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'The Centre secure the open India-Myanmar border with barbwire'

"If the Centre goes ahead with its plan, we have no authority and we cannot stop it," he said. Nagaland deputy CM Y Patton.



GUWAHATI: The Centre aims to secure the open India-Myanmar border with barbwire fencing and terminate the free movement agreement between the two nations, Union home minister Amit Shah said Saturday. The announcement coincides with pleas from Mizoram and Nagaland authorities to allow tribal people on both sides to continue travelling 16km without a passport or visa due to familial and ethnic ties. "Narendra Modi's government has decided that the India-Myanmar border, which is open, will be protected by barbed fencing just like what we have along the India-Bangladesh bor-

der," Shah said while speaking at the passing-out parade of five Assam Police commando battalions. The 1,643km unfenced border facilitates free movement through treacherous terrain and largely uninhabited areas in four northeastern states — Arunachal Pradesh (520km), Nagaland (215km), Manipur (398km), and Mizoram (510km). Manipur CM N Biren Singh has raised concerns about the open border and free movement as principal reasons for prolonged violence in the state. BRO is currently building a fence along 10km of the Manipur-Myanmar bor-

der, with plans to fence an additional 70km, according to Singh. Arunachal Pradesh has not taken a stand yet. In Aizawl, Mizoram CM Lalduhoma expressed shock over the announcement. "I had met PM Modi and home minister Amit Shah and told them about my opposition to scrapping FMR and fencing of the border," he said, emphasising ethnic ties between Mizo and Chin communities of Myanmar. "If the Centre goes ahead with its plan, we have no authority and we cannot stop it," he said. Nagaland deputy CM Y Patton echoed Lalduhoma's stand, not-

ing that any decision to fence the border would be unacceptable to Nagas. The BJP MLA underscored that a significant population of Naga ethnicity have been residents of Myanmar since long. The free movement mechanism was formalised in 2018 through a bilateral "Agreement on Land Border Crossing" as part of PM Modi's Act East Policy. The agreement retained the free movement of tribes. However, it became a security concern as insurgents used it for hit-and-run activities, smugglers had a free run, and an influx occurred.

TMC, Congress step up war of words over sharing of LS seats

KOLKATA: TMC has kept the alliance door ajar for Congress in Bengal but will not tolerate any unjustified bargaining for Lok Sabha seats, party spokesperson Kunal Ghosh said on Saturday, adding CM Mamata Banerjee will take "the right decision at the right time". His remarks came in response to questions whether Mamata's advice to party workers on Friday to be ready to fight all 42 Lok Sabha seats in Bengal was indicative of a breakdown in TMC's talks



with Congress. "CM Mamata Banerjee is among INDIA bloc's most important leaders. That is why she respects this alliance and is adhering to alliance dharma. This is why TMC is tolerating this (seat demands by Congress). But if this becomes impractical

bargaining, TMC will not sit and wait," Ghosh said. Bengal Congress president Adhir Chowdhury said: "I don't care about anyone. Our leaders have spoken. We know how to contest and win." But All India Mahila Congress president

Alka Lamba said in Siliguri that the party leadership was holding talks with INDIA constituents in various states, including Bengal, over LS poll seat-sharing. TMC's Ghosh warned that his party is capable of going solo. "TMC ekai eksho (TMC is competitor on its own). TMC had fought BJP on its own in 2021 (assembly polls) Where were Congress and CPM then? They were fighting separately in a coalition and got zero. There is no dilemma on that issue.

Japan's 'Moon Sniper' makes historic 'pin-point' lunar landing

NEW DELHI: Japan made history on Friday, becoming only the fifth nation to land a spacecraft on the Moon. The US, the Soviet Union, China and India are the only other nations to have accomplished the feat so far.

Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency's Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM) probe, dubbed the "Moon Sniper", landed on the slope of a crater just south of the lunar equator using "pinpoint technology".

The craft's landing site was an area within 100 metres (330 feet) of a spot on the surface, far tighter than the usual landing zone of several kilometres. "No other nation has achieved this. Proving Japan has this technolo-

gy brings us a huge advantage in upcoming international missions like Artemis," said Sakai, JAXA's SLIM project manager. The pinpoint technology has been previously used by Japan to successfully land probes.

Nitish revamps JD(U) team, drops 13 leaders; Tyagi gets key role

PATNA: Three weeks after taking over as JD(U) president, Bihar CM Nitish Kumar on Saturday reconstituted his national team, dropping 13 senior leaders who were office-bearers during the term of his predecessor, Rajiv Ranjan Singh. Raja Sabha member Bashistha Narain Singh and Mohammad Nisar, who were not part of the previous team, have been included. Singh, who had stepped down as the party's state unit chief three years ago citing health reasons, has been made national vice-president, replacing Mangani Lal Mandal, who is now one of the 11 general secretaries in the 22-member team of office bearers. Nisar, who was earlier working as the office secretary at the party's national office in New Delhi, has been made national secretary. K C Tyagi, who was earlier "special adviser-cum-chief spokesperson", has been redesignated as "political advisor and spokesperson". Among the leaders who were relieved, 11 were national general secretaries. These included Harshvardhan Singh, Qamar Alam and former MP from Uttar Pradesh, Dhananajay Singh, who were seen as close to Rajiv Ranjan Singh. Five Lok Sabha members — Giridhari Yadav, Santosh Kumar Kushwaha, Chandeshwar Prasad Chandravanshi, RP Mandal and Vijay Kumar Manjhi — have also been dropped. Two national secretaries who could not find place in the new team are MLC Rabindra Prasad Singh and Sanjay Verma. Sanjay Kumar Jha is the only cabinet minister who has been retained in the new team as national general secretary while Gopalganj MP Alok Kumar Suman will continue as the treasurer. Apart from Tyagi, the other national spokesperson is Rajib Ranjan, a former MLA from the CM's home district of Nalanda, who returned to JD(U) last year after quitting BJP. However, he has been stripped of the post of national general secretary. Though the JD(U) leadership has tried to accommodate leaders from all castes and

ED questions CM Soren for 7 hours in land scam case

RANCHI: An Enforcement Directorate (ED) team questioned Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren for about seven hours at his official residence here on Saturday in connection with the Ranchi land scam case amidst protests by hundreds of Jharkhand Mukti Morcha workers. The ED has summoned the CM eight times.



After skipping summonses for the seventh time, Soren agreed to record his statement. ED has initiated investigations at Soren's house at 1pm, escorted by central paramilitary forces and state

police. The team left around 8.30pm. ED sources said the team conducted a comprehensive but amicable interrogation of the CM, including questions about an allegedly "illegal transaction of a plot of land measuring 8.5 acres in Bariyatu area of the city". Sources also said the agency is yet to decide on questioning Soren further.

Government suspends 3 directors of SAIL and NMDC

NEW DELHI: In one of the biggest such actions in recent years, the government has ordered the suspension of three directors of state-run companies — SAIL and NMDC — as well as other senior executives. In separate stock exchange filings on Saturday, the com-



panies only said that the move follows a directive from the steel ministry. In an exchange filing, SAIL said that its director (commercial) VS Chakravarthy and director (finance) AK Tulsiani,

and four executive directors have been suspended. Meanwhile, NMDC said its director (commercial) V Suresh has been placed under suspension, although it is unclear what led to the decision in his case. The fate of SAIL CMD named in the complaint.

Maldives govt. reluctant to use Indian choppers, kid dies

NEW DELHI: A 13-year-old child died in the Maldives because of a delay in providing him treatment that was caused by the alleged reluctance of the Maldivian government to use Indian choppers for medical evacuation, according to the Maldivian media. India had earlier provided two naval choppers and a Dornier aircraft for medical evacuation and other High Availability Disaster Recovery (HARD) activities. According to reports in the local media, the child, who couldn't be brought to capital Male from Gaafu atoll in time, died later. The family attributed the death to the delay in his transfer to Male. The fate of Indian choppers and aircraft has been left uncertain because of Maldivian government's insistence.

Ayodhya to Assam and Arabian Sea, 98-year-old master sculptor who gives shape to iconic statues



New Delhi Designed and cast at a workshop in Noida, a 30ft tall bronze statue of Jatayu now has pride of place on an elevation — Kuber Tila — at the Ram Janmbhoomi complex in Ayodhya. It's the latest from Ram Vanji Sutar, the nonagenarian sculptor who is just two short of 100 and doesn't like to take a break. Nor does he have time for one. He has another job to do in Ayodhya — a 251-metre tall statue of Ram that will come up on the banks of the Saryu.

Once installed, the statue will become the tallest in the world. At 182 metres, the Statue of Unity in Gujarat holds that record now. That, too, was designed by Sutar and his son Anil. For the Jatayu statue, commissioned by the temple trust, Ram Sutar and Anil had offered two options — one depicting the mythical bird in attack mode and the other a flying posture. "The temple trust liked the flying mode," says Anil (65), who manages the sprawling workshop in Sector 63.

MVA meet on January 25 to finalize LS seat-sharing formula

MUMBAI: Leaders of the Maha Vikas Aghadi will meet in the city on January 25 to finalize the seat-sharing formula for the ensuing Lok Sabha elections. This will be MVA's third meeting on the issue since the formation of the INDIA bloc. The MVA expects the Election Commission of India to

declare the Lok Sabha election schedule after February 15. "We expect to work out an acceptable formula for the Congress, NCP and Shiv Sena (UBT). If all 48 seats are not finalized, we will take a decision on the undisputed seats and leave the remaining seats to the National Alliance Committee led by

Mukul Wasnik (to decide)," a senior Congress leader. The MVA meeting will be attended by Congress' Ashok Chavan, Congress legislature party leader Balasaheb Thorat and MPCC president Nana Patole, NCP's Jayant Patil and Jeetendra Awhad and UBT Sena's Sanjay Raut and Vinayak Raut.

Growing stray dog problem is evidence that the sterilisation programme has failed

The concept of dog "ownership" is nebulous for most Indians, with only a small fraction of urban dwellers falling into the category of what is now called "pet parents". Most dogs in rural areas are associated



Delhi: The conflict between people and stray dogs in India has crossed the threshold of tolerance. While cases of young children being mauled to death by packs of dogs are in the news now, this phenomenon is not new. Over the last five years, more than 300 people, mostly

children from poor and rural families have been killed by dogs. Worse still, dogs are responsible for over 20,000 rabies deaths. A 2017 study showed that homeless dogs in rural areas can also be devastating for wildlife. Over 80 species, of which more than 30 are on the

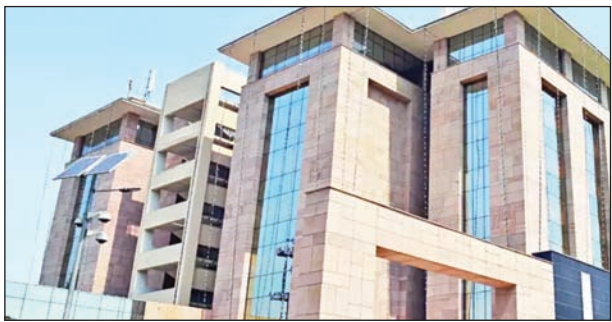
endangered list, were targeted by dogs in wilderness areas. This mounting evidence points to a failure on the part of the government to implement policies that are both practical and humane to dogs, people, and wildlife. But why are we facing such a problem with dogs?

There is no one answer. The concept of dog "ownership" is nebulous for most Indians, with only a small fraction of urban dwellers falling into the category of what is now called "pet parents". Most dogs in rural areas are associated with households that feed them but do little

else in terms of health-care or welfare. In urban areas too, people from all walks of life feed dogs on the streets but very few take any direct responsibility. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the state to ensure that the lives of humans and domesticated animals are safe and secure. This is where the problem lies. The Animal Welfare Board of India, a statutory body under the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, promulgated the Animal Birth Control (Dogs) Rules in 2001 (now replaced with the even more draconian ABC Rules 2023). This policy was meant to control both the dog population, as well the deadly rabies virus.

3 district court complexes to add nearly 200 courtrooms

Delhi: Delhi government has approved a plan to build three district court complexes in Rohini Sector 26, Shastri Park and Karkardooma. The completion of the projects, approved recently in an expenditure finance committee meeting, will add nearly 200 rooms to the city's district courts. "Swift and accessible justice is a fundamental right of every Indian and this is achievable only when there is sufficient infrastructure in the courts," the finance minister Atishi said. The city courts have been facing a considerable backlog of



cases. "The government's dedication to build 200 courtrooms in Delhi proves to be highly significant in strengthening the judicial system," the minister said, adding that the new courtrooms would greatly aid in the swift resolution of legal matters. The new district

court complex in Rohini will have 100 courtrooms and 270 lawyer chambers. It will consist of three basements, a ground floor and two 11-storey building blocks. "The cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 714.2 crore," said a government official.

This mobile app connects commuters with autorickshaws without commission

Delhi: The Namma Yatri app is a part of the open network for digital commerce network — established by Centre's department for promotion of industry and internal trade Delhi transport minister Kailash Gahlot launched the Namma Yatri mobile app, which will help connect com-

muters with auto rickshaws drivers without commission. The Namma Yatri app is a part of the open network for digital commerce (ONDC) network — established by the central government's department for promotion of industry and internal trade. "Bringing ONDC to Delhi and the

launch of Namma Yatri app will bring autos and other digital platforms to the fingertips of Delhi residents. We believe this will be also a game changer in multimodal integration in the future. Their focus on empowering drivers and enriching our city's last-mile connectivity ecosystem.

Delhi L-G approves Vigilance Department's recommendation to discipline two DANICS officers for Rs 97 crore AAP advertising

Delhi: Following L-G V K Saxena's approval, the Vigilance Department recommended disciplinary action and "major penalty" against two DANICS officers for allegedly permitting "unproductive expenditure of public funds" for AAP Delhi's Rs 97 crore commercials. Special Secretary vigilance YVJ Rajasekhar wrote to the Joint Secretary (UT), Ministry of Home Affairs, that Saxena had approved the recommendation of action against DANICS cadre officers Shamim Akhtar Tamanna and Manoj Kumar Dwivedi. In its May 13, 2015 ruling in 'Common Cause V/s Union of India', the Supreme Court issued directions to prevent "unproductive expenditure of public funds." Rajasekhar wrote about this issue.

On April 6, 2016, the Centre formed a Union Territories committee under B B Tandon, former Chief Election Commissioner of India, to regulate advertising



content and eliminate wasteful government spending. "Sh. Ajay Makan complaint dated 10.05.2016 for recovery of unproductive expenditure of Rs. 97 Crores (approx.) was examined by the Committee on Content Regulation on Govt. Advertising (CCRGA) in light of Supreme Court guidelines, Rajasekhar said. In the conclusion of a report on September 16, 2016, the committee ordered the Delhi government to assess and recover expenditures incurred in issuing advertisements outside Delhi on various anniversaries, ads and advertisements in which the Aam Aadmi Party was mentioned, those that shared the Chief Minister's views on incidents in other states.

EPFO removes Aadhaar as valid proof for date of birth



New Delhi: The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will no longer accept Aadhaar card as a valid proof for date of birth. The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) under the Ministry of Labour and Employment of the Government of India, made the announcement through a circular (No: WSU/2024/1/UIDAI Matter/4090) on Tuesday. The decision has been made with the approval of the Central Provident Fund Commissioner (CPFC). The Employees'

Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will no longer accept Aadhaar card as a valid proof for date of birth (File photo). The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) will no longer accept Aadhaar card as a valid proof for date of birth (File photo). EPFO has followed a directive from the Unique Identification Authority of India (UIDAI). As per UIDAI's directive (Circular No. 08 of 2023), Aadhaar was being considered as proof for date of birth by several benefi-

ciaries. Aadhaar, while a unique identifier, was not recognized as a proof of date of birth according to the Aadhaar Act, 2016. In its directive, UIDAI emphasized that Aadhaar was a proof of identity, not proof of birth. In light of UIDAI's directive, EPFO has removed Aadhaar from the list of acceptable documents for correcting date of birth. The circular noted that Aadhaar's removal pertained to Table-B of Annexure-1 of the Joint Declaration SOP issued earlier.

Dense fog in Delhi as visibility falls to 50m in morning; AQI stays 'very poor'

New Delhi: The IMD said visibility at the Delhi airport oscillated between 50 and 100 metres between 12:30am and 6:30am, impacting flight operations. Delhi's minimum temperature rose by a degree at most locations across the national Capital on Thursday, even as dense fog persisted for nearly six hours, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said. Safdarjung, representative of Delhi's weather, recorded a minimum temperature of 6.6°C on Thursday, a degree below normal. The Met department said visibility fell as low as 50 metres in the early hours of the day, remaining dense for six hours between 12:30am and 6:30am. According to forecasts, dense fog is likely over the next two days as well.



SpiceJet crew slipped 'don't panic' note to passenger stuck in aircraft lavatory

New Delhi: SpiceJet on apologised for the inconvenience caused to the passenger and announced to provide him with a full refund. A SpiceJet passenger who was stuck inside the aircraft's lavatory mid-way on Tuesday was slipped a 'do not panic' note by the crew members when they failed to open the door and get him out. The passenger was stuck for almost an hour as the door of the toilet malfunctioned mid-air. A picture of the crew members' 'do not panic' note to the passenger is going viral on social media. "Sir we tried our best to open the door, however, we could not open. Do not panic, we are landing in a few mins, so please close the commode lid and sit on it and secure yourself. As soon as the main door is open, an engineer will come. Do not panic," the handwritten note read.

NHAI to allow buyback of tolled highway projects

Delhi: Introducing sweeping changes in contract conditions to attract more private investment, NHAI will bring in a provision of buying back tolled highway projects in case a competing road or additional tolled road comes up in its vicinity. The changes, which have been finalised, include paying 90% of the loans due to lenders before termination of any contract in case of default by contractors or the highway authority, which will bring comfort to banks and financial institutions. National Highways Authority of India (NHAI) is also likely to share with lenders the details and status of land for any project, considering non-availability of land has been a key reason for delays. These major amendments in the 'model concession agreement' and reforms for tolled highway (BOT-toll) projects to be built with private investment will be introduced to revive investment in the sector. NHAI has identified 54 projects worth over Rs 2.2 lakh crore and covering 5,200km. It shared details of the projects with builders, financial institutions and fund managers. The issue of different governments coming up with road projects parallel to existing tolled highways has been a concern for investors as they fear traffic diversion and loss of revenue. "We are open to making more changes to attract private investment. Experiences show that projects built on BOT-toll are of better quality and need less maintenance than roads built on EPC (with 100% govt spending)... We're trying to fast-track clearances and make the entire system transparent in order to make BOT projects attractive," Union minister Nitin Gadkari said.

Congress opposes one election, one nation: 'Undemocratic, against federalism'

Delhi: The Congress rejected simultaneous elections because they violated federalism and the Constitution. Congress chairman Mallikarjun Kharge wrote to the secretary of the committee on one nation, one election to renounce the "undemocratic" notion and dissolve the high-powered committee studying it. Former president Ram Nath Kovind leads the panel. Kharge advised the former president "not to allow his persona and the office of the former president of India to be abused by the Union government to subvert the constitution and parliamentary democracy in

this country" in the letter. "The Indian National Congress is strongly opposed to the very idea of 'One Nation, One Election,'" he wrote to committee secretary Niten Chandra. "For the sake of maintaining a thriving and a robust democracy, it is imperative that the entire idea must be abandoned and the high-powered committee dissolved." Last year, the Central government formed the eight-member Kovind-led committee. It wrote six national parties and 33 state parties on October 18 to propose simultaneous three-tier Lok Sabha, state assembly, and local body elections.

Delhi: Even as the deadline for taxpayers to geotag their properties nears, only 78,000 tags have been issued so far, mostly in non-residential areas. The Municipal Corporation of Delhi has said that failure to geotag properties by Jan 31 will deprive taxpayers of rebates. MCD has around 14 lakh taxpayers and around 13 lakh properties have been issued the unique property identification code (UPIC) number. A majority of these are struggling to comply with the geotagging requirement. In unauthorised colonies, the exercise doesn't even seem to have started.

Deadline looms, just 78,000 property tags issued



Queried about the response, MCD officials said that people were buying time and there would be a huge rush at the last moment. "The process is very simple and we are expecting that by the month-end, people will come forward to get their properties geotagged. We held over 200

campus, meetings with RWAs and market associations," said the official. At the beginning of Dec last year, MCD made geotagging of all categories of properties mandatory if taxpayers were to avail property tax rebates. Taxpayers who failed to geotag their properties by Jan 31, 2024, would not be able to avail a

10% rebate on the lump sum advance payment of tax for the 2024-25 financial year by June 30.

Geotagging of properties involves assigning a unique latitude-longitude marker to a property on a GIS map by selecting current location against any unique property identification code to ensure that the properties have their location geographically identified. "In places where addresses have not been done properly, such as in densely populated areas, the geotagging will help MCD to identify each property geographically.

Ram rajya in its true sense has dawned in India: PM Modi

● "It is my guarantee that India will be among the world's top three economies during next term of five years"



SOLAPUR: Ram rajya in its true sense has dawned in India, PM Modi at the inauguration of the country's largest affordable housing scheme for unorganised-sector workers in Maharashtra's Solapur. "Our government, following the ideals of Prabhu Shri Ram, has been ensuring that good governance and honesty exist in the country. Bhagwan Ram taught us to honour the commitments we make...When I laid the foundation of the project five years ago, I promised to be here to hand over the keys. Modi's guarantee means 'guarantee puri hone ki guarantee,'" the PM said.

"Previous governments lacked niyat, niti and nishta (intent, attitude and dedication)," the PM said of "garibi hatao" remaining a mere slogan for decades. "There was a time when 'bicholiye' (middlemen) wouldn't let welfare benefits reach the poor.

Those middlemen have been ousted. Swindling has stopped. In the last nine years, 25 crore people have been lifted out of poverty," he added. Modi handed over house keys to some beneficiaries, mostly textile and beedi unit workers. Half the 30,000 EWS homes

planned under the Ray Nagar Co-operative Society Federation project are ready. Urging the occupants to light lamps in their new homes on Jan 22 to celebrate the consecration of Ayodhya's Ram temple, Modi said this would be symbolic of removing darkness from their lives. The PM, who was visiting Maharashtra for the second time in a week, declared there was no stopping India from going where it deserves to be and BJP from getting a third term in the Lok Sabha polls this year.

"It is my guarantee that India will be among the world's top three

economies during my next term of five years." He urged people to "dream big" instead of "thinking small", saying the days of wallowing in poverty and self-pity were over. "Your dreams are my promises to fulfil. Treat it as Modi's guarantee." On his participation in the consecration rituals in Ayodhya, Modi said, "I will go to Ayodhya with your blessings. My rituals began in the Panchavati area of Nashik, where Bhagwan Ram spent some years. I don't want any shortcomings to affect the ceremony and the divine feeling that has enveloped the country."

Punjab Congress takes 'Hitler' jab at Kejriwal, Mann amid pact in key

Chandigarh

Leader of opposition in the Punjab assembly and Congress leader Pratap Singh Bajwa on Wednesday equated chief minister Bhagwant Mann and his Delhi counterpart Arvind Kejriwal with Adolf Hitler and said the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leaders should remove pictures of BR Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh from their offices and put up the picture of the former German dictator.

"The first thing I would like to advise them is to

pull down the pictures of Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh from their offices and replace them with Adolf Hitler.

And if you carefully see the picture of Hitler, it matches with one of their (AAP) leaders," Bajwa said, adding that the AAP government practices "dictatorial government". "I cannot guarantee that...": Jaishankar breaks silence on Bajwa's remarks came hours before both allies of the major Opposition coalition, in

a rare show of unity at the local level, teamed up in what is seen as the 'first match of BJP vs INDIA (bloc)' ahead of the Chandigarh mayoral election. "Congress and AAP in Chandigarh have become the first constituents of Indian National Democratic Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) parties to implement the decisions and sentiments of INDIA to not let BJP win elections by default," senior Congress leader Pawan Bansal wrote on X (formerly Twitter) after pictures of him

and AAP MP Raghav Chadha chatting together in a lawn were surfaced.

However, the political tension between Congress and AAP appears to be surfacing not very far from Chandigarh in the Punjab assembly, and the leader of the opposition's comment belies the unity call of the INDIA allies. Despite being members of the larger coalition in the centre, Congress and AAP often don't match their steps at the state level.

YS Sharmila to assume role of Congress chief in AP on Jan 21

Amaravathi

YS Sharmila, who was appointed by the Congress as the president of the Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee recently, will assume the new role on January 21, the

party said in a statement.

The event will be attended by Manikkam Tagore, in charge of Andhra Pradesh Affairs at the All India Congress Committee, along with Members of

Parliament, CD Mayappan, Secretary of AICC, and Christopher Tilak, AICC Secretary, they said. The program is expected to be attended by Members of the CWC, former Union

Ministers, former Members of Parliament, former legislators, working presidents, and senior party leaders. The wide-ranging participants encompass Coordination Committee Members.

Bilkis : SC dismisses plea by convicts seeking extension of time to surrender

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Friday dismissed the request for an extension of time to surrender by the 11 convicts in the Bilkis Bano case. The apex court ruled that the reasons provided by the convicts for seeking more time were without merit. Consequently, they are required to surrender by Sunday, in line with the court's earlier direction. Previously, nine out of the 11 convicts had approached the Supreme Court, asking for an extension, citing medical issues and family responsibilities. After deliberation, the court, subject to the Chief Justice of India's approval, had agreed to hear their pleas. However, upon examination of the reasons cited by the convicts, the court found them lacking in substance. One of the convicts, PR Modhiya, had mentioned undergoing lung surgery and the need for regular medical consultations. Another convict, Govindhbhai Nai, had requested additional time due to recent angiography and an upcoming operation for "haemorrhoids." Additionally, Modhiya's plea highlighted the recent death of his wife and the need to complete departmental procedures related to her service benefits. Despite these arguments, the court deemed the reasons cited as insufficient to warrant an extension. Other convicts who sought similar relief included Bipin Chandra Joshi, Ramesh Chandana, and Mitesh Bhatt. This decision follows the Supreme Court's January 8 ruling, which invalidated the Gujarat government's decision to grant remission to these 11 convicts. The individuals were convicted for their roles in the gang-rape of Bilkis Bano and the murder of 14 of her family members during the 2002 communal riots. The court had directed them to surrender, overturning their release after a year and a half of liberty. In its judgment, the bench of Justices Nagarathna and Ujjal Bhuyan not only criticized the Gujarat government's decision but also questioned the 2022 Supreme Court order that initiated the remission process.

The court pointed out that the state's actions, though based on the Supreme Court's directions, contradicted the letter and spirit of the law. With this latest ruling, the Supreme Court has reinforced its commitment to ensuring justice in the Bilkis Bano case, a matter of significant public and legal interest.

Pannun 'plot': Gupta's extradition to US approved by Czech court, ministry to decide

PRAGUE: A Czech appeals court has ruled that Prague can extradite to the United States an Indian man accused by the US of involvement in an unsuccessful plot to kill a Sikh separatist on American soil, the justice ministry said on Friday. A final decision on the extradition of accused Nikhil Gupta, 52, will be in the hands of justice minister Pavel Blazek



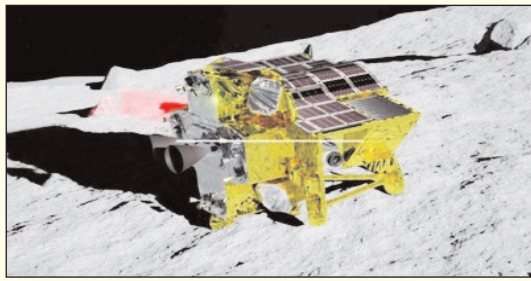
once the ruling is delivered to all parties in the case, a ministry spokesperson told the news agency. Gupta has been accused by US federal prosecutors of working with an Indian

government official on the plot to kill a New York City resident who advocated for a sovereign Sikh state in northern India. Gupta was arrested by Czech authorities in June last year when he travelled from India to Prague. Czech news website www.seznamzpravy.cz, which first reported on the appeals decision, said Gupta had argued his identity

was mistaken and that he was not the man the United States was looking for. He described the case as political, it said. "The timeframe for the minister's decision cannot be assumed at this point," the justice ministry spokesperson said, adding that Gupta could be expected to take all steps possible to try to prevent his extradition.

Nasa's LRO pings Vikram, opens door to new style of locating targets on Moon

BENGALURU: For the first time on the Moon, Nasa transmitted and reflected a laser beam between an orbiting spacecraft it operates and a device — Laser Retroreflector Array (LRA)— on Isro's Vikram lander on the lunar surface, opening the door to a new style of precisely



locating targets on the Moon's surface. Reconnaissance Orbiter (LRO) pointed its laser altimeter instrument toward Vikram. The lander

was 100km away from LRO, near Manzinus crater in the Moon's South Pole region, when LRO transmitted laser pulses toward it. After the orbiter registered light that had bounced back from a tiny Nasa retroreflector aboard Vikram, Nasa scientists knew their technique.

Farooq : Is Shri Ram confined to only one temple?

NEW DELHI: Former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Farooq Abdullah on Friday stirred a row after he raised questions about the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya and asked if Lord Ram is confined to a single temple. Speaking to reporters in Jammu, Farooq Abdullah also asked if Lord Ram exclusively belongs to the BJP or RSS emphasising that "nobody is the custodian of Ram". "Is Lord Ram residing only in one temple? Isn't Ram having any other home (temple)? Are other Ram

temples useless ones? Ram is omnipresent. He is also there where there is no Ram temple. He is the Ram of the entire universe," Abdullah told reporters. He further stated that Shri Ram should not be confined to one sect and it is misleading to portray him solely as a Hindu deity. Abdullah also questioned the exclusivity associated with the temple opening on January 22 and criticized the invitation process. "Is Ram of the BJP only? Does Ram belong to only the RSS? Who are they to

invite anyone? Why do you need an invitation to go to a temple?" the former chief minister asked. "If I am going for an Umrah, shall I expect an invite from there? The invitation process is wrong. Nobody is the custodian of Ram," he added. The consecration ceremony of the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, also known as the 'Pran Pratishtha' of Ram Lalla's idol, is scheduled for January 22, 2024. On the day of "pran pratishtha," over a lakh devotees are anticipated to gather in the temple town.

UK Parliament echoes with chants of 'Shri Ram' in celebration

NEW DELHI: With excitement spreading around the globe over the upcoming Pran Pratishtha ceremony of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, the Sanatan Sanstha of UK (SSUK) kicked off joyous celebrations at the British Parliament on Friday. The atmosphere within the House of Commons was filled with reverence as Shri Ram, known as the 'Yugpurush', took center stage. The event began with a bhajan, followed by a presentation of the Kakhbushundi Samvad by SSUK members. The group also paid homage to the life of Shri Krishna by exploring the 12th Chapter of the Gita. The event was attended by Harrow MP Bob Blackman, along with Raj Rajeshwar Guruji.

and Swami Surya Prabha Didi from Brahmariishi Ashram, Hunslow. A UK declaration, endorsed by more than 200 temples, community organisations, and associations across the

18 trains, several flights delayed as Delhi sees no respite from dense fog

New Delhi

A layer of fog continues to shroud north and northeast India on Thursday, obstructing visibility and lowering it as low as zero metres at several places, affecting air and rail traffic. A passenger train moves in early morning fog and chill in South West Delhi of dwarka. A passenger train moves in early morning fog and chill in South West Delhi of dwarka. Dense to very dense fog prevailed in parts of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Jharkhand, Assam and Odisha. According to the India Meteorological Department (IMD), the current weather conditions are likely to prevail in the next five days.

"Cold wave to severe cold wave conditions are likely to continue over

northwest India for five days," it said.

18 trains running late

A total of 18 trains arriving in Delhi were delayed by up to six hours due to heavy fog enshrouding the railway tracks, the India Railways spokesperson said. The visibility was reduced to only 50 metres, which impacts the flight operations.

Only the CAT III-B-compliant runways can enable a plane to take off-landing under such conditions. Several flight operations were delayed at IGI airport due to low visibility amid the fog. Passengers stranded at the airport awaited the turn of their flights that were running late from the scheduled time. "I have come from Bahrain. My flight was delayed by one hour," a passenger told ANI.

Editorial

Why Iran's 'surgical strike' inside Pakistan is no surprise

Two weeks ago, Iran witnessed one of its deadliest suicide attacks in decades, claiming the lives of 90 people. The perpetrators, identified as the Jaish al-Adl, triggered a swift response from Tehran, vowing retaliation. Today, that promise was fulfilled as Iran launched a surgical strike on Pakistan, targeting the terrorist group's bases in Balochistan. The recent suicide attacks in Kerman, Iran, on the death anniversary of General Qassem Soleimani, set the stage for today's events. More than 90 lives were lost in the explosions, with reports suggesting that the strikes on Pakistan were a direct response to this tragedy.

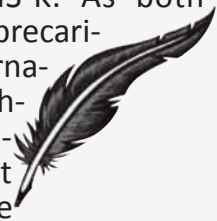
Jaish al-Adl, also known as the "Army of Justice," is a Sunni terrorist group with a stronghold in Pakistan. Fundamentally driven by religious differences, this group aims to break up the country, specifically seeking to separate Sistan-Baluchistan from Iran. The group has been a menace to the region conducting various attacks including suicide bombings, kidnappings, ambushes and hit-and-runs.

Iran has repeatedly urged Pakistan to take action against Jaish al-Adl, reminiscent of India's calls for action against similar groups. Despite Tehran's efforts, Pakistan's response has been lukewarm, leading to a burgeoning threat. The recent attack on Pakistan marks a turning point in Iran's approach, as it takes matters into its own hands to neutralise terror camps.

Jaish al-Adl has now emerged as an affiliate of the Islamic State Khorasan (ISIS-K). Reports suggest that the recent bombings in Iran were executed with the collaboration of both groups, further complicating the regional landscape. Although Tehran has not made any evidence public, it appears convinced of this link.

Diplomatic fallout

In the aftermath of today's strikes, diplomatic relations between Iran and Pakistan have reached a nadir. Pakistan's recall of its ambassador to Iran and the expulsion of the Iranian envoy signify a deepening rift. High-level visits have been suspended and the diplomatic tension is palpable. Iran's retaliatory strikes on Pakistan underscore a growing distrust between the two nations and highlight the complex web of regional tensions. The conflict, rooted in religious differences, has broader implications, with Jaish al-Adl evolving into a formidable threat and aligning itself with ISIS-K. As both countries navigate this precarious situation, the international community watches closely, wary of potential repercussions that could extend beyond the region.



Two big issues that will show the way on India-Iran ties

Recently External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, visited Iran, engaging in crucial discussions with top officials. The focus of their talks included addressing the threat posed by Houthi attacks and navigating complex geopolitical issues.

During the visit, Jaishankar expressed concerns about the Houthi threat, emphasizing the international community's shared interest in resolving the issue. He highlighted recent incidents, including the drone attack on the MV Chem Pluto, a ship

bound for India. Despite the United States attributing the attack to Iran, India refrained from contesting these claims, choosing instead to pledge a commitment to halt such attacks and punish the perpetrators. Jaishankar reinforced India's unwavering stance against terrorism, characterising the attacks as acts of terrorism that require a resolution. However, one month after the MV Chem Pluto incident, India has yet to publicly identify the attackers, prompting speculation about its internal

deliberations. "We have even seen some attacks in the vicinity of India. This is a matter of great concern to the international community. This fraught situation is not to the benefit of any party and this must be clearly recognised," said Jaishankar. During discussions in Tehran, reports suggest that Jaishankar provided an assessment to Iranian officials, outlining India's perspective on the Houthi threat. However, the views on the matter diverged, with Iran not entirely endorsing

India's position. The disagreements between India and Iran extend beyond the Red Sea tensions. Jaishankar's meeting with Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi touched upon two crucial issues: Israel's actions in Gaza and India's investments in Iran. Raisi expects India to play a greater role in influencing Israel to end the bombings in Gaza. Iran publicly stated its desire for India to contribute to ending the conflict, lifting the blockade and supporting the rights of the Palestinian people.

India-Taiwan relations under Lai Ching-te: Opportunities and Challenges

Taiwanese Vice President Lai Ching-te, also known as William Lai, left, celebrates his victory with running mate Bi-khim Hsiao in Taipei, Taiwan, on 13 January, 2024. AP More than half of the world's population is expected to exercise their voting rights in 2024, making it a crucial year for the whole world. With the elections in Taiwan, the results of which are expected to resonate well beyond its boundaries, winding up on 13 January, there is little doubt that the Asian geopolitical theatre is set to witness radical developments and changes. Taiwan's elections saw the coming of the Democratic Progressive Party's (DPP) third successive term, with Lai Ching-te, often referred to as a 'dangerous separatist' and a 'troublemaker' by Beijing, succeeding Tsai Ing-wen as president of the Republic of China (ROC). For India, this comes as good news! The continuance of the DPP and Tsai legacy for another four years provides more diplomatic opportunities for improved bilateral relations and more trade and commercial collaboration. In recent years, the ties between India and Taiwan have gained unprecedented momentum, owing primarily to increased support for Taiwan among Indian civil society organisations.



Taiwan, in turn, has actively reached out to India, leveraging its carefully crafted New Southbound Policy. President Tsai Ing-wen launched this strategy in 2016, and it serves as a road map for greater engagement with prospective allies and partners, including India. India's Act East Policy and Indo-Pacific outreach efforts have further encouraged Taiwan to broaden and deepen its connection with India. This development, however, is a relatively recent phenomenon influenced by strategic, geopolitical shifts in the region. As the Indo-Pacific construct solidifies, the ties between New Delhi and Taipei are poised to take on a more tangible, institutionalised form and can play a meaningful role in strengthening their bilateral

relations, which were established in 1995. For a significant period, the shadow of China had loomed over India-Taiwan relations. While Taiwan maintained a conciliatory stance toward China before President Tsai's tenure, India's multifaceted relationship with China also impeded the strengthening of ties with Taipei. However, China's reluctance to address India's territorial concerns and territorial incursions, whether in Doklam or Galwan, prompted India to reassess its China policy, thereby benefitting India-Taiwan relations. During the initial phase of Narendra Modi's government (2014-17), signs emerged of India gradually shedding its hesitancy toward Taiwan, albeit prudential behaviour remained. Tsai Ing-wen's vic-

tory in 2016 represented a watershed moment in Taiwan's politics, marking a transition away from its economic dependence on mainland China. Taiwan's New Southbound Policy seeks to diversify its economic and investment relationships, posing issues for governments adhering to a One China Policy, notably India. Taiwan has identified India as a top priority under its New Southbound Policy, focussing on trade, commerce, economic cooperation, talent exchange, resource sharing and regional connectivity. Keeping up with this, the India-Taiwan Parliamentary Friendship Forum was established in 2016 as a formal platform for fostering friendship. In terms of commercial and industrial engagement, the Taiwan External Trade Development Council (TECC) and the India-Taipei Association (ITA) formalised a memorandum of understanding in 2017 for the promotion of industry collaboration. This was preceded by multiple MoUs signed between Taiwan's Chinese National Federation of Industries and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry in the same year. The inaugural India-Taiwan Trade Forum in Taipei in 2018 and the opening of the Taipei World Trade Centre's

New Delhi office further underscored the growing economic ties. India's interest in expanding economic and sociocultural ties with Taiwan is evident. Nevertheless, given the prominent roles both nations play in the world economy, the existing bilateral economic relationship falls short of expectations. Nations should continue to expand their partnership as the relationship between India and Taiwan is set to play a significant role in the evolving dynamics of the Indo-Pacific region.

Bolstering relations under Lai Ching-te

With the DPP winning a third straight term, led by current Vice-President Lai Ching-te, there is expected to be a policy consistency that India could capitalise on to further its ties with the island nation. Lai has pledged to support Tsai's cross-strait policies, asserting Taiwan's right to self-determination in the face of China's territorial claims on the island. Numerous opportunities for cooperation between Taiwan and India, including commerce, business, tourism, and education, remain inadequately utilised. In light of this, analysts advise that India designate Taiwan as a consultative partner in its Make in India initiative.

How Turkiye is 'secretly' winning the race in Africa

In the ever-evolving global landscape, Africa has become a battleground for influence and investment with China leading the charge. However, amidst the giants, a surprising contender has emerged in the form of Turkey, making significant strides in the region. As we delve into the numbers, it becomes evident that Turkey, led by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, is positioning itself strategically in Africa, leveraging economic, political and military avenues. Turkey's Erdogan vows to intensify strikes against Kurdish fighters in Syria and Iraq. Turkish firms have undertaken over 1,800 projects in Africa, with a total investment exceeding \$85 billion. These ventures have not only contributed to

the continent's economic development but have also generated employment for approximately 100,000 Africans. The bilateral trade between Turkey and African nations has witnessed substantial growth soaring from \$5.4 billion in 2003 to an estimated \$50 billion in the last year. Turkey's growing presence in Africa is not accidental. Rather, it is a result of a meticulously crafted long-term strategy. In 1998, faced with the denial of full European Union membership in 1997, Ankara pivoted its foreign policy. Erdogan, first as prime minister and later as president, actively redirected attention towards Africa culminating in the unveiling of the Action Plan for Africa. Political and diplomatic

engagement The diplomatic outreach is palpable with the number of Turkish embassies in Africa escalating from 12 in 2002 to 44 two decades later. Erdogan, personally invested in this relationship, has visited Africa an astounding 40 times in 20 years, more than any other world leader. Turkey's efforts were recognised with observer status at the African Union in 2008 and a declaration as a strategic partner. Turkey's approach in Africa combines cultural influence, economic projects and military cooperation. Erdogan's security agreements with 30 African nations, including training programs for soldiers and military deployments, have established Turkey as a key player in the region.

Hostile shift in Maldives' relations with India

India-Maldives relations are straining as a result of events that happened recently. Concerns were raised by the swift deterioration of India-Maldives ties, which occurred only one month after Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with Mohamed Muizzu, the recently elected president of the Maldives. The catalyst was a series of tweets from three Maldivian ministers denouncing Prime Minister Modi's visit to Lakshadweep and his close ties with Israel.

India and the Maldives have long-standing historical ties in terms of ethnicity, language, culture, religion, and trade. The partnerships have been multifaceted, amicable, and sincere. Following Maldives' independence in 1965, India was one of the first countries to recognise the country and open diplomatic ties with it. India's quick intervention in the 1988 coup attempt resulted in the growth of mutual trust and peaceful, long-lasting bilateral ties with the Maldives. Our forces' prompt evacuation when they were deemed unnecessary allayed concerns about potential Indian territorial aspirations and supremacy. Since 1988, India and Maldives have worked closely together in the fields of security and defence. In order to accommodate the Maldivians'



needs for defence equipment and training, India took a highly cooperative and versatile approach. In April 2016, a comprehensive Action Plan for Defence was also signed in order to strengthen the defence collaboration.

Social media turmoil underscores India's importance for Maldives; Muizzu's 'India Out' campaign must take a backseat. When the Tsunami struck in 2004 and Malé faced a water crisis in December 2014, India was the first country to step up by aiding the Maldives. The Indira Gandhi Memorial Hospital (IGMH) was built in 1995 with Indian grant assistance. At a cost of Rs 52 crore, major renovations to the IGMH sponsored by the Government of India culminated in June 2017. During her visit to Malé on 17-18 March, 2019, the late EAM Sushma Swaraj entrusted the renovations of IGMH to the people of Maldives. India's credentials as the "first responder" have been further cemented by the country's prompt delivery of 30,000 doses of the

measles vaccine in January 2020 to stop an outbreak in the Maldives, as well as by its prompt and all-encompassing aid to the Maldives since the start of the Covid epidemic. Tourism, which is the main source of government revenue and foreign exchange gains, is a major contributor to the Maldivian economy. About 25 per cent of the Maldives' GDP is derived directly from tourism, with a far larger percentage coming from indirect sources. For Maldivians, the hospitality sector provides over one-third of direct employment prospects. India remained the leading market in 2021 and 2022, with approximately 2.91 lakh and 2.41 lakh arrivals of Indian tourists, and a 23 per cent and 14.4 per cent market share respectively. An open skies agreement between Maldives and India was reached in March 2022, substantially enhancing connectivity between the two nations. With 100,915 visitor arrivals (up to June 13, 2023), India ranks as the top source market for the

RBI: Foreign exchange, bond, money markets to remain shut on January 22

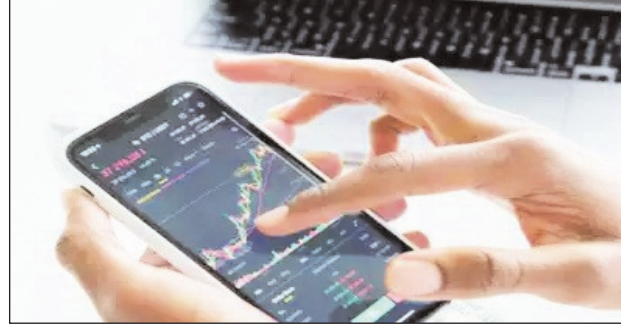


MUMBAI: India's central bank said there will be no trading in foreign exchange, bond and money markets on January 22, as the Maharashtra state government has declared a public holiday, while the settlement of outstanding transactions will be postponed to January 23. The state government has declared a public holiday on Monday under Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, the Reserve Bank of India said.

The 3-day variable rate repo auction announced earlier in the day stands canceled and a two-day VRR auction will now be conducted on January 23, the central bank added. "An extra issue each of Standing Deposit Facility (SDF) and Marginal Standing Facility (MSF) with reversal on January 23, 2024 (Tuesday) is being made available," the RBI said. Earlier in the day, the RBI said trading in the FX, bond, interest rate and currency derivative, call

Investors become richer by Rs 4 lakh crore as markets bounce back after three-day fall

NEW DELHI: With a rebound in equities after a three-day fall, investors' wealth climbed Rs 4 lakh crore on Friday, mirroring optimism in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 496.37 points or 0.70 per cent to settle at 71,683.23. During the day, it rallied 708.78 points or 0.99 per cent to 71,895.64. Following the recovery in domestic equities, the market capitalisation (mcap) of BSE-listed firms jumped Rs 4 lakh crore to Rs 373.57 lakh crore. In the past three days, the BSE benchmark fell by 2.91 per cent. "Markets rebounded from its 3-day losing streak on renewed all-round buying



support, aided by recovery in global indices. The recent fall was extremely fast-paced and concerns of higher valuations along with global factors prompted investors to book profit. "However, India's strong growth prospects in the long-term will always provide a cushion to the falling markets," said Prashanth Tapse, Senior VP

(Research), Mehta Equities Ltd. Among the Sensex firms, Bharti Airtel, NTPC, Tech Mahindra, Tata Steel, Mahindra & Mahindra, UltraTech Cement, Titan, Axis Bank, JSW Steel and Larsen & Toubro were the major gainers. IndusInd Bank, HDFC Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and State Bank of India were among the laggards.

Tata Steel to cut up to 2,800 UK jobs

LONDON: Tata Steel is to cut up to 2,800 UK jobs, it announced Friday, as the industry transitions to greener production of the metal. The company confirmed the closure of two blast furnaces at the Port Talbot steelworks in Wales, according to a statement. It added that "Port Talbot's two high-emission blast furnaces and coke ovens would

close in a phased manner" this year. "Up to 2,800 employees are expected to be potentially affected" by restructuring at the company, including 2,500 roles over the next 18 months, the statement said. A spokesman told AFP the "vast majority" of job losses would be in Port Talbot. Tata Steel employs about 8,000 staff in the UK. Towards the

end of last year, the UK government provided £500 million (\$634 million) to fund the production of "greener" steel at the country's biggest steelworks, while saying that 3,000 jobs were still at risk. "The course we are putting forward is difficult, but we believe it is the right one," Tata Steel's chief executive T V Narendran said.

CAPSULES

AI is the buzz, the big opportunity and the risk to watch among the Davos glitterati

DAVOS: Artificial intelligence is easily the biggest buzzword for world leaders and corporate bosses diving into big ideas at the World Economic Forum's glitzy annual meeting in Davos. Breathtaking advances in generative AI stunned the world last year, and the elite crowd is angling to take advantage of its promise and minimize its risks.

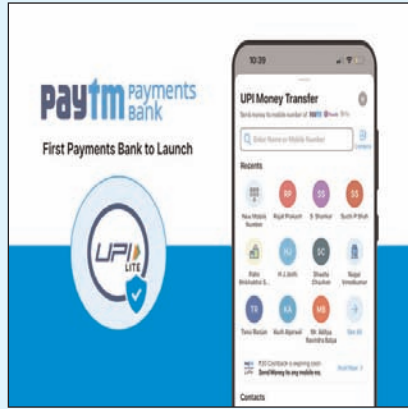


In a sign of ChatGPT maker OpenAI's skyrocketing profile, CEO Sam Altman is making his Davos debut to rock star crowds, with his benefactor, Microsoft CEO Satya Nadella, hot on his heels. Illustrating AI's geopolitical importance like few other technologies before it, the word was on the lips of world leaders from China to France. It was visible across the Swiss Alpine town and percolated through afterparties. The leadership drama at the AI world's much-ballyhooed chatbot maker followed Altman and Nadella to the swanky Swiss snows. Altman, who was suddenly fired last year by OpenAI's board and then swiftly reinstated, said at a Bloomberg event that he was focused on getting a "great full board in place" and would consider changes down the road to the company's unusual structure, which is governed by a nonprofit. He deflected further questions, interrupting a question directed at an OpenAI executive accompanying him by saying, "Is really what you want to spend our time on the soap opera rather than what AGI is going to do?"

Paytm Q3 losses narrow to Rs 221.7 crore

NEW DELHI: Fintech company One97 Communications, which operates under the Paytm brand, on Friday reported narrowing of losses to Rs 221.7 crore for the October-December quarter, according to a filing. The losses stood at Rs 392.1 crore in the year-ago period. The revenue from operations jumped over 38 per cent year-on-year to Rs 2,850.5 crore in the third quarter of FY2023-24. In a statement, Paytm said its Q3 performance was marked by "significant growth in subscription revenue, improved margins, and increased payment business revenue".

Paytm's board also approved its Rs 100 crore investment in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) to establish a global financial ecosystem. "Leveraging its success in real-time payments, Paytm aims to



streamline cross-border remittances with efficient, AI-powered solutions. Additionally, Paytm will invest in setting up a development centre in GIFT City to create a technology backbone for these solutions" the release added.

On the Q3 report card, the company said the number of merchants subscribing to Paytm's payment devices reached 1.06

crore as of December 2023, marking on year increase of 49 lakh. The payments business exhibited significant growth, with revenue escalating by 45 per cent YoY to Rs 1,730 crore, and the net payment margin witnessing a 63 per cent YoY increase to Rs 748 crore. Merchant payments volume (GMV) grew by 47 per cent YoY, reaching Rs 5.10 lakh crore. "Revenue from financial services and other segments climbed by 36 per cent YoY to Rs 607 crore, driven by personal loans, merchant loans distribution, and increased revenue from the insurance broking business," the release said. Paytm said it will emphasise the introduction of new use cases, including Credit on UPI and Autopay, to stimulate monetisable incremental customer acquisition.

Hindustan Unilever posts disappointing Q3 profit on low rural demand

CHENNAI -Hindustan Unilever (HUL), the Indian arm of UK's Unilever, posted a smaller-than-expected increase in quarterly profit on Friday as demand in the country's rural regions remained low partly due to a delayed winter. Consumer goods giants, including HUL peers Nestle India and Britannia Industries, have been struggling with a spending pull-back at a time when prices of various essentials such as vegetables dairy have shot up. The operating environment remains challenging due to a subdued



festive season, uneven monsoon and delayed winter, with economic recovery in urban areas outpacing rural, HUL said in an investor presentation. The company's quarterly sales of products slipped marginally to 149.28 billion rupees, with underlying sales growth in its home

care business, which accounts for 36% of its revenue and houses Surf Excel and Comfort brands, falling 1%. The Dove soapmaker's profit climbed 0.6% to 25.19 billion rupees (\$303.30 million) for the quarter ended Dec. 31 but missed average analysts' estimate of 26.8

billion rupees, according to LSEG data. The profit miss came as HUL cut prices of several products, including detergents and household care products, amid easing commodity prices and stiff competition. "Competitive intensity (is) likely to stay high," HUL said, indicating easing commodity prices are allowing smaller rivals to better compete with deep-pocketed consumer goods conglomerates. Rural income growth would determine the pace of recovery, HUL said, adding it is "cautiously optimistic in the near term."

Jagrut Kotecha to lead PepsiCo in India, Ahmed El Sheikh moved to Middle East Business

NEW DELHI: In a leadership rejig, food & beverage major PepsiCo on Friday said Jagrut Kotecha will lead the India business as the CEO, while the incumbent Ahmed El Sheikh will assume the charge of the Middle East business unit. Kotecha, who is the Chief Commercial Officer for PepsiCo in Africa, Middle East, and South Asia (AMESA) will assume the role of CEO for PepsiCo India in Sheikh's place, the company said in a statement.

Ahmed El Sheikh, who led the PepsiCo India business for almost seven years, will move on from his current role and assume new responsibilities as of March 2024, it said.



"This leadership change, reflecting PepsiCo's dynamic and forward-thinking global approach, has been meticulously planned and was communicated to the India office employees yesterday (Thursday) as part of a series of leadership changes across AMESA," it said. PepsiCo Chief Executive Officer -- Africa, Middle East &

South Asia -- Eugene Willemsen said India remains a pivotal market for the company, playing a crucial role in our global strategy. "Over the last six years, Ahmed has been instrumental in transforming our business, driving innovation, and steering the team through challenging landscapes. His leadership saw the introduction of pioneering

Atlas Air Boeing cargo plane catches fire mid-air, makes emergency landing in Miami

Miami: An Atlas Air Boeing cargo plane was forced to make an emergency landing at Miami International Airport following an engine malfunction that occurred shortly after its takeoff. The incident, involving a Boeing 747-8, was reported late on Thursday. Videos circulating on social media platform X depicted flames erupting from the left wing of the aircraft during flight. Atlas Air confirmed in a statement that the aircraft's crew adhered to standard procedures during the incident and successfully returned to Miami International Airport (MIA). The company also mentioned plans to conduct a thorough inspection to ascertain the cause of the mal-



function. "The crew followed all standard procedures and safely returned to MIA," Atlas Air said in a statement. Data from Flightaware identified the aircraft as a Boeing 747-8, equipped with four General Electric GEnx engines. In response to the situation, Miami-Dade Fire Rescue was deployed, and no injuries were reported. Requests for comments from Boeing, the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA), and General Electric

Pakistan stocks plunge, raise eco woes ahead of polls

Islamabad: An escalation of geopolitical tension between Pakistan and neighbouring Iran sent ripples through Pakistan's bonds and stocks, and raised the spectre of more pressure on the country's struggling economy. Pakistan conducted strikes inside Iran, targeting separatist Baloch militants two days after Tehran said it had attacked the bases of another group within Pakistani territory. The strikes and counterstrikes come just days before general elections in Pakistan, slated for Feb 8. Further escalation, observers believe, could endanger the upcoming polls and could also badly hit the country's failing economy. Following the announcement of strikes on Iran, the Pakistan Stock Exchange fell by 1,000 points Thursday morning. Pakistan's international bonds fell by as much as 1.3 cents in early trade before trimming or reversing losses.

The 27th National Youth Award was successfully held in Nashik.



New Delhi : The 27th National Youth Award was successfully held in Nashik on January, 2024, during the 4th day of the National Festival. Fifteen youth from across the country were honored with the National Youth Award 2021 during this event, presented by the esteemed Hon. Minister of State for Youth Affairs and Sports, Mr. Nisith Pramanik. The ceremony was attended by Hon. Ms. Vanita Sood, Director of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, Hon. Mr. Radhakrishna Game, Commissioner of the respective department, and Hon. Dr. Suhas Diwase, the respected Sports Commissioner of Maharashtra. The recipients of the National Youth Award during the

National Youth Festival in Nashik are as follows:
1. Mr. Adhi Daiv (17), Gurugram, Haryana
2. Mr. Ankit Singh (29), Chhatrapur, Madhya Pradesh
3. Mr. Bisathi Bharat (28), Anantapuram, Andhra Pradesh
4. Mr. Keval Kishorbhai Pavara (27), Botad, Gujarat
5. Ms. Pallavi Thakur (26), Pathankot, Punjab
6. Mr. Prabhat Fogat (25), Jhajjar, Haryana
7. Mr. Ram Babu Sharma (28), Jaipur, Rajasthan
8. Mr. Rohit Kumar (29), Chandigarh
9. Ms. Sakshi Anand (26), Patna, Bihar
10. Mr. Samrat Basak (28), Dhalai, Tripura
11. Mr. Satyadev Arya (30), Bareilly, Uttar Pradesh

12. Ms. Vaishnavi Shyam Gotmare (26), Akola, Maharashtra
13. Ms. Vidhi Subhash Palsapure (26), Latur, Maharashtra
14. Ms. Vinisha Umashankar (17), Tiruvannamalai, Tamil Nadu
15. Mr. Vivek Parihar, Udhampur, Jammu and Kashmir
The National Youth Award is conferred upon individuals aged 15 to 29 for outstanding contributions in the fields of national or social service. This award aims to instill a sense of responsibility towards their community, fostering personal growth as responsible citizens. Presented annually during the National Youth Festival.

EPACK Durable Limited Initial Public Offer to open

Gurugram: EPACK Durable Limited ("EPACK" or the "Company"), shall open its Bid / Offer in relation to its initial public offer of Equity Shares. The total offer size of Equity Shares of face value 10 each aggregating up to comprises of fresh issue aggregating up to 4,000 million [400 crore] ("Fresh Issue") and offer for sale of up to 10,437,047 Equity Shares. The Anchor Investor Bidding Date shall be Thursday, January 18, 2024. The Bid/Offer will open on Friday, January 19, 2024 for subscription and close on Tuesday, January 23, 2024. The Price Band of the Offer has been fixed at 218 to 230 per Equity Share. Bids can be made for a minimum of 65 Equity Shares and in multiples of 65 Equity Shares thereafter. The Company proposes to utilise net proceeds from fresh issue



of Equity Shares to funding capital expenditure for the expansion / setting up of manufacturing facilities, repayment and / or prepayment, in part or in full, of certain outstanding loans of our Company and general corporate purpose (the "Objects of Issue"). The offer for sale of up to 10,437,047 Equity Shares ("Offered Shares") comprising up to 1,172,976 Equity Shares by Bajrang Bothra, up to 666,798 Equity Shares by Laxmi Pat Bothra, up to 748,721 Equity Shares by Sanjay Singhania, up to 748,721 Equity Shares by Ajay DD Singhania (collectively, the "Promoter Selling

Shareholders"), up to 286,351 Equity Shares by Pinky Ajay Singhania, up to 286,351 Equity Shares by Preity Singhania, up to 442,905 Equity Shares by Nikhil Bothra, up to 442,905 Equity Shares by Nitin Bothra, up to 379,633 Equity Shares by Rajat Kumar Bothra (collectively, the "Promoter Group Selling Shareholders"), up to 4,630,284 equity shares by India Advantage fund S4 I and up to 631,402 Equity Shares by Dynamic India fund S4 US I (collectively, the "Investor Selling Shareholders"), and together with the Promoter Selling Shareholders and the Promoter Group Selling Shareholders, the "Selling Shareholders", and such offer for sale of Equity Shares by the Selling Shareholders, "the Offer for Sale").

Abu Dhabi Chamber obtains three ISO certificates

DUBAI: The Abu Dhabi Chamber of Commerce and Industry has obtained three ISO certificates for its dedication to upholding the highest international standards and optimal global management practices in quality, environmental sustainability, and occupation-

al health. The certificates include the ISO certificate for quality management systems (ISO 9001:2015), the ISO certificate for environmental management systems (ISO 14001:2015), and the ISO certificate for occupational health man-

agement systems (ISO 45001:2018), after successfully passing all requirements and conditions for external auditing. Ahmed Khalifa Al Qubaisi, Chief Executive Officer of Abu Dhabi Chamber, said, "The success of the Abu Dhabi Chamber in passing the external audit.



Paving the digital highway: Netplus and the future of connectivity in Punjab

As the digital landscape evolves, the telecom industry stands at the forefront of this transformation, reshaping how people connect and communicate. In Punjab, a region embracing technological advancements, Netplus, under the visionary leadership of Gurdeep Singh, is playing a pivotal role in revolutionising connectivity. Netplus, a broadband service provider subsidiary of Juhar Group is known for its connection speeds and customer retention rate. Netplus Broadband is one of the fastest-growing ISP in the region, providing next-gen services such as high-speed broadband, smart telephony & OTT. With an exponential rise in data consumption, the introduction of 5G technology, and a growing emphasis on seamless connection, the telecom sector is undergoing a seismic transformation. It is no longer enough just to be connected; it is also necessary to be connected quickly, reliably, and securely. Netplus has been at the forefront of this transformation in Punjab. Speaking on this, Gurdeep Singh, Chairman, and Founder, shares Netplus's story and its role in influencing the future of connectivity. "Netplus has been proactive in embracing technological advancements. We recognized the burgeoning demand for high-speed internet and expanded our infrastructure to provide reliable fiber-to-the-home (FTTH) services. Moreover, we're closely monitoring the 5G landscape, preparing to integrate this cutting-edge technology into our services as soon as it becomes available in Punjab. Our priority has always been customer satisfaction and technological innovation.

China's military and government acquire Nvidia chips despite US ban

BEIJING: Chinese military bodies, state-run artificial intelligence research institutes and universities have over the past year purchased small batches of Nvidia semiconductors banned by the US from export to China, a Reuters review of tender documents show. The sales by largely unknown Chinese suppliers highlight the difficulties Washington faces, despite its bans, in completely cutting off China's access to advanced US chips that could fuel breakthroughs in AI and sophisticated computers for its military. Buying or selling high-end US chips is not illegal in China and the publicly available tender documents show dozens of Chinese entities have bought and taken receipt of Nvidia semiconductors since restrictions were imposed. These include its A100 and the more powerful

● "The graphic processing units - a type of chip - that are built by Nvidia are widely seen as far superior to rival products for AI work"

H100 chip - whose exports to China and Hong Kong were banned in September 2022 - as well as the slower A800 and H800 chips Nvidia then developed for the Chinese market but which were also banned last October. The graphic processing units - a type of chip - that are built by Nvidia are widely seen as far superior to rival products for AI work as they can more efficiently process huge amounts of data needed for machine-learning tasks.

The continued demand for and access to banned Nvidia chips also underlines the lack of good alternatives for Chinese firms despite the nascent development of rival products from Huawei and others. Prior to the bans, Nvidia commanded a 90% share of China's AI chip market. Purchasers included elite universities as well as two entities subject to US export restrictions - the Harbin Institute of Technology and the University of Electronic Science and Technology of China, which have been accused of involvement in military matters or being affiliated to a military body contrary to US national interest. The former purchased six Nvidia A100 chips in May to train a deep-learning model. The latter purchased one A100 in

Pakistan stocks plunge, raise eco woes ahead of polls

Islamabad: An escalation of geopolitical tension between Pakistan and neighbouring Iran sent ripples through Pakistan's bonds and stocks, and raised the spectre of more pressure on the country's struggling economy. Pakistan conducted strikes inside Iran, targeting separatist Baloch militants two days after Tehran said it had attacked the bases of another group within Pakistani territory. The strikes and counterstrikes

come just days before general elections in Pakistan, slated for Feb 8. Further escalation, observers believe, could endanger the upcoming polls and could also badly hit the country's failing economy. Following the announcement of strikes on Iran, the Pakistan Stock Exchange fell by 1,000 points Thursday morning. Pakistan's international bonds fell by as much as 1.3 cents in early trade before trimming or reversing

losses. Last year, Pakistan was on the borderline of defaulting before it managed to secure an agreement with the IMF for \$3 billion. Economic ties with Iran, while not huge, are important for Islamabad as it struggles to supply its western-most regions in Balochistan with critical commodities. Iran provides electricity to many areas in Pakistan, and there is sizeable unofficial trade in commodities including LPG and Iranian diesel.

Pakistan passed a special order in June to allow barter trade with Iran, along with Afghanistan and Russia, for certain goods, among them petroleum and natural gas. "The bilateral trade, valued at over \$2 billion, is crucial for both economies," said Aneel Salman of Islamabad Policy Research Institute. He said the interruption of trade routes would have an immediate impact, including shortages in Pakistan.

Infosys, Wipro & HCL Tech results, experts suggest Indian IT sector rebound likely in FY25

Analysts anticipate a turnaround in the coming quarters based on management's comments on the demand environment. Growth in India's information technology (IT) sector is expected to bounce back in the next fiscal year, according to experts. However, the recent performance of the country's top four IT companies in the third quarter has not instilled much confidence, says report. Although IT companies showed little improvement in market confidence following the US Federal Reserve's announcement of potential interest rate cuts in 2024, analysts anticipate a turnaround in the coming quarters based on management's comments on the demand



environment. During the fiscal third quarter ending in December, Tata Consultancy Services (TCS), India's largest IT firm, reported a 4% increase in revenue and a 2% growth in profit compared to the same period last year. On the other hand, Infosys, the second largest IT services company, revised its revenue growth guidance for the fiscal year 2024 to 1.5-2.0% after experiencing a 7.3% decline in profit and a 1% increase in revenue. Wipro's profit

declined by 12%, marking the fourth consecutive quarter of lower profits. Additionally, its revenue dropped by 4.4%. In contrast, HCLTech witnessed a 6.5% rise in revenue and a 6.2% growth in profit.

Peter Bendor-Samuel, the chief of IT industry research firm Everest Group, predicts a demand revival by the second quarter of 2024 (April-June) based on the current guidance from these IT companies.

Adani Group to provide Dharavi residents 350 sqft homes with independent kitchens and toilets

Dharavi redevelopment: Eligible residential tenements, existing before January 1, 2000, will have separate kitchens and in-built independent toilets in each flat. Dharavi Redevelopment Project Pvt Ltd (DRPPL), a collaboration between the Adani Group and the government of Maharashtra, announced that eligible residential tenements in Dharavi will receive flats featuring independent kitchens and toilets, with a minimum area of 350 sq ft. This compensatory area is almost 17% larger, marking the highest among slum redevelopment projects in Mumbai, as



stated by the developer. In November 2022, Adani Properties, the real estate development company under the Gautam Adani-led Adani Group, secured the rights to redevelop the 600-acre Dharavi slum in Mumbai. With an 80% stake held by an Adani Group entity in DRPPL, the government of Maharashtra

holds the remaining 20%. Previously, informal settlement dwellers in Maharashtra were allocated houses measuring 269 sq ft. However, since 2018, in adherence to the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana for urban poor housing, the state government began providing homes ranging from 315 sq ft to 322 sq ft, according to

report. Eligible residential tenements, existing before January 1, 2000, will have separate kitchens and in-built independent toilets in each flat. The dwellings will prioritize being well-lit, ventilated, hygienic, and secure. Ineligible residential tenements in Dharavi will be accommodated under the proposed affordable rental housing policy, following the defined norms of the Maharashtra government. The Adani Group has indicated similar development plans for the various Navi Dharavis is being considered, addressing the substantial demand for dwelling units.

Jio Financial Services Q3 net profit falls 56 pc to Rs 294 crore

NEW DELHI: Jio Financial Services Ltd on reported a 56 per cent decline in consolidated net profit at Rs 294 crore for the third quarter ended December 2023, compared to the previous quarter. The company had earned a consolidated net profit of Rs 668 crore in the second quarter of the current fiscal, Jio Financial Services said in a regulatory filing. Its revenue too moderated to Rs 414 crore, from Rs 608 crore in the September quarter. For the nine months ended December, the company's net profit stood at Rs 1,294 crore, the filing said. The total expenses increased sequentially to Rs 98.95 crore, against Rs 71.43 crore in the previous quarter. Jio Financial Services, carved out from Reliance Industries Ltd

Lionel Messi is turning MLS into a league of old men

When Lionel Messi announced he was joining Inter Miami last summer, the administrators of US soccer hoped his glamor and skills would attract more fans and revenues to Major League Soccer. American fans, meanwhile, hoped his prestige would lure more world-class talent to the league.

They reasoned that if the MLS was good enough for the Argentinian superstar — his claim to being the GOAT enhanced by a newly acquired FIFA World Cup winner's medal — then surely it was good enough for the other greats of the game, from Europe, Latin America and Africa.

This would help raise standards in the MLS, expose American players to a higher quality of soccer and eventually benefit the US men's national team. Messi, who was yet again named the world's best player this week, has certainly delivered on the first



part of the deal. MLS has reaped bumper profits from ticket sales, TV deals and sponsorships, and Apple has pronounced itself more than pleased with the boost in viewership since his arrival. His Miami team has enjoyed massive paydays, with ticket prices sometimes rivaling Taylor Swift's, and its pink jersey has become the world's most coveted piece of sports merchandise. And, almost incidentally, he brought the club its first trophy.

There's more Messi-moolah on the way when the new soccer season kicks off next month. Inter Miami has already sold out their tickets, and the

fans' appetite for Messi-merch is unlikely to be sated anytime soon. The league can also count on hefty checks from sponsors. But the Messi-inspired stampede of stars to the MLS has not materialized. The most prominent foreign players to have followed the Argentine to the US (and to Inter Miami) are Sergio Busquets, Jordi Alba and Luis Suarez, all of whom played with him at FC Barcelona. The foursome has one other thing in common: They are all past their prime. Suarez is nearly 37, Messi is 36, Busquets is 35 and Alba, 34. Even so, Inter Miami is the odds-on favorite to retain the MLS Cup.

It's a bit tricky...': How the pitch for India-Pakistan T20 World Cup clash is being prepared in New York

NEW DELHI: In preparation for the highly anticipated India-Pakistan clash in the 2024 T20 World Cup, Adelaide Oval head groundsman Damien Hough revealed the intricate process of creating the pitch at New York's Eisenhower Park. Hough explained the challenges and steps involved in making the pitch, emphasizing the innovative approach adopted for this significant match in the ICC tournament. Speaking to Channel 7,

Hough highlighted the complexity of the task, stating, "It's a bit tricky, we basically built six of the 10 trays here in Adelaide. We made them modular. We're really proud of them. We've got a couple out of the back that will probably come out here [on Adelaide Oval] next year." He confirmed that the pitch in Eisenhower Park is currently in the "grow-in phase," elaborating on the process. "We put them in a shipping container and send

them really wherever we want around the world. But they've gone over to Florida. And I've just come back from a month of work over there putting the trays together, putting the soil in, compacting them and putting the grass on. So we're in the grow-in phase." Hough mentioned a company called LandTek in Florida that is assisting with the grow-in phase and outlined the strategic trips planned in the next six months.

Dhoni's tips will help me...': Jurel, son of Kargil war veteran

NEW DELHI: Dhruv Chand Jurel became a household name in Agra's Defence Colony when he captained the India Under-19 team to win the Asia Cup title in September 2019. He was famous as 'Captain Dhruv' in his locality. If you ask for Dhruv there,

in the Defence Colony, people will help you reach his doorstep. Recently, the buzz has returned to his residence. Now, if you ask locals about him, they will say Dhruv, jo Virat aur Rohit ke saath khelne wala hai (Dhruv, the one who is set to

play alongside Virat Kohli and Rohit Sharma) A Kargil war veteran's son, Jurel, who represents Rajasthan Royals in IPL, was given a call-up to the Test team for the upcoming series against England, starting in Hyderabad on January 25.

CAPSULES

Uzbekistan hand leaky India second Asian Cup defeat

NEW DELHI: India fell to a second straight defeat at the Asian Cup on Thursday in Doha, losing 3-0 to Uzbekistan, all the goals coming in a torrid first half for Igor Stimac's men.

The result put Uzbekistan in pole position to qualify along with Australia from Group B with one round of matches to go.

Against the central Asian nation at Ahmed bin Ali Stadium, India's performance was a far cry from their display against Australia, where the team went down 0-2 in the opener.

Uzbekistan scored through Abbosbek Fayzullaev (4th minute), Igor Sergeev (18th) and Nasrullaev (45+3) to register their first win in the competition after being held to a stalemate by Syria in their tournament opener. Hoping to start on a positive note barely days after their promising show against Australia, India, instead, found themselves on the backfoot straightaway and conceded a rather soft goal early on. The lightning quick Fayzullaev, placed in a favourable position, found the target with a header past the hapless Gurpreet Singh Sandhu after Shukurov headed the ball towards him from a Nasrullaev cross taken at the edge of the Indian penalty area. Ranked 102 in the world as against their 68-ranked opponents, Igor Stimac's men found the going tough as Uzbekistan looked to rattle the Indian defence with their attacking play. Unlike the match against Australia, the Indians could not prevent Uzbekistan from splitting their defence wide open in the early part.

In a mood to stamp their authority further, Uzbekistan again benefitted from sloppy defending from their opponents.

Rizwan's honest take on split with opening partner Babar Azam

NEW DELHI: As Pakistan succumbed to their fourth straight T20I defeat against New Zealand in Christchurch on Friday, opener Mohammad Rizwan admitted that the recent changes in the team combination have hurt their side. One of the major decisions in the recent reshuffle was the split of one of Pakistan's best-ever opening pair of Rizwan and Babar Azam, a move that drew sharp criticism in the cricketing fraterni-



ty. With the scores of 27, 1, 10 and 1, Saim Ayub, Rizwan's new opening partner, has under delivered at the top. Defending the management's decision, Rizwan said that

the team is trying different combinations ahead of the upcoming T20 World Cup and the loses will come in the way. After yet another defeat in the fourth T20I against the Kiwis,

Rizwan, when asked about the split with Babar said: "Yes, you can say the split has hurt us (Nuksaan hua hai). The team management and the captain talked to us (me and Babar). Mohammad Hafeez also talked to us. Babar bhai has a big heart. We both agreed on the decision of splitting the opening pair and said there is no issue." "The whole nation thought we had a good thing (partnership) going at the top of the batting order.

'I'd call him a left-handed Dhoni'

NEW DELHI: After a thrilling victory, involving two super overs, in the third and final T20I against Afghanistan, Indian captain Rohit Sharma lavished praise on young devastating batsman Rinku Singh. Rinku, whose rise from a humble background to superstardom has been an inspiration for many, once again became the talk of the town after he smashed an unbeaten 69 runs off just 39 balls, including six sky-rocketing maximums in the third T20I against Afghanistan. Rinku, who grabbed eyeballs for towering five sixes in an over



against Gujarat Titans in the 2023 season, is looking as a bright prospect for this year's T20 World Cup, to be hosted by the West Indies and the United States from June 4 to June 30. His stellar performance drew accolades from various quarters, including captain Rohit and coach Rahul

Dravid. In the match at the M Chinnaswamy Stadium on Wednesday, Rohit achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first player to score five T20I centuries, scoring an unbeaten 121 runs off 69 balls. He combined forces with Rinku in a formidable 190-run partnership for the fifth wicket, pro-

pelleng India to a mammoth 212/4. Team India off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin also lauded Rinku for his attacking batting style and termed him as a 'left-handed Dhoni'.

"He is somebody I'd call a left-handed Dhoni. I can't compare him to Dhoni just yet because Dhoni is too big. But, I am talking about the composure that he brings. He has been consistently scoring buckets of runs for UP and broke his way into the Indian team. He was on the KKR bench for many years," Ashwin said on his YouTube channel.

If you allow time and space to a side like Uzbekistan, they will kill you: Igor



DOHA: India coach Igor Stimac said his team offered Uzbekistan too much space and time during the 0-3 drubbing in the AFC Asian Cup here and admitted drastic improvement is required to match the standards of the continent's elites. Unlike their outing against Australia, when they managed to hold the title contenders and World Cup regulars

goal-less for the first 50 minutes, the Indian defence was split wide open in the early part of the game by Uzbekistan. Defensive lapses hurt the 102-ranked team the most, as it conceded two goals within first 17 minutes.

"They were far more clinical than us. They didn't give away anything. And whatever problems we had,

came from ourselves. We allowed them to take those chances. That's the difference," Stimac said after the match. India simply failed to withstand the early Uzbek onslaught though Stimac preferred to go easy on his wards, who will face Syria on January 23 in their last group match. "Overall, the boys have been fantastic. They have trained

Indian women's hockey team fails to qualify for Paris Olympics after loss to Japan in FIH

NEW DELHI: In a major heart-break, the Indian women's hockey team on Friday failed to qualify for the upcoming Paris Games after suffering 0-1 loss to Japan in FIH Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi.

Kana Urata's sixth minute strike from the penalty corner turned out to be the winner for Japan as the wheels that were set in motion for the Indian women's team, following a momentous fourth-place finish at the Tokyo Olympics in 2021, seemed to have come off after the utterly disappointing show in one of its hubs in recent years. The top three sides from this tournament qualified for the Paris Olympics. By finishing third, Japan, booked their berth. Germany and USA, who will play in the final later in the evening, are the other two sides to have sealed their places. Japan were the early aggressor as they exerted pressure on the Indian defence and, in the process, had the



first scoring chance, but an alert Indian skipper Savita in front of the goal came out rushing to kick away the loose ball in the second minute. The Indians played catch-up as they failed to threaten the Japanese goal despite making some fine circle penetrations. Japan kept up the pressure and secured their first penalty corner minutes later but the Indians defended well. Two minutes later, India conceded another soft penalty corner and this

time Urata found the back of the net through the legs of Savita with a grounded flick. The Indian backline was put under tremendous pressure by the Japanese with some defence-splitting dangerous crosses but the hosts somehow managed to hold on. In the 12th minute, India had their first real chance. Monika created the opportunity with a fine cross from the right flank but Lalremsiami's deflection went over the bar.

Himanshu Chauhan takes five as Delhi bowl out MP for 171

INDORE: Rookie speedster Himanshu Chauhan, playing only his third First-Class game, bagged his maiden five-wicket haul to put Delhi in the driver's seat against Madhya Pradesh on the opening day of an Elite Group D Ranji Trophy encounter on Friday.

Chauhan, who didn't get to bowl a single over in the weather affected previous game in Jammu, grabbed 5 for 51 in 17 overs and was ably supported by medium pacer Divij Mehra (3/48 in 15 overs) as Madhya Pradesh were bundled out for 171 in only 53.2 overs.

In reply, Delhi were 86 for 2 at stumps, losing opener Salil Malhotra (14) and senior left-hander Jonty Sidhu (12). Yash Dhull (36 batting, 83 balls) showed admirable application and had skipper Himmat Singh (19 batting) for company. Dhull hit six boundaries in the 29 overs that Delhi batted in the final session.

CAPSULES

Ayodhya's 'Sarayu Model' becomes a hot topic in terms of inland waterways

Ayodhya
'Sarayuu model' has become a hot topic in terms of inland waterways. With the launch of the first solar boat by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in the river on Friday, the process of developing the inland water mechanism has been initiated for the first time in the country. Besides, the process of bringing a fleet of clean energy-focused (especially electric and solar-powered) boats to Ayodhya is likely to start soon. With this initiative, the government aims to bring to life the vision of 'navya' Ayodhya, by effectively addressing environmental concerns while carrying out urban development and operating solar energy-based urban transportation. It is noteworthy that Ayodhya is now being equipped with such modern facilities along with introducing boating activities in the Sarayu river, which will establish it as a new major center of inland waterways on the lines of Varanasi in coming times. Govt's focus is on clean energy-based boat transportation. In line with CM Yogi's vision, the Uttar Pradesh New and Renewable Energy Development Agency (UPNEDA) launched the Roof-Top Mounted Solar Boat Service in Ayodhya. This marks the beginning of a game-changing electric solar technology-based boat service, a first in the country in terms of inland waterways. Notably, the boat was assembled on the banks of the Sarayu River, and its components and other equipment were sourced from various parts of the country. This boat is entirely indigenous and has been made under the 'Make in India' initiative. One boat has been completed, and in the coming days, the regular operation of other boats is expected to be announced. Additionally, the operation of electric boats on the Sarayu River will soon commence. Two floating jetty-based power source plug stations, CJ VI Ganga 3 and CJ VI Ganga 6, have already been placed between Guptar Ghat and the Naya Ghat from December 15 for charging of electric boats. Initially, the operation of these two boats will be on a regular basis, and later the fleet can be expanded. Way cleared for the operation of Jatayu Cruise and Water Metro. In addition, the Jatayu Cruise is operating in Ayodhya whereas the process of strengthening the barrage for maintaining the appropriate water level for its regular operation in the river has been completed. It has cleared the way for the operation of the Water Metro in the Sarayu River, which will be completed in the coming days for the first time in North India after Kochi. The Yogi government has made various efforts to make the Sarayu a popular destination for boat tourism, including promoting water sports activities such as jet skiing. Floating jetties have been arranged at major ghats, including Nayaghat and Guptar Ghat on the banks of the Sarayu, and the continuous process of developing basic facilities for activities such as pilgrims' bathing is underway.

Yogi govt launches novel initiative to create incense sticks from offered flowers for enhanced cleanliness

Ayodhya
In an innovative effort to maintain cleanliness within temple premises, the Ayodhya Municipal Corporation has embarked on a project to produce incense sticks from the flowers offered in all Ayodhya Dham temples. The Municipal Corporation plans to process the substantial quantity of flowers expected to be offered during the Pran Pratishtha ceremony. Even after the conclusion of the Pran Pratishtha program, the Municipal Corporation will continue to create incense sticks from the flowers used in the temple premises, ensuring not only the cleanliness of the temple, but also preservation of flowers. This processing initiative also serves as a means to provide employment opportunities for women in self-help groups. According to estimates, after the Pran Pratishtha, a remarkable 9 metric tons of flower waste are expected to be recycled daily from all the temples of Ayodhya Dham, a significant increase from the current 2.3 metric tons. Vishal Singh, the Vice Chairman of Ayodhya Development Authority, highlighted that Ayodhya, the birthplace of Lord Shri Ram, attracts numerous pilgrims annually who contribute to the generation of tons of floral waste.

Handicraft Exhibition is the cornerstone of PM's 'Vocal for Local' & self-reliant India vision: CM Yogi

Lucknow
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inaugurated the Handicraft Exhibition of Gramashree and Craft Roots at Safed Baradari in Kaiserbagh locality here on Saturday and said that though the exhibition might appear small, it is the cornerstone of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's 'Vocal for Local' and 'Self-Reliant India' vision. "With the inspiration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the innovative One District One Product scheme was launched in Uttar Pradesh in the year 2018 to encourage traditional industries in which a unique product each



from all 75 districts of the state was selected and marketed. This gave a new direction and recognition on the global stage to the traditional industry", CM Yogi remarked. There is no dearth of potential in Uttar Pradesh. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said that Vishwakarma Shram Samman Yojana is being run to encourage and train the artisans of the state under which they are being provided honorarium and toolkits. "As a result of this, the exports of Uttar Pradesh, which is called a landlocked state, more than doubled within two to three years. Governor Anandiben Patel conducted many innovative experiments during the

lockdown period following the outbreak of the novel coronavirus pandemic. She linked these experiments to the empowerment of women who were deprived of work. And when these women got the opportunity, they amply demonstrated their skills and proved that there is no dearth of potential in the state", he pointed out. CM Yogi added that the programme is being taken forward under the guidance of Governor Anandiben Patel. He remarked further that the artisans associated with handicrafts are a source of inspiration.

Yogi govt to illuminate Ayodhya with 10 lakh diyas on Jan 22'

Ayodhya
Following the consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on January 22, the entire city will glow with the radiance of 10 lakh diyas in the evening. On the call of the double engine government, 'Ram Jyoti' will be lit at houses, shops, religious places and historic sites. Previously, when Lord Ram returned from exile, Diwali was celebrated in Ayodhya by lighting diyas. Now,



after the completion of the consecration ceremony, Diwali will be celebrated again by lighting 'Ram Jyoti.' The Yogi government, which has been organizing the 'Deepotsav'

for the last seven years, will once again adorn Ayodhya with diyas on January 22, attracting the attention of the world with its divine splendor. Diyas to illuminate 100 temples and public places since assuming power in 2017, the Yogi government has been organizing Deepotsav annually. In 2017, the government adorned Ayodhya with 1.71 lakh diyas, and in the 2023 Deepotsav.

PM to gift projects worth thousands of crores to Bulandshahr during his visit on Jan 25

Bulandshahr
The preparations for the upcoming visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to Bulandshahr on January 25 are in the final stages. On Saturday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath inspected the Police Shooting Range Ground, which is the venue for the PM's program. During this, CM Yogi reviewed projects,

which the Prime Minister will inaugurate/lay foundation stones of, and provided necessary directives to the officials. The Chief Minister, while directing officials regarding preparations for the proposed public meeting venue, emphasized the need to ensure that the public participating in the meeting does not face any difficulties. He also instructed them to make the best arrangements and urged officials to expedite the ongoing construction work in the divisions undertaken by the government. After the review meeting, the Chief Minister provided further information to the media in this regard. He mentioned that on January 22, after the consecration ceremony in Ayodhya.

Majestic greenery from Maharashtra adorns the Ram Janmabhoomi Complex

Ayodhya
Leading up to the consecration ceremony, the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex is undergoing a divine transformation with the plantation of 7,500 saplings brought from Maharashtra. As the consecration program, scheduled for January 22, approaches, more than eight thousand visitors, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, are expected to be captivated by the lush greenery within the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex.

Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust and the Uttar Pradesh Forest Department are collaborating to decorate the premises with seven and a half thousand pots containing various indigenous and foreign flowers. The burst of colors springing from these plants aims to captivate visitors within the temple courtyard, providing an experiential journey reminiscent of the Ramayana period. A campus adorned with 7500 plants from Maharashtra in preparation for the consecra-

tion of Shri Ram Lalla on January 22, the entire complex is elaborate decorations. Alongside flower decorations, more than seven and a half thousand pots and plants have been brought in from Maharashtra, enhancing the premises. The fragrance of the trees and plants is poised to mesmerize visitors. The Forest Department, under the directives of Teerth Kshetra Trust and Chief Minister Yogi, is diligently undertaking preparations. Plants enhancing the grandeur of the campus. The Ram Mandir premises.

A total of 650 e-carts will operate in the first phase, devotees will soon experience enhanced facilities

Ayodhya
In order to ensure a smooth experience for devotees visiting Ayodhya, the Yogi government has made extensive preparations to operate e-carts for transporting pilgrims to the Ram Temple and Hanuman Garhi for the darshan of Shri Ram Lalla. These e-carts or golf carts will be free for the elderly, divyangs and pregnant women. To execute this significant initiative, the Ayodhya Development Authority has called upon private industrial houses to contribute. Efforts are underway to encourage these private industrial houses to donate to this service in Ayodhya through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds, thereby providing relief to the pilgrims. According to Vishal Singh, the Vice Chairman of the Ayodhya Development Authority, a large number of devotees, including the elderly, divyangs, and pregnant women, are expected to visit Ayodhya for the darshan of Shri Ram Lalla after the consecration ceremony. For devotees arriving in Ayodhya with their vehicles, the facility of e-carts will be available at the parking area. Through these e-carts, devotees can visit Hanuman Garhi and other religious sites in the vicinity, along with the darshan of Lord Ram. Furthermore, the plan includes providing free services for the elderly, divyangs, and pregnant women. The e-carts will take devotees heading to the Ram Temple. Subsequently, wheelchairs will be provided free of charge at that location for the elderly, divyangs, and pregnant women. The objective is to enable as many devotees as possible to have a darshan within a short timeframe, he added. Vishal Singh said that we have sent a proposal to those corporate houses for contribution to provide e-cart or golf cart service here. These corporate houses have previously expressed their desire to serve in Ayodhya through their CSR funds. After obtaining their approval, the plan will be implemented on a large scale. A total of 650 e-carts will come in the first phase. Ayodhya Development Authority's facility management partner, Kavach Global Konnects Pvt. Ltd., is playing a crucial role in this. Mr. Takshe Raval, Director of Kavach Global, said that through the tender process, they have secured various locations within the Ayodhya Development Authority. At these locations, efforts are being made to provide devotees with better facilities. As part of this plan, the intention is to offer devotees the convenience of 12-seater and 18-seater e-carts from these locations.

Parking arrangements made for over 22K vehicles at 51 places in Ayodhya for consecration

Ayodhya
The Yogi government has made comprehensive arrangements for parking at 51 designated locations in Ayodhya Dham for the Shri Ram Lala Pran Pratishtha ceremony. With a capacity for 22,825 vehicles, these places are conveniently marked on Google Maps to facilitate access of guests. Special parking provisions have been made for VVIPs, VIPs, and other guests, ensuring a well-organized and

equipped setup, including wireless and PA systems. Parking arrangements have been made at following places: ADG Traffic BD Paulson informed that 51 places have been identified to park the vehicles of the guests coming for Shri Ram Lala Pran Pratishtha program in Ayodhya Dham. The designated locations offer simultaneous parking for approximately 22,825 vehicles. These include 5 spots on Rampath, 1 on

Yogi govt strengthens measures against cyber fraud linked to Ram Temple

Ayodhya
Amid the growing concern over surge in cybercriminal activity related to the consecration program of Lord Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya Dham, the Yogi Government has sprung into action to deal with the issue. As false messages claiming to collect donations for Ram Janmabhoomi, along with deceptive promises of providing free Prasad, VIP passes and entry passes, are circulating, the Yogi government is taking proactive measures to address and counteract these malicious activities. Instructions have

been issued to the entire state police, particularly Ayodhya Police, to maintain heightened vigilance. In a recent incident, Ayodhya Police acted swiftly, arresting an Indian American citizen involved in similar activities and putting him in jail under relevant sections. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust is also alerting all devotees about these deceptive practices. Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust cautions people. The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has issued an appeal to all the devotees to not respond to requests or WhatsApp messages from unknown individuals without verification and to avoid making donations without proper authentication, highlighting the various cyber fraud tactics employed by criminals taking advantage of people's trust. These tactics include the distribution of fake QR codes for collecting donations in the name of Ram Mandir, making false promises of providing free Prasad to the public, coming up with misleading offers of VIP passes and entry passes to visit Ram Mandir.