmedabad

Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday virtually launched Indigo Airlines' direct air service between Ayodhya and Ahmedabad at an event organized on Thursday.

Devotees/tourists who wish to have darshan of Lord Shri Ram now have the option of taking the direct flight from Ahmedabad to reach Ayodhya. Expressing happiness over the launch of the new air service, the Chief Minister said, "With this direct flight,



Ayodhya has become directly connected to Ahmedabad. Ahmedabad is the second place after Delhi to be connected to Ayodhya through air service. Starting from January 15, there will also be flight services

between Ayodhya and Mumbai." He said that another flight service between Delhi and Ayodhya will start on January 16. He further highlighted that improved air services contribute significantly to tourism and business

activities. Discussing the improving air services in the state, the Chief Minister mentioned that the number of air passengers in the state increased from 59.97 lakh in the financial year 2016-17 to 96.02 lakh in the financial year 2022-23, representing a growth rate of 29.46 percent in the past three years. He informed that in 2016-17, Lucknow airport received 39.68 lakh passengers, Varanasi had 19.16 lakh, Gorakhpur 54,000, and Prayagraj received 45,000.

Dasharath Samadhi Sthal in Ayodhya undergoes transformation under Yogi govt

Ayodhya

Situated approximately 15 kilometers away from the iconic Ram Janmabhoomi, Raja Dasharath Samadhi Sthal in Ayodhya has undergone a remarkable transformation under the proactive administration of the Yogi government. In the first phase, the government expedited the restoration process of this historically significant site, which had long suffered neglect during previous governments.

In the first phase, the government focused on strengthening and enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the Samadhi Sthal. For the second phase, the Yogi government is actively preparing a development plan for the area. In 'Ramnagari', where every aspect



related to Lord Ram holds profound significance, the Samadhi Sthal of his father, Raja Dasharath, had long grappled with neglect. However, thanks to the determined resolve of the Yogi government, this site has undergone a revitalization process.

The Padma Purana also describes the spiritual significance of the Raja Dasharath Samadhi Sthal, stating that anyone who visits this place and recites

or remembers the 'Shani Stotra' composed by Raja Dasharath is liberated from the troubles caused by Saturn (Shani).

It is also asserted that individuals who visit this sacred place, witness the distinctive idol of Shani Dev, and recite the Shani Stotra composed by King Dasharath, are believed to receive the auspicious gaze and blessings of Shani throughout their lives.

Swachh Survekshan 2023: UP's Varanasi and Prayagraj get recognized as 'Cleanest Ganga City'

Lucknow

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's effective leadership has positioned Uttar Pradesh as a state renowned for its cleanliness. This recognition is further evident in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 results, wherein UP has been honored in various award categories. Among these, Varanasi and Prayagraj have been recognized as the 'Cleanest Ganga Towns.' The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs of the Government of India announced the National Awards for Swachh Survekshan 2023 for sanitation at an event organized at Bharat Mandapam in New Delhi. The awards were received by the Minister of Urban Development of the state, A.K. Sharma, from President Draupadi Murmu. Award for dedication to cleanliness in Swachh Survekshan 2023, Varanasi and Prayagraj received first and second place, respectively, as Cleanest Ganga Towns. Both



these cities were honored by the President for their dedication to cleanliness. Varanasi also received a three-star Garbage-Free City rating, and Prayagraj was awarded Water Plus City status. Additionally, at the zonal level in the North India region, three cities from UP, namely Barwar, Anupshahr, and Gajraula, received the Clean City North Zone award. Noida received the state-level Clean City award in the population category of one lakh. 65 cities of UP achieve garbage-free status in

addition to this, the results of GFC and ODF have also been announced, in which this year 65 cities in UP have been certified as garbage-free cities. Among the GFC cities, there are 56 one-star, 08 three-star, and one five-star city. UP aims to achieve certification for several more garbage-free cities this year. Furthermore, all cities in UP have become ODF this year. In various categories of ODF, 02 ULBs (Urban Local Bodies) have obtained Water Plus certification for the first time.

15-foot-tall metallic squirrel from Bengaluru on way to Ayodhya

BENGALURU: A 15-foot-tall metallic squirrel from Bengaluru is on a 1,900-km journey to Ayodhya. It left Bengaluru on January 8 in two pieces and will be installed at the recently inaugurated Ayodhya railway station on January 15. Self-made sculptor Kalyan S Rathore, 52, who is credited with the 130-foot-tall 'Efflorescence' installation at Terminal 2 of Kempegowda International Airport (KIA), has created this multi-planned artwork. Rathore explained the theme and the coming together of dichotomies with this public art installation. Rathore recalled jumping at the opportunity of bringing contemporary work into the historical city of Ayodhya. "I did not want to do anything expected. Instead of a deity, I wanted to bring out the unsung hero of the Ramayana -- the squirrel. As children we had heard of its contribution in building the bridge by carrying around tiny pieces of rock.

CAPSULES

A huge 500 kg Nagada from Gujrat reaches Ayodhya General Secretary of Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust accepts a Nagada from Gujarat

Ayodhya Champat Rai, General Secretary of Ram

Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust, accepted the huge 500 kg Nagada that reached

Ayodhya on Wednesday in a special chariot from Gujarat. He assured that it will be installed at the appropriate place. Gujarat VHP's

Ashok Rawal has sent a letter for accepting Nagada. Chirag Patel, who brought the Nagada, said that it is adorned with layers of gold and silver. The structure of Nagada involves the use of iron and copper plates as well. It was constructed by the people of Dabgar community. This huge Nagada, a symbol of Hindu culture, has been constructed in the Daryapur extension of Karnavati metropolis to be installed in the Ram temple.



1st T20I: All-round Shivam Dube fires India to easy win over Afghanistan

NEW DELHI: Ignored for South Africa series, all-rounder Shivam Dube starred with both bat and ball on comeback, guiding India to an easy six-wicket win over Afghanistan in Mohali on Thursday. Proving his utility in India's crowded batting lineup, Dube made the opportunity count as he hit a belligerent half-century in chase of 159 after bowlers restricted the Afghan batters to a par total. After bowling an economical spell (2-0-9-1), Dube smashed an unbeaten 60 off 40 balls to help India overcome the target with 15 balls to spare. A lively 68-run partnership off 43 balls between the seasoned Mohammad Nabi (42 off 27) and youthful Azmatullah Omarzai (29 off 22) lifted Afghanistan to 158 for five after India dominated the powerplay. The total posted was not enough in good batting conditions as India got home comfortably. Dube, playing his first



T20 since the Asian Games, and Tilak Varma (26 off 22) shared a 44-run stand off 29 balls to give Indian innings momentum after losing the openers inside four overs.

As It Happened

Rohit Sharma (0), returning to T20s after 14 months, and Shubman Gill (23) got involved in an avoidable mix-up that limited the Indian skipper's stay to just two balls. The usually calm and cool Rohit did not hide his anger on this occasion as Gill did not pay heed to his call for a quick single.

Gill was not able to stay for long but Varma and Dube were able to take the innings

forward and India did not look back from there on. Dube, who is seen as a back up to injury prone Hardik Pandya, used his long levers efficiently and his disdainful drives on the off side stood out.

He ended the game in style with a straight six and four in the fine leg region. Jitesh Sharma (31 off 20) also gave a good account of himself before Rinku Singh (16 not out off 9) joined Dube in the middle and took the team home. Earlier, a stroke-filled partnership between Nabi and Omarzai was just what Afghanistan needed after India reduced the visitors to 57 for three in 10 overs amid chilly conditio

'We want to challenge ourselves in areas where we are uncomfortable'

● "We want to keep trying different things - try and bowl our bowlers in different situations of the game"

NEW DELHI: Indian captain Rohit Sharma on Thursday said that the team management is looking to deliberately expose players to challenging situations ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup in June. The ongoing three-match series against Afghanistan is India's last before the T20 World Cup, slated to be hosted by the United States and the West Indies. India's six-wicket



victory over the Afghans in the opener marked Rohit's return to the shortest format after an absence of 14 months. "We want to keep trying different things - try and bowl our bowlers in different situations of the game, like you saw today, Washi (Washington Sundar) bowled the 19th over. We want to challenge ourselves in the areas we are slightly uncomfortable with and the bowlers are not used to that. "We want to try

and do that. Keeping all of those things in mind, we'll try and do whatever is possible but not at the cost of the game. We want to make sure that we come out on top and play the game well. All in all, today was a good day for us," he said at the post match presentation. India gunned down the 159-run target in 17.3 overs. Shivam Dube starred with an unbeaten 60 off 40 balls and also took a wicket with his medium pace.

Bengal have task cut out against UP

KOLKATA: Bengal did not get the start they were looking for as they managed to end up with just one point against Andhra in their Ranji Trophy opener. They will have to raise their game against a strong Uttar Pradesh side when they meet them in an Elite Group 'B' match at the Green Park in Kanpur from Friday.

Although the hosts' first game against Kerala also ended in a draw, UP dominated the proceedings earning three points from that. UP seem to have all their bases covered with both their batters and bowlers coming good in the first match. Although they will be missing an in-form Rinku Singh and wicketkeeper-

batter Dhruv Jurel in this match, batters like skipper Aryan Juyal, Priyam Garg and Nitish Rana, who have shifted base to UP this season, are all capable of scoring big. Both Juyal and Garg had hit centuries in the last match too. The Bengal pace attack does not look too menacing in Ishan Porel.

Vidarbha take on minnows Manipur, eye bonus points in Ranji Trophy

● "The first outing saw the three seamers — Yadav, Thakare and Darshan — doing most of the bowling in overcast conditions"



NAGPUR: Bat once, bat big, get seven points: That, in short, will be Vidarbha's game-plan against Manipur in their second Ranji Trophy match from Friday. Though the plot sounds a lot more about batting, the bowlers will be key. They will be expected to bowl out the minnows twice as soon as possible at the ADSA Railway Ground in Ahmedabad. The first outing,

against Services, was a good one for the Vidarbha bowling unit. The bowlers led by Aditya Thakare bundled out Services for just 155 in the second innings. The bowling attack now has Rajneesh, in place of Yash Thakur. Ideally, the team management would be keen to give a chance to seamers rested in the first match, and Gurbani. The lure of bonus

points may, however, lead to second thoughts about resting the likes of Umesh Yadav. With the weather expected to be warm and sunny, Vidarbha spinners — Akshay and Aditya — may get more workload. The first outing saw the three seamers — Yadav, Thakare and Darshan Nalkande — doing most of the bowling in overcast conditions.

Mahi bhai told me to react according to the ball and keep calm': Rinku Singh

NEW DELHI: Riding on Shivam Dube's all-round show, Team India opened the new year in the white-ball format with a commanding six-wicket win over Afghanistan in the first T20I of the three-match series in Mohali. Left-handed batter Dube fired an unbeaten innings of 60 runs off 40 balls, playing a pivotal role in India's successful chase of a 159-run target. His contribution allowed India to achieve the target with 15 balls to spare, indicating his capability and form with the bat, which could be



valuable for the team in the upcoming T20 World Cup. Opting to field, India restricted Afghanistan to a modest 158-5.

Rahmanullah Gurbaz (23) and Ibrahim Zadran (25) stitched a 50-run opening partnership, but it was Mohammad Nabi's 42 off 27 balls that helped Afghanistan

cross the 150-mark. Another left-hander, Rinku Singh, who scored a 9-ball 16, stayed till the last, giving Dube good company to finish off the chase. The duo put on a fine unbeaten 42-run stand for the fifth wicket, denying any chance whatsoever to Afghanistan. Rinku, who is an attack-

ing batsman himself, kept his cool and gave credit to former Indian skipper MS Dhoni's advice for his calm and composed approach towards the game. "I've spoken with Mahi bhai (MS Dhoni), he just told me to react according to the ball, keep your calm and I just do the same thing. I don't think a lot while batting, just react to the ball," Rinku said at the post-match interaction. "I have got a habit of batting at 6 and finishing very games, I'm feeling very happy with this job.

Return of key domestic players will lend more balance to team: Owen Coyle

CHENNAI: Head coach Owen Coyle stresses that the return of key domestic players will lend more balance to the Chennaiyin FC team in the Kalinga Super Cup in Bhubaneswar. In an interaction with TOI ahead of Chennaiyin's opener against fellow Indian Super League side Punjab FC in Group C, Coyle speaks about the importance of having a near full-strength squad, the club's chances in the cup competition, transfers in the January window and more.

Excerpts:

The Kalinga Super Cup provides Chennaiyin FC an opportunity to win silverware after a period of five years (the last title they won was the ISL trophy in 2018). With the squad you have, do you believe that you can end the



wait? We certainly believe that we are capable of doing it. We want to be at the business end fighting for trophies. We knew that it was going to take time, to evolve and build the team to do that (win titles). In this cup competition, we have to be at our best. Anything other than that will not be good enough because of the quality of the opposition (teams). We have got a number of players

back from injuries, which will help us give more balance to the team. It is a tough group, as they all are, for different reasons. We played Punjab and Mumbai City recently, albeit both away from home (in the ISL in December 2023). We know the squads; if we perform the way we did against Punjab at our home (a dominant 5-1 win in Chennai), we will be more than a match for anyone. That

Ishan Kishan Saga: The Mess that could have been avoided

● The left-hander can't be selected for England Tests later this month

The dashing wicket-keeper batsman's chances of entering the team also hit the cold point once batting maestro Virat Kohli expressed his intentions of playing the marquee event in June. To add to his dilemma, head coach Rahul Dravid on Wednesday had made a loaded statement that Ishan Kishan has to play domestic cricket to make his return to India fold. It means that having not played



any cricket for seven weeks, the left-hander can't be selected for England Tests later this month, where Kona Bharat is seen as the first keeper. Ishan Kishan will be tad too naïve not to understand that he currently stands on the lowest pedal in the ladder of players who are in contention for a slot in India's squad for the T20 World Cup. The dashing wicket-keeper batsman's chances of entering the team also hit the cold point once bat-

ting maestro Virat Kohli expressed his intentions of playing the marquee event in June. To add to his dilemma, head coach Rahul Dravid on Wednesday had made a loaded statement that Kishan has to play domestic cricket to make his return to India fold.9 If Kohli vs Kishan comparison is done with weightage on experience and big match temperament, the Jharkhand man stood no chance against the Big Man.

This despite the fact that after Shubman Gill, until the ODI World Cup, Kishan was one of the most consistent white ball batters. Did he have reasons to feel aggrieved that he didn't play a single T20 in South Africa after scoring two half-centuries under pressure in the preceding series against Australia at home?

And Kishan is not someone who lacks that passion quotient not to feel hurt at that sidelining. If one had to accommodate both Kohli and skipper Rohit Sharma, who also returned to the T20 establishment, the scapegoat had to be Kishan as he is a top-order player. Then we have another left-handed top-order batter Yashasvi Jaiswal, who might just be a yard ahead of Kishan in terms of

Fuming Rohit vents out anger at Gill after terrible run out

NEW DELHI: India skipper Rohit Sharma's return to the T20I fold after a 14-month gap turned out to be a nightmare, as he could play only two balls before being dismissed for a duck in a horrendous mix-up with non-striker Shubman Gill during the first T20I against Afghanistan in Mohali on Thursday. A visibly angry Rohit couldn't put a check on his emotions as lashed out at his partner Gill while walking back to the dugout. India, set to chase 159, suffered early blow on the second delivery of the innings. Rohit struck a powerful shot to mid-off off Fazalhaq Farooqi's delivery, and Ibrahim Zadran came up with an impressive effort to stop the ball. Following the shot, Rohit immediately went for a run, but his partner, Gill, was more focused on tracking the ball rather than responding to the call for a run.

CAPSULES

Wanindu Hasaranga takes career-best 7/19 as Sri Lanka bowl out Zimbabwe for 96 in third ODI

NEW DELHI: Sri Lankan leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga marked a spectacular return to international cricket by recording his career-best figures of 7-19 in the rain-affected ODI decider against Zimbabwe in Colombo on Thursday.



The match, reduced to 27 overs per side due to rain, saw Zimbabwe being bowled out for 96 runs. Despite a promising start by Zimbabwe's openers, Hasaranga, known for his deceptive googly, made a significant breakthrough by dismissing Takudzwanashe Kaitano in the ninth over after the first rain interruption. He continued his brilliance by claiming two more wickets in the same over, leaving Zimbabwe struggling at 47-3. With no recovery in sight for the tourists, Hasaranga continued to wreak havoc by taking four more wickets, finishing with a career-best 7-19. This outstanding performance set a new record for R Premadasa Stadium, surpassing Angelo Mathews' 6-20 against India in 2009. It also stands as the second-best ODI figures by a Sri Lankan bowler, with Chaminda Vaas' 8-19 holding the top spot. Sri Lanka lead the three-match series 1-0. The first game was washed out by rain while Sri Lanka won the second by two wickets.

CAPSULES

Delhi HC asks YouTuber to remove 'defamatory' video on Ram Rahim

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court has directed journalist and YouTuber Shyam Meera Singh to take down a video on Dera Sacha Sauda Chief Gurmeet Ram Rahim Singh within 24 hours, holding it "prima facie defamatory".

Justice Jasmeet Singh noted that the video contained material based on a trial court judgment on Ram Rahim's conviction and quoted passages from a book titled 'Dera Sacha Sauda and Gurmeet Ram Rahim' by Anurag Tripathi.

However, since there was no disclaimer attached, the video seemed defamatory, he said. The court granted liberty to the journalist to upload a new video with a disclaimer that its contents are quoted from the trial court judgment and the book. Ram Rahim has sued Singh for a video he uploaded on December 17 last year titled, 'How Gurmeet Ram Rahim fooled his bhakts?' The thumbnail of the video read, "Ram Rahim ka asli sach (Ram Rahim's real truth)".

Ram Rahim's counsel Mohit Mathur submitted that the video could be accessed globally by the devotees and jeopardised his client's right to fair trial. He also questioned the timing, saying the video had been uploaded when the Dera chief's appeal against his conviction was due for hearing. Ram Rahim was sentenced to 20 years in jail in 2017 for raping two disciples. He is also serving a life sentence for his involvement in the murders of journalist Ram Chander Chhatrapati and Dera manager Ranjit Singh in 2002.

Mumbai slips in Swachh Survekshan 2023 rankings

MUMBAI: In an indication that the city's recently started 'deep cleaning drive' needs a larger boost, Mumbai's ranking slipped to 37 from 31 in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 results, which were announced on Thursday in the presence of President Droupadi Murmu in New Delhi. The 37th ranking was in the million-plus (population-wise) cities category, as the city's population is estimated at over 12 million.

The neighboring satellite city, Navi Mumbai, held on to its third position, similar to its score in the Swachh Survekshan 2022. Thane, meanwhile, was ranked 14th, slipping slightly from 13th last year, while Kalyan Dombivli rose to the 22nd rank from 24th last year. This year, the cleanest city award showcased joint winners. The port city Surat, alongside Indore, which had conquered the top spot alone for six consecutive years, were ranked number one. In the category of cities with a population of less than one lakh, Sasvad, Patan, and Lonavala secured the top three spots.

Two cities from Maharashtra, namely Navi Mumbai at rank 3 and Pune at rank 10, appeared in the top ten cities.

Swachh Survekshan is a nationwide sanitation survey of cities. President Murmu, who presented the awards, said that our Safai Mitras have been the frontline soldiers of our cleanliness campaign. She said that only by eliminating man-holes through mechanized cleaning and achieving the goal of sanitation through machine-holes, will we be able to establish our true identity as a sensitive society.

Mumbai's detailed report card showed that it ranked 189th nationally out of 446 cities. 97% of waste was being collected door-to-door, 65% of waste was being segregated at source, while 97% of residential areas were clean. The marks that the city received were 4446.19 out of 7500.

Local residents pointed out that the city, paying the highest taxes, deserved to be cleaner and it was important that citizens also did their bit apart from expecting everything from the civic authorities. Advocate and activist Godfrey Pimenta said, "The decline in ranking can be attributed to a lack of civic sense among the majority of Mumbaiers who indiscriminately dispose of garbage. The hawkers also share equal responsibility for this issue," he said.

King Circle activist Desai points out that in Mumbai, one of the problems is also that a large population lives in slum areas. "Here, civic sense is lesser compared to formal colonies. There is a greater need to invest in mechanical sweeping more than what is done. Cities like Indore have 23 mechanical sweeper machines for their 40 lakh population, where cleaning is done three times a day," said Desai.

No rest for Speaker as January 31 deadline for NCP case looms

MUMBAI:

Maharashtra Speaker Rahul Narwekar disposed of a bunch of disqualification petitions Wednesday that had been filed by rival factions of Shiv Sena, and now another bunch of petitions filed by rival NCP factions are lying on his plate for disposal. In keeping with the directions of the SC, Narwekar will have to take a decision on these petitions by January 31. Records of the legislature secretariat show the proceedings began on January 6. It is expected that on or before January 18, the parties involved shall exchange and file the list of witnesses and



affidavits. Cross-examination of witnesses will be conducted on January 20, while the cross-examination of respondents will take place on January 23. Final hearings will commence from January 25 and conclude on January 27. The speaker will pronounce his verdict thereafter.

NCP (Ajit Pawar faction) chief Sunil Tatkare said the NCP

case was different from the Shiv Sena case, where the case pertained to validity of whip and whether the whips issued by the rival factions were legally valid. "Disciplinary proceedings were launched against us after we attended a meeting of the NDA," he said. The Ajit Pawar faction has already approached the EC with the plea that Ajit Pawar be

recognised as the head of NCP and the clock symbol be allotted to his faction.

The EC has heard all the parties and reserved its order. Jeetendra Awhad of NCP Sharad Pawar faction said Ajit violated the 10th Schedule of the Constitution. "Ajit and his eight colleagues took oath as cabinet members on July 2, 2023 in the Shinde government. Therefore, we initiated disqualification proceedings against them for violation of the 10th Schedule."

Awhad said Ajit and his supporters' actions amounted to voluntarily giving up membership of the party.

Navy receives first India-made MALE drone from Adani city co

HYDERABAD: The Navy on Wednesday received the first medium altitude long endurance (MALE) drone made in India by Adani Defence & Aerospace (ADA) in collaboration with Israeli firm Elbit. Named Drishti 10 Starliner, the UAV was handed over by ADA at a flag-off ceremony led by the chief of naval staff, Admiral R Hari Kumar, at the Adani Aerospace Park here.



The UAV is based on the Hermes 900 platform of Elbit and has been 70% indigenised by ADA following a technology transfer from Adani Elbit Advanced Systems India Ltd, a joint ven-

ture between Adani Group and Elbit. While ADA has already exported 20 of these UAVs to Israel, it has bagged an order for two UAVs each from the Indian Navy and Indian Army. The

drone, which is an advanced intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance (ISR) platform with a 36-hour endurance and a payload capacity of 450 kg, will be sent to Porbandar where it will be inducted into naval maritime operations. The all-weather military platform, with NATO's STANAG 4671 certification for airworthiness, is cleared to fly in both segregated and unsegregated airspace.

27 new Covid cases reported in 24 hours

KOLKATA: Bengal logged the highest single-day Covid spike in more than a year with 27 fresh cases reported in the past 24 hours. The number of active cases has crossed 200 in the state now. According to health officials, most of these cases are in Kolkata and a further rise is expected in the coming two to three weeks before the waning phase starts.

After close to a year, the state started reporting frequent Covid cases from the end of December. From single-digit spike, the numbers

shot to double figures for the first time on December 28 with 14 cases. Since then, the daily count has remained around 10, before jumping to 27 on Wednesday, taking the active cases to 213.

RISE IN ACTIVE CASES
The current infection is not causing severe disease in healthy individuals. But we have to worry about people with significant comorbidities as they are still susceptible," said a senior health official. With states like Kerala, where the spike started this time, already in the declining phase,

experts expect the down graph in Bengal to begin after about three weeks.

"Whatever may be the number of fresh cases, only those with multiple comorbidities are likely to get severe infection.

In immunocompetent individuals, the infection will be like cold cough or like any other mild influenza. Hence, the current spike should not cause any public health challenge," said chest specialist Kausik, former Covid-19 nodal officer at Beliaghata ID Hospital.

Morphed nude pictures of actress shared online, sent to family and friends

MUMBAI: A film actress who was on her way to the Versova police station to complain about a social media user for posting her morphed nude photos learned that the person had even sent multiple such photos to her parents, friends, and relatives on their WhatsApp numbers. The case was registered with the Versova police based on Annet Kaur Sekhon's (37) complaint on Wednesday after she received messages on social media that she will be raped and killed. Sekhon has been stay-



ing in Mumbai's Andheri (West) for the last two years along with her friend. She learned about the morphed images of her posted on social media on December 27 when her friend Gyanendra Dev received the photos on his social media

page from one Kuldeep Dwivedi. "The cyber section of the police station has sought the internet protocol (IP) address of the user through which the morphed photos have been posted," said a police officer of the Versova police station. Due to the work schedule, Sekhon did not file the complaint on December 23, 2023. In the complaint, Sekhon said:

"Another friend informed about the post with threatening messages to rape and kill along with the morphed photos.

Hawkers encroaching Rashbehari Ave evicted in surprise pushback drive

KOLKATA: A surprise hawker pushback drive was carried out at Gariahat on Wednesday morning to clear a section of Rashbehari Avenue near the Gariahat crossing where the carriageway had been encroached by stalls selling tea and snacks.

The drive comes months after the Kolkata Municipal Corporation (KMC) and the town-vending committee had taken up the issue of

road encroachment with the hawker union leaders active in the belt. Union members said they had asked the hawkers to clear the road but the latter had turned a deaf ear to the warning.

Early on Wednesday morning, hours before the hawkers arrived, a team from KMC with a payload and trucks reached the spot along with cops from Gariahat police. Over the next couple of hours, the

payloader demolished the hawker stalls that were jutting into the road and loaded them on the trucks.

In Gariahat, KMC had set up corrugated tin sheds along the edge of the pavement where hawkers set up stalls and attempted to streamline the hawkers who squatted on both sides of the pavement to do business on one side and leave the rest of the pavement for pedestrians.

Haji thanks CM Shinde for granting Rs 10 lakh to each madrasa for modernisation

MUMBAI: Congress leader and City Congress (minority cell) vice-chairman Haji Mudassar Patel has thanked CM Eknath Shinde government's recent decision to give Rs 10 lakh to each madrasa in the state registered with the Wakf Board. Patel said that this would go a long way to help in modernisation process of the madrasas. "Madrasas play a big role in education of the deprived section of Muslims. By giving monetary help of Rs 10 lakh to each madrasa to set up library,

improve infrastructure and appoint teachers for science, maths and other modern subjects, the government has taken a big step. We congratulate the CM for this positive move," said Patel. The state government carries out this work under Dr Zakir Hussain madrasa modernisation plan.

According to the GR, while seeking the state government funds, the madrasas need to be registered with the Wakf Board. "The students studying in these madrasas will have to take admission in government schools. Apart

from religious teaching, the madrasas will also need to engage the teachers to teach science and math," said the government resolution. Patel also thanked the CM for granting Rs 500 crore to the minority development funds. Citing two examples, Patel said CM Eknath Shinde is concerned to lift up the Muslim community. He said there were some long pending issues of two Muslim institutions, an old educational institution and a hospital, and the CM addressed them once they were brought to his notice.