

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Saturday 30 December, 2023

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

Cadres to give up all forms of violence': ULFA signs historic peace accord with govt

● Notably, the hardline faction of the ULFA, led by Paresh Baruah and believed to be residing along the China-Myanmar border, did not participate in the agreement



NEW DELHI: The pro-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA) signed a tripartite Memorandum of Settlement pact with the Centre and Assam governments on Friday, committing to abandon violence and integrate into mainstream society. Signed in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah and Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, the peace accord marks the conclusion of 12 years of unconditional negotiations between the ULFA faction led by Arabinda Rajkhowa and the government. This significant peace pact is anticipated to bring an end to the long-standing insurgency in

Assam. Making the announcement, Shah said, "It is a matter of joy for me that today is a bright day for the future of Assam. For a long time, Assam, Northeast faced violence and after PM Modi became PM in 2014, efforts were made to reduce the gap between Delhi and Northeast." "This is a new start of a period of peace for the whole Northeast, especially Assam. I want to assure ULFA representatives that the faith you have kept in Govt of India, from the side of Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA), a programme will be made in

a time-bound manner to fulfill everything, without you asking for it. Under MHA, a committee will be formed, which will work with the Assam govt to fulfill this agreement," he added. "As part of the memorandum of settlement signed by Ulfa with Centre & Assam govt, its cadres will give up arms & all forms of violence, disband the outfit, vacate their camps and join the democratic process." Notably, the hardline faction of the ULFA, led by Paresh Baruah and believed to be residing along the China-Myanmar border, did

not participate in the agreement. Established in 1979 with the quest for a 'sovereign Assam,' the ULFA has been engaged in subversive activities, leading to its designation as a banned outfit by the central government in 1990. Assam CM said, "Today is a historic day for Assam. During PM Modi's tenure, under the guidance of Union Home Minister Amit Shah, work for Assam's peace was always underway. Three accords have been signed and with three accords tribal militancy has come to an end in Assam."

Nitish takes over as JD(U) chief after Lalan Singh quits top party post

New Delhi Janata Dal (United) national president Rajiv Ranjan Singh aka Lalan Singh has offered to quit the post at the national executive meeting in New Delhi, according to people familiar with the development. JD(U) state president Umesh Kushwaha said that the party's national executive requested Kumar to take over the party in the larger interest of the party and nation. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar at JD(U)'s national executive meeting. Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar at



JD(U)'s national executive meeting. The key meeting kicked off today in New Delhi amid swirling rumours that Lalan Singh will step down from the top post to make way for Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar's return. The decisions taken by

the executive will be ratified at JD(U)'s national council meeting later in the day. Kumar has maintained that key meetings in the national capital are routine annual exercises. "These meetings take place every year. It's normal...there is

nothing specific at all. These are routine meetings", the chief minister told reporters in Patna on Thursday. Singh reaffirmed that Nitish Kumar was the leader of the party and claimed that the rumours about his future and his differences with Nitish Kumar were being spread at the BJP's instance. "If I have to resign, I will call you (media persons), and consult you about what to write in the resignation letter so that you can go to the BJP office and get the draft," Singh said sarcastically.

Who is Narayana Gowda, the activist behind pro-Kannada protest in Bengaluru?

Bengaluru: TA Narayana Gowda and 29 of his associates were arrested in Bengaluru after their pro-Kannada protest turned violent on Wednesday. They have been sent to judicial custody after they were produced in

the court. The activists of the Karnataka Rakshana Vedike went on a rampage in Bengaluru damaging signboards of shops not written in Kannada. The vandalism once again brought the language debate to the lime-

light with Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah promising an ordinance to make 60% Kannada mandatory on signboards. Amid the row, social media users questioned Narayana Gowda's proximity to

the Congress leadership. TA Narayana Gowda and his associates have been sent to jail for vandalising in Bengaluru. TA Narayana Gowda and his associates have been sent to jail for vandalising in Bengaluru.

Kotak gives 'financial guide' on making India a \$30 trillion economy by 2047



New Delhi India is closing the year 2023 as the fifth largest economy in the world, with a GDP of over \$3.6 trillion. Banker and financial expert Uday Kotak has given his advice on how India can remain on track to become the largest economy in the world. Kotak highlighted that if this rate is kept stable, India will become a \$30 trillion economy by the year 2047. As part of his "year end musings", Uday Kotak on X published a financial guide to make India a \$30 trillion economy by the year 2047, which is more than the current GDP of the United States. To achieve this, India will have to record 9 percent annual growth, he said. Kotak wrote on X, "In the early 80s, the Indian saver had low confidence in financial assets versus gold and land. Slowly the saver moved some parts to bank deposits, UTI and LIC." He further said, "Even in the 90s, investing in equities was considered "speculative". Hence companies looking for capital went to the foreign institutional investor (FII). FIIs saw potential and bought into companies while the Indian saver stayed away. Companies raised capital through the less known Luxembourg stock exchange. India's capital market was being exported."

Uday Kotak on 'creating sustained growth' in India Uday Kotak, who is the founder of the Kotak Mahindra Bank, highlighted seven main points to make India's economy grow steadily across the coming decade, which focused on increasing investment and reducing debt.

1,70,000 'Ayushman Arogya Mandir' built in country: Mandaviya

New Delhi

The Union Minister of Health and Family Welfare was speaking after laying the foundation stone for two critical care blocks and BSL-3 labs in Vijayawada under the PM Ayushman Bharat Health Infrastructure Mission (PM-ABHIM) scheme. Mandaviya also inaugurated seven Integrated Public Health Laboratory (IPHL) labs at Old Government General



Hospital. The pan-India health infrastructure strengthening scheme—PM ABHIM—was launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in October 2021. It aims to produce

robust outcomes in Public Health leapfrogging India to one of the most advanced countries in the world in terms of management of Public Health outbreaks. Speaking on the occasion, the Health Minister said that PM Modi looked at the health sector with a holistic approach. "If a society is healthy, it ushers the country into a prosperous nation. And therefore, PM Modi looked at the health sector with a holistic approach," Mandaviya said.

The Union Health Minister said that today there is one Ayushman Arogya Mandir per five to six thousand people.

CM Yogi takes stock of development work prior to PM Modi's arrival in Ayodhya

Ayodhya: Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath took stock of development works in Ayodhya ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit. This marks his third visit to Ayodhya this month, with previous visits on December 2 and December 21, during which he offered prayers at various temples. CM Yogi visited and worshipped at Hanumangarhi and Ramlala and prayed for the well-being and



prosperity of Uttar Pradesh. Upon reaching Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, the Chief Minister admired the beautifully adorned surroundings and even took a selfie with the veena. He greeted the public and then observed the Ram Path. The Chief

Minister also provided necessary instructions to the administrative officials. During his visit to the Ram Path, the Chief Minister interacted with women, elderly individuals, and children present there. The atmosphere resonated with the chanting of 'Jai Shri Ram.' The Chief Minister also inspected the Ayodhya Dham Railway Station. Before the arrival of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Indian Navy unveils new Shivaji-inspired designs of epaulettes for top officers

New Delhi

The Indian Navy on Friday unveiled the new design of epaulettes that officers will wear, drawing inspiration from Rajmudra of Chhatrapati Shivaji. Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the introduction of the new design during the Navy Day



address on December 4 at Vice Admiral and Rear Admiral – the top three positions in the naval forces. The reflection of the Maratha ruler's maritime legacy in new

epaulettes, a shoulder piece that signals an officer's rank, is an attempt to leave the mentality of slavery, which the current design feature — Nelson's Ring, a colonial legacy.

"Indian Navy proudly unveils the new Design of Admirals' Epaulettes.

TDP has consistently stood by BC community: Nara Lokesh

Guntur (Andhra Pradesh)

Telugu Desam Party (TDP) National General Secretary Nara Lokesh emphasised the pivotal role of his party in securing rights of the Backward Classes (BCs) and asserted that the TDP has consistently stood by the BC community throughout its history while addressing the media in Andhra Pradesh's Managalagiri on the eve of Jayahoo BC. Lokesh said that during the tenure of NTR, the TDP government played a crucial role in bringing BC communities into the political fold, implementing a significant milestone by allocating 24 per cent reservation for them.

Ram Mandir in Jan, Abu Dhabi temple in Feb: Shashi Tharoor's poll prediction

New Delhi

The inauguration of Ayodhya's Ram Temple on January 22 and then the event of BAPS Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi will set the stage for the 2024 election, Congress MP Shashi Tharoor said predicting that the election dates will be called very soon thereafter. The message is clear for 2024 that Narendra Modi is a Hindu Hriday Samrat, Tharoor said asking what happened to achhe din. The Ram Temple inauguration on January 22 has already become a political flashpoint with the opposition being a divided house over whether to attend the event or not. PM Modi has accepted an invitation to inaugurate BAPS Hindu tem-



ple in Abu Dhabi -- which will be the largest Hindu temple in the United Arab Emirates. "In 2019, with that narrative collapsing in the wake of the disastrous demonetisation, the Pulwama terrorist attack gave Mr Modi the opportunity to convert the general election into a national security election. In 2024, it is clear the BJP will now revert to its core message and offer Narendra Modi to the nation as a Hindu Hriday Samrat," Tharoor said.

Guests will be presented copies of 'Ayodhya Darshan' from Geeta Press

Ayodhya/Gorakhpur

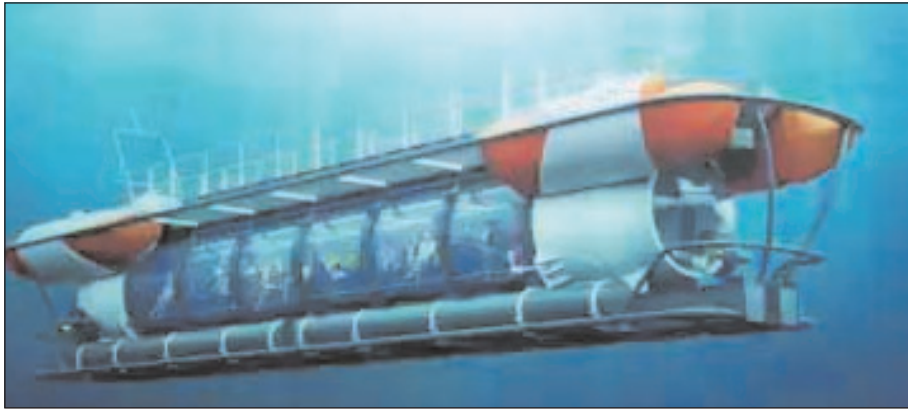
During the consecration ceremony of Ramlala on January 22 in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Governor Anandiben Patel, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, and other distinguished guests, including the RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat, will be presented

with the 'Ayodhya Darshan' publication by Geeta Press as a souvenir. Geeta Press, known for providing religious books at an affordable price, has taken the initiative to provide a holistic darshan of the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi in Ayodhya through this book. This book contains an introduc-

tion to the history, major temples, pilgrimages and cultural importance of Ayodhya. Preparations are underway at full throttle for the consecration of Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya. Geeta Press is set to make a significant contribution to the Pran Pratishtha offerings.

Gujarat govt. plunges into submarine project to spur tourism around lost city of Dwarka

NEW DELHI: On the lines of the submersible expedition to the Titanic shipwreck in the Atlantic Ocean, the Gujarat government is set to take a plunge into submarine tourism by signing an MoU with Mazgaon Dockyard Limited (MDL) for acquiring a submarine in order to offer unique underwater experiences in the pristine waters around Bet Dwarka, a small island off the coast of existing Dwarka, and to the lost city of Dwarka that has submerged in the Arabian Sea. The place is of immense importance in Hindu mythology as it is believed to be created by Lord Krishna. An official announcement regarding the submarine tourism project



is expected to be made during the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, which is scheduled to take place in Gandhinagar from January 10 next year. The collaborative effort of the Gujarat government and MDL is meant to develop a submarine that is likely to weigh around 35 tonnes and will have a carrying capacity of 30 passen-

gers. In this submarine, 24 passengers will sit in two rows and every seat will have a window view, so that one can easily see the natural beauty of the sea at a depth of 300 feet. MDL chairman and managing director Sanjeev Singhal said that while the MoU has been signed, the construction of the submarine will start only after

the final decision of the state government. "We have entered into an MoU with the government of Gujarat. We are still at the MoU level and until something is finalised, we cannot go ahead with the construction of the said submarine," he said. The mystery of Dwarka's existence, both as a thriving city and its eventual submersion,

has driven numerous archaeological expeditions along the Indian coastline. These expeditions brought forward submerged walls that were once a part of a fortified city, pottery, sculptures and artefacts.

Dwarka continues to be a popular centre of spiritual pilgrimage. The present-day Dwarka's famous Dwarkadhish Temple, also known as Jagat Mandir, stands as a prominent place of worship and landmark. The submarine tourism project will not only reshape Gujarat's tourism landscape, the state government's initiative also has the potential to boost employment opportunities and attract investments in the region.

MoS Rajeev Chandrashekar rebuts Washington Post, says report on Apple hack warnings has 'half facts, fully embellished'

New Delhi Union Minister of State for Information Technology Rajeev Chandrashekar has rebutted "The Washington Post" report on the Indian government allegedly targeting Apple after the company warned independent Indian journalists and opposition party politicians that government hackers may have tried to break into their iPhones and called it "half facts, fully embellished". The Union Minister further called the report "terrible" and "tiresome". Taking it on his social media X, Rajiv Chandrashekar stated, "Rebutting @washingtonpost's terrible storytelling is tiresome, but someone has to do it. This story is half facts, fully embellished."



In a story published on December 27 in association with Amnesty the Post had reported that certain journalists had been targeted with the spyware on their iPhones, with the latest identified case occurring in October. In its post on X, the Post claimed "A day after Apple warned independent Indian journalists and opposition party politicians in October that government hackers probably

tried to break into their iPhones, officials under Prime Minister Narendra Modi promptly took action against Apple." Following this, Chandrashekar raised concern and emphasised that the rest of the story includes Apple's response, which came on October 31. "Left out of the story is Apple's response on Oct 31-day of threat notifications," he posted. Further sharing the rest of the story, Chandrashekar quoted Apple's response, which said that Apple does not attribute the threat notifications to any specific state-sponsored attacker, adding that some Apple threat notifications may be false alarms or are not detected.

Option of filing review petition being explored': CPI (M) leader on SC upholding abrogation of Article 370

JAMMU: CPI(M) leader MY Tarigami on Thursday said that options are being explored including filing a review petition before the Supreme Court in regard to its judgment upholding the Centre's decision to abrogate the Article 370. The remarks came after a five-judge Constitution bench of the Supreme Court on December 11 unanimously upheld the Union government's 2019 decision to abrogate Article 370 of the Constitution which conferred the special status to Jammu and



Kashmir while pointing out that Article 370 is a "temporary provision". Speaking to ANI, CPI(M) leader MY Tarigami said, "In addition to being a petitioner representing my party, I am also a citizen and as a citizen, I would say I am not happy with the verdict."

We are exploring more options, including requesting the court to review the verdict, and restore the rights of the people of J-K." MY Tarigami further stated that the local citizens of Jammu and Kashmir were not involved in the consultation process by the Centre before abrogating the said article. "Article 370 became a bridge between Jammu and Kashmir and the rest part of India, it was abrogated without consulting the local citizens."

Tharoor advocates opportunities for youth in elections; hints at 2024 being his last contest

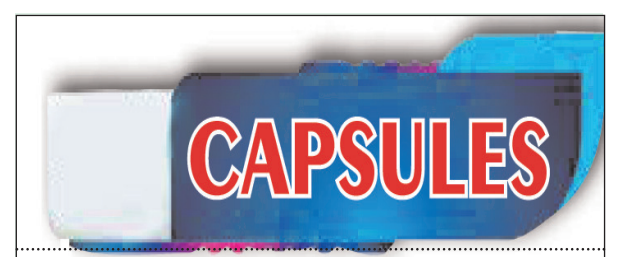


THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Congress leader and MP Shashi Tharoor, while speaking at a local Congress event, hinted that his next electoral battle in Thiruvananthapuram might be his last in this constituency. Although he emphasized the importance of making way for younger candidates, Tharoor noted the unpredictability of politics, suggesting nothing is set in stone. Addressing his future in politics, Tharoor remarked, "I do believe that at some point, the time comes to make room for younger people. And that's my thinking". He added, however, "In politics, there is another slogan which is 'never say never'". "If Govt won't listen to opposition then..":

Shashi Tharoor as INDIA bloc gears up to protest against Centre This statement came in response to his comments on a TV show where he indicated that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections could be his last contest from Thiruvananthapuram. Clarifying his stance, he said, "I didn't say never, I said I think it will be my last election." Tharoor expressed his commitment to contesting the upcoming polls with full dedication, treating it as potentially his last campaign in Thiruvananthapuram. Having entered politics over a decade ago, Tharoor marked his parliamentary debut with a significant victory in the 2009 general elections from Thiruvananthapuram.

Four Covid deaths, 702 fresh cases in a day

NEW DELHI: India recorded four more deaths due to Covid-19 in one day — one each from Karnataka, Kerala, Bengal and Delhi — while the daily tally of infections stood at 702, the health ministry said. On December 22, India had recorded 752 new cases of Covid-19 in a day. As reported by TOI on Thursday, the two deaths reported in Maharashtra were added to its tally of Wednesday. The current surge in Covid-19 cases is suspected to be caused by JN.1, a new sub-variant of SARS-CoV2, which was first detected in Kerala in India on December 8. It has been detected in eight other states of Gujarat, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Telangana, & Delhi.



Assam CM Himanta Sarma apologises for controversial post on role of 'Brahmin-Shudras'

NEW DELHI: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma issued an apology after his now-deleted post on social media platform X sparked accusations of promoting caste division from various opposition leaders. In the post, Sarma claimed that according to the Gita, it is the duty of the Shudras to serve the other three castes—Brahmins, Kshatriyas, and Vaishyas. This sparked a massive row, with opposition leaders denouncing what they called the "BJP's manuvadi ideology," and Owaisi specifically criticizing Hindutva for being contrary to principles of liberty, equality, fraternity and justice. Facing mounting criticism, Himanta Biswa Sarma issued an apology on Thursday, acknowledging the mistake in translation. He clarified that the post was based on an incorrect translation of a sloka from the Bhagavad Gita. Sarma promptly deleted the post as he realized the error and emphasized that the state of Assam reflects a casteless society, attributing it to the reform movement led by Mahapurush Srimanta Sankardeva. In his statement, the Assam chief minister explained that he follows a routine of uploading one sloka from the Bhagavad Gita every morning on his social media handles. He expressed regret for any offense caused by the deleted post and extended a sincere apology to those who may have been affected.



IAF Chief visits two frontline operational bases in western sector

NEW DELHI: The Chief of Air Staff (CAS) Air Chief Marshal VR Chaudhari of the Indian Air Force visited two frontline operational bases in the western sector, the IAF said in a statement. The IAF chief was briefed on the operational readiness of the bases, the statement said. During his interaction with air warriors, he complimented them for

their professionalism and exhorted them to maintain their vigil to guard the nation's skies, it added. Earlier, On December 22, the Air Chief while addressing the 20th Subroto Mukerjee Seminar at the Manekshaw Centre in New Delhi emphasised India's proactive role in raising the concerns of the countries of Global South. He spoke

on the relevance of air power and the need for IAF to act as a catalyst for progress, fostering strategic partnerships and contributing to the collective advancement of the Global South. IAF's increased footprint during regular training engagements with partner nations has resulted in sharing of best practices in operations and maintenance.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's flight to Delhi diverted due to low visibility

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's flight from Nagpur to Delhi was rerouted to Jaipur on Thursday night due to low visibility at the Delhi Airport. The Delhi-NCR region continued to face dense fog on Friday as the India Meteorological Department (IMD) forecasted similar conditions for Saturday. The adverse weather conditions have significantly impacted flight operations at the Delhi airport, with approximately 60 flights experiencing diversions and delays during this

period. According to airport sources, between the early hours of December 25 and December 28, a total of 58 flights were diverted, predominantly those operated by domestic carriers. The primary reason cited for these diversions was the inclement weather conditions, with pilots reportedly not trained to operate flights in low visibility situations. The aviation sector was not the only one affected, as reduced visibility also affected a total of 22 Delhi-bound trains that experienced delays.

Retired judge pushing some names led to no collegium meeting for 2 months?

NEW DELHI: It was no surprise that soon after retirement, Justice Sanjay Kishan Kaul termed the collegium system of selecting constitutional court judges as not the best mechanism even though he had vigorously and successfully pushed many names as part of the Supreme Court and high court collegiums. Judiciary insiders said his apparent disillusionment probably stemmed from his failure to push through the appointment of an advocate as judge of J&K HC, elevation of a Madhya Pradesh HC judge to SC, and supersession of the most sen-



ior Delhi HC judge for appointment as SC judge or as an HC chief justice. These had met with resistance from all other members of the collegium. To avoid embarrassment, the CJ tactically refrained from holding collegium meetings after November 6. On November 6, the collegium headed by CJ D

Y Chandrachud and including Justices Sanjiv Khanna, B R Gavai and Surya Kant, besides Justice Kaul, had recommended three names for appointment as SC judges. Coming into the SC collegium during Justice N V Ramana's tenure as CJ, Justice Kaul was regarded as a person with strong views about candidates

to be selected for appointment as judges and chief justices of HCs and insisted on appointment of those whom he suggested and vigorously pushed for recommending their names irrespective of reservations from other collegium members, SC sources told. Having succeeded in pushing such candidates for judgeship on the administrative side through the collegium system, he had, on the judicial side, taken up the task of goading, to many it seemed coercing, the Union government to expeditiously appoint them as HC judges.

9-year-old girl found dead in apartment complex in Karnataka

BENGALURU: A nine-year-old girl was found under mysterious circumstances inside the swimming pool of Prestige Lakeside Habitat apartment, off the Varthur-Gunjur Road in the city's tech corridor, on Thursday night. The victim has been identified as Manasa, daughter of private company employee Rajesh. Rajesh and his family reside in tower 17 in the apartment. She was a fourth standard student at a private school. According to the complaint filed by Rakesh with Varthur police, he suspects that his daughter died of drowning after she accidentally fell into the swimming pool around 7.30 pm. He got to know about the incident around 8 pm. Manasa was playing with a few other children staying in the apartment when the incident happened. The girl was rushed to a nearby private hospital in an ambulance. The doctors upon examination declared her brought dead.

Ayodhya will be world's biggest site of Hindutva: Sri Ram Research Centre head

Ayodhya

Chairman of Sri Ram Research Centre, Ajay Pratap Singh, on Friday said that Ayodhya will be the biggest site of Hindutva at the international level. The head of the lone research centre on Lord Ram said that no one ever imagined that Ayodhya, which has been neglected for the past 20 years, would take the form of such a 'big city'. "Unimaginable. We had never thought that Ayodhya, which has been neglected for the past 20 years, would take the form of such a big city today. I think that Ayodhya will be the biggest site of Hindutva at the international level," Ajay Pratap Singh said on the



consecration ceremony of Lord Ram Temple here on January 22. The research centre, also known as Ram Shodh Peeth, in the temple city's Rammanohar Lohia Avadh University, was established in 2001 and it works to unearth any fact about Lord Ram hidden in history. "The Ram

Shodh Peeth was established in 2001, this is the only research centre on Lord Ram in India. We are doing research on Lord Ram here. Ram had given the message of harmony. Our work is to unearth any historically hidden fact and make people aware of it," he told ANI. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi is set to attend the consecration ceremony of the Ram Temple on January 22. Preparations are underway in full swing for the event, which will draw dignitaries and people from all walks of life. As per temple officials, the consecration ceremony will be held over a span of seven days starting on January 16. On January 16, the host appointed by the temple trust, Shri Ram Janmbhoomi Teerth Kshetra, will conduct the atonement ceremony. The 'Dashvidh' bath, Vishnu worship, and offering to cows will be held on the banks of the Saryu River. Following that, on January 17, a procession carrying the

idol of Lord Ram in his child-like form (Ram Lalla) will reach Ayodhya. Devotees carrying Saryu water in Mangal Kalash will be reaching the Ram Janmbhoomi temple. On January 18, formal rituals will kick off with the Ganesh Ambika puja, Varun puja, Matrika puja, Brahmin Varan, and Vastu Puja. On January 19, the holy fire will be lit, followed by the establishment of 'Navagraha' and a 'havan' (holy ritual surrounding the fire). The sanctum sanctorum of the Ram Janmbhoomi temple will be washed with Saryu water on January 20, after which the Vaastu Shanti and 'Annadhivas' rituals will take place.

Cases of lobbing of grenades cracked with arrest of perpetrators: Assam DGP

Guwahati: Director General of Police G P Singh, in a post on X, said, "In an excellent operation lasting weeks, the three crimes of grenade lobbing by a banned organisation in Tinsukia, Sivasagar and Jorhat have been cracked and perpetrators arrested and motorcycles used recovered." "People instigating these perpetrators through online platforms have also been identified and would be brought to book whichever corner they are in. The evidence would be presented in the appropriate court of law in due course," he added. The DGP said that the Assam Police remain steadfast in their resolve to protect the people of the state from all violent crimes at all personal and professional costs, and he

complimented every officer and men associated with the operations. Two persons allegedly involved in the lobbing of a grenade near an army camp in Jorhat town have been separately arrested from Moran in Dibrugarh district and Titabor in Jorhat district and the motorcycle they had used in the crime has been seized, another police officer said. Earlier, a 24-year-old man identified as Dipankar Gogoi allegedly died by suicide after he was picked up for questioning by the police several times after the blast as he was earlier associated with the outfit, a charge subsequently denied by his family. Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma had ordered an additional chief secretary-level inquiry while the DGP

had directed the IGP (Eastern Range) to conduct an inquiry into the incident. The ULFA(I) claimed responsibility for the recent grenade attacks in Tinsukia, Sivasagar and Jorhat, stating those were carried out in response to the 'arrogance' of the DGP Singh, who was "trying to establish the outfit's demand as a law and order problem and not a political issue". The DGP had in response to the ULFA(I)'s allegations said that "they always refer to me and if they have a cause with me, they can always target me. I live in Kahilipara and my office (DGP headquarters) is in Ulubari, (both in Guwahati). They can come and target me. Why are they harassing the common people by lobbing a grenade here and there".

Just one runway for low visibility landings at Delhi airport adds to flight delays across India

NEW DELHI: The mild winter has not seen Delhiites shivering yet, but 2-3 days of dense fog has left travellers across India breaking out in a cold sweat. The four-airstrip IGI Airport, as of now, has only one CAT-III runway where planes can land during very low visibility. The main warhorse 28/10 runway is shut for repairs. As airlines have not rostered enough low-visibility operation-trained crew, the combined effect of the two factors

has led to delays and diversions at Delhi, India's busiest aviation hub, on dense fog days. Once an aircraft is delayed here, other flights it has to operate across the airline's network that day face delays or even cancellations. For example, a family was supposed to fly out of Goa Mopa to Mumbai on a 1 pm flight on Tuesday. The incoming aircraft from Delhi was delayed so much that they finally took off for their destination at 7.30 pm,

according to an explanation given by the crew while departing from Goa. The massive handicap at IGI is contributing big time to network-wide delays. The other reasons are fog at other airports, airlines not deploying the right planes and crew for low-visibility landings and usual engineering issues. According to the Union aviation ministry, the overall on-time performance of airlines on foggy December 26, was 54.5% for IndiGo,

Brainbees Solutions Limited Files DRHP With Sebi

Gurugram: Brainbees Solutions Limited (FirstCry.com), India's largest multi-channel retailing platform for Mothers', Babies' and Kids' products, in terms of GMV, for the year ending December 2022, has filed its Draft Red Herring Prospectus ("DRHP") with market regulator Securities and Exchange Board of India ("SEBI"). The public offering comprises a fresh issue of Equity Shares aggregating up to ₹18,160.00 million and an offer for sale of up to 54,391,592 Equity Shares by selling shareholders. The offer for sale comprises of up to 20,318,050 Equity Shares by SVF Frog (Cayman) Ltd, up to 2,806,174 Equity Shares by Mahindra & Mahindra Limited, up to 8,601,292 Equity Shares by PI Opportunities Fund-1, up to 3,899,525 Equity Shares by TPG Growth V SF Markets Pte. Ltd., up to 3,014,233 Equity Shares by NewQuest Asia Investments III Limited, up to 2,523,280 Equity Shares by Apricot

Investments Limited, up to 2,404,344 by Valiant Mauritius Partners FDI Limited, up to 837,676 Equity Shares by TIMF Holdings (Mauritius), up to 837,676 Equity Shares by Think India Opportunities Master Fund LP (Cayman) and up to 616,945 Equity Shares by Schroders Capital Private Equity Asia Mauritius II Limited (Corporate Selling Shareholders). The company proposes to utilize the Net Proceeds Up to ₹18,160.00 million from the offer towards funding the expenditure for setting up new modern stores, a warehouse and lease payments for our existing identified modern stores in India, towards funding the investment in its subsidiary, FirstCry Trading for overseas expansion by setting up new modern stores and warehouses in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia ("KSA"), towards funding the investment in its subsidiary, GlobalBees Brands towards acquisition of additional stake in its indirect subsidiaries.

Special Amrit Bharat Express trip from Ayodhya to flagged off on December 30

Delhi : The brand new Amrit Bharat Express, which has been designed primarily to cater to the needs of migrant workers, is set for its debut one-time special run between Ayodhya, the birth place of Lord Ram, and Darbhanga via Sitamarhi (Sita's birthplace) in Bihar. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to flag off the train on December 30 when he is scheduled to launch a Vande Bharat express between Ayodhya and Delhi, and inaugurate a host of projects in the holy city. Though the regular service of the first Amrit Bharat Express will be between Delhi and Darbhanga, the special run between Ayodhya and Darbhanga is significant considering that the train has been designed for people who travel long distance in search of work, amplifying the government's thrust to make the life of poor better.



Gujarat Congress MP slams alcohol ban exemption order

Delhi : Congress MP from Gujarat, Shaktisinh Gohil has slammed the state government after it issued an order exempting employees, officials, and visitors in Gift City from the alcohol ban. In a video message posted on his official X account, Gohil said the order will have a negative impact on the state of Gujarat. "In Gandhinagar's Gift City, the alcohol ban is being lifted, and it's been decided to remove the prohibition. Now people will consume it, and it will impact Gujarat in a negative way," the Congress MP said. "No idea what kind of profit the Gujarat government is seeing in this," Gohil could be heard saying in the video. The Gujarat government allowed the consumption of alcohol at hotels, restaurants and clubs offering "wine and dine" service in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in the Gandhinagar district. All individuals employed in the dry state Gujarat's GIFT City and authorised visitors will be allowed to consume alcoholic beverages within the designated area, the order stated. However, as per the latest notification, hotels and restaurants will not be allowed to sell liquor bottles.

Darjeeling orange farmers in deep crisis as high taxes and market floods hinder exports

Siliguri (West Bengal) : Once a golden treasure, the Darjeeling orange is facing a bitter crisis. Traders in Siliguri, the heart of the fruit trade, are staring at massive losses due to a drastic drop in production. This fragrant jewel of North Bengal, known for its captivating taste and aroma, is now struggling to survive. With production plummeting to just 20%, the future of this iconic fruit hangs in the balance. North Bengal counted crores of rupees with the trading of oranges from November to January every year. Many traders from across the country used to gather at the Regulated market, the biggest wholesale market in the Northeast situated in Siliguri under the Darjeeling district of West Bengal to get stock of the seasonal fruit as much as they can. Meanwhile, the situation has changed over the last couple of years. The production level of oranges in Darjeeling, Kurseong and Kalimpong has gone down. According to the traders in Siliguri, the production of oranges has gone down to 20 per cent. They claimed due to the lack of maintenance and non-cooperation of the Government, the orange production level has gone down. Adam Singh Giri, a farmer from Soreng, Darjeeling at the regulated market said, "They are not getting any assistance from the government. So trying to maintain the orange trees by themselves and a few from the farmers club, but due to the non-availability of organic fertilizers, the farmers became helpless. They also requested the government to look into it, otherwise, the fruits will have vanished". Binod Rastogi, an orange trader from a regulated market in Siliguri said, "The orange market is now almost finished."

Karnataka Congress govt reverses BJP regime's hijab 'curbs'

Delhi : Nearly two years after the then BJP government issued an order barring students from deviating from the dress code prescribed by management of schools and colleges, and effectively proscribed wearing of hijab on campuses, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Friday said he has directed authorities to reverse that directive. Making this announcement while addressing a gathering at Muslim-dominated Kavalanda in Mysuru, the CM said choice of dress and food is personal.

13 charred to death in MP's Guna as bus hits truck, catches fire

BHOPAL: At least 13 people were charred to death and 14 injured after a passenger bus caught fire following a head-on collision with a dumper truck on the outskirts of MP's Guna on Wednesday night. Collector Tarun Rathi had told around midnight that five bodies had been recovered and the

toll was likely to increase. "I am not in a position to comment on the exact number of deaths. Our teams are still working," he said. Details were still sketchy but at 1am, the death toll from the accident stood at 13. The bus had expired insurance and fitness certificates, say officials.

It's not yet known what caused the head-on collision. The bus had just left Guna city limits and was headed for Aron, located around 40km away, when it was hit by a dumper around 8.30pm. The collision sent the bus careening off the road and it toppled on its side. The fire started almost instantly.

Merchant navy sailor from Dehradun goes missing while at sea; family suspects kidnap

DEHRADUN: Ankit Saklani, 34, a merchant navy sailor from Nehru Gram, Dehradun, has been missing for 10 days while sailing on the Russia to Turkiye route. On December 18, the ship's staff conveyed to his family Ankit "killed himself by jumping into the sea", but his family believes he might have been "kidnapped or murdered".

Talking to , Dehradun SSP Ajai Singh said family members of Ankit have approached him in the matter with their complaint. "We have assured them of all support. At the same time, I asked them to visit the registered office of the shipping firm in Mumbai and contact the staff and owners to make the picture clear," he said. Singh said the case was linked to Mumbai and the incident took place in international waters, advising family members of Ankit to contact the Mumbai DCP. "I have written to the DCP sharing details of the case and requested him to look into it. The initial probe can be handled by the Mumbai police. If any step is not taken by them, we will take up the matter on our own."

Smriti Irani on period leaves: 'Why should employer know women's menstrual cycle'

Delhi : Minister of Women and Child Development Smriti Irani defended her "menstruation not handicap" remark, asking, "Why should a woman's menstrual cycle be known to her employer". Irani said that by making menstrual leave a mandate, she does not want women to face discrimination and harassment at the workplace over it. She said, "For you to mandate (menstrual leave across all segments) and make it lawfully implemented, people have to report implementation. Imagine a scenario in the private

sector. When somebody has to implement it, your HR guy has to know, your accounts guy has to know...why should a women's menstrual cycle be known to the employer. Imagine if it's a single woman...who chooses not to take those leaves that she is supposed to be granted.

Can you imagine the harassment that women will have to face...Imagine a floor with 20,000 women... we are creating new barriers for discriminating against women," Smriti Irani said. Irani, however, noted that such leaves are "part of the

law, but it is only under the context of medical leaves".

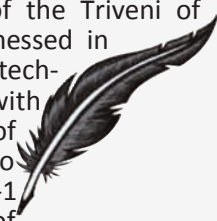
She said, "Under the Occupational safety and health standard rules of 2020, a medical leave is already provided for".

Irani went on to respond to the critics who said some women have to suffer severe pain during the menstrual cycle. She said, "If you look at challenge with regard to severe pain, it's an indication of hormonal and chemical imbalance or (it has) a genetic inclination to it...which means you need a doctor immediately.."

Editorial

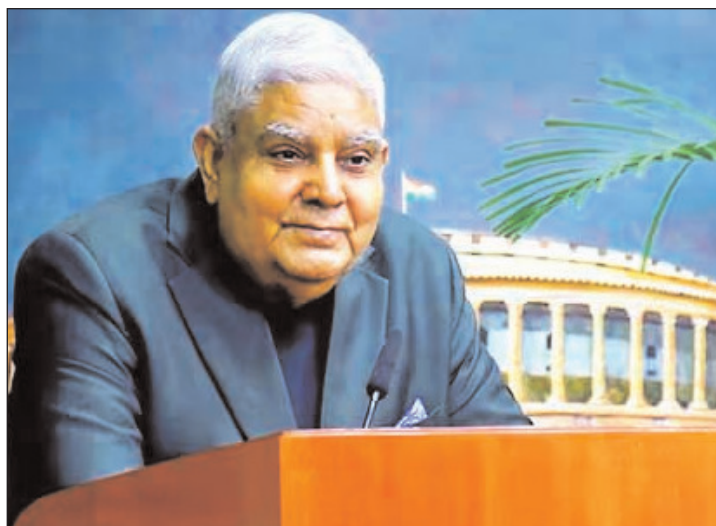
How India is experiencing a silent 'Triveni' revolution in politics, science and civilisation

Revolutions are mostly bloody and abrupt. There is a seething undercurrent in the people and when a man of the hour appears, not generally by design but through a confluence of coincidences and circumstances, he sets off cataclysmic changes that overturn many, if not most, of the instrumentalities of the ancien régime. Modern history, and by that I mean the period over the last 500 years, has witnessed many such violent changes that fundamentally changed the lives of common people. Typical examples are the French, American and Russian Revolutions. Other political changes in the last century that have not been given this 'revolution' epithet would certainly qualify for it, for example the regime changes in Turkey, China, Iran, Afghanistan and the USSR. Other revolutions are more silent but their effects are as momentous. These, for the most part, are somewhat apolitical—the Industrial Revolution and the Silicon Revolution being the most important ones in recent times. The independence of India was a political event of course but it was relatively bloodless except for the fallout of the partition. Its significance lay in that it triggered a chain reaction in Asia and Africa that resulted in the dismantling of Europe's 500 year colonial enterprise, leading eventually to its ongoing economic collapse. In post-independence India we have associated colours like green, white, pink and blue with various revolutions that have had transformational economic impacts and improved the quality of life for countless millions. India is witnessing another silent revolution today, and one that may be more accurately termed a triple revolution, a Triveni moment as it were. Political, economic and civilisational streams of thought and action have intertwined such that India is becoming Bharat—a new, more confident and self-assured nation, which is preparing for its Amrit Kaal moment by, let us say, 2047. India's present spurt in economic growth is an outcome of many facilitating financial and fiscal systems being overhauled and reimagined, laying the foundation for sustained increases in prosperity. Digital payments, in which we are clearly the world leader, and the digital India initiative which has seen its moment in the G20 declaration, are clearly moves made by a country that can project itself confidently to be the author of the next generation of global digital public architecture and become the world's third largest economy by say, 2030. Politically, we have matured considerably since 2014, as the merits of our constitution have begun to sink in because a single party, the Bharatiya Janata Party, has had a simple majority in the Lok Sabha for nearly a decade now. The confusing coalition era, where sleazy compromises between coalition partners were mistakenly, even deliberately, conflated with an idea that finds no mention in our constitution—federalism—is an easily forgotten nightmare. A majority-driven parliamentary democracy, which is what the makers of our constitution envisaged for us, has finally taken root in our country, even as we will surely witness the political consolidation of a national alternative to the BJP and the decline and disappearance of small, hereditary, regional parties which have hitherto enjoyed undeserved power and pelf through their suffocating control of small caste and sectarian groups in a corruption-ridden pseudo-socialist scarcity economy. An unexpected focussing of the Triveni of ideas and actions was witnessed in 2023, in the area of science, technology and engineering, with the successful completion of the Chandrayaan-3 mission to the moon, and the Aditya L-1 mission for the observation of the solar corona.



Mimicry row: Why Vice President should have taken the incident in his stride

My first interaction with Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar was both pleasant and surprising. He was then the Governor of West Bengal. I was to speak in Kolkata at the renowned institution, Birla Academy of Art and Culture, run by the creative and ever-energetic Jayashree Mohta. The lecture was on my latest book, *Hinduism's Greatest Thinker*. A day before the event, Jayashree called me excitedly to say that Governor Dhankhar had confirmed his presence at the talk, but because of other commitments, would not stay only for a few minutes. My talk was online, on a big screen put at the Birla Academy. Dhankhar, Jayashree told me later, did not leave early, as he had said, but stayed on for the entire lecture, which went on for over an hour. She was surprised and I was glad, and I regretted the opportunity to thank him personally. Sometime after this, when he had become the Vice President (VP), there was a function at his residence where he was launching a new book by Karan Singh on Hinduism, to which I was invited. This was the first time I was physically meeting Dhankhar Saheb. But I was taken aback by his warmth.



He referred to me and my books more than once while speaking at the launch, and at the tea that followed, not only talked with me at great length, but also asked his official photographer to take a picture of us together and directed his staff to arrange a separate meeting with me later. I mention the above incidents to show that Dhankhar is a pleasant and unassuming person, with a lively interest in subjects beyond the usual ken of politicians, a keen sense of humour and a ready and hearty laugh. I was surprised, therefore, that he took such umbrage at Trinamool Congress MP Kalyan Banerjee's caricature of him and dubbed it as an insult to his high constitutional office. Kalyan's mim-

icry was done not on the floor of the House—where it would have been objectionable and a contempt of the Chair—but outside, where MPs suspended from both Houses of Parliament had gathered in protest. At one level, the attempt by the Speaker and the VP (as chair of the Rajya Sabha), to end the cacophonous vandalism that has become routine in our Parliament, is justified. But at another, it is a well-established tradition that the responsibility to run the House lies primarily with the Treasury benches. The mass expulsion of such a large number of MPs for their insistence that Home Minister Amit Shah make a statement in Parliament on the very serious breach of security in Parliament on 13

December—with potential lethal consequences—was not unreasonable. In fact, presiding officers of both the Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha should have themselves endorsed this request. The anger of Opposition MPs thus had a context. In any democracy, satire on politicians is par for the course. In our own country, eminent cartoonists like K Shankar Pillai (1902-89), routinely lampooned political leaders, including, most prominently, prime minister Jawaharlal Nehru himself. In fact, the popular publication, *Shankar's Weekly*, had 400 cartoons on Nehru, none of which could remotely be called complimentary. This tradition—and freedom—to satirise politicians, was continued in the iconic cartoons of RK Laxman, Unny and Abu Abraham. In fact, Abu became famous for his audacious cartoon during the Emergency—which somehow escaped the draconian censorship laws then—where he showed president Fakhruddin Ali Ahmed, signing an Ordinance, without even reading it while luxuriating in a tub at the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Fakhruddin was holding a constitutional post but was not spared for having become a rubber-

stamp president, who just did the bidding of prime minister Indira Gandhi.

In other genuine democracies, particularly the UK and the USA, no high political office is insulated from the excoriating lampooning by writers, cartoonists and stand-up comics. In India, the advent of stand-up comics started as a professional and highly popular genre around 2010, with pioneers like Vir Das, and spread like wildfire. In a way, the Indian stand-up comics, were only following a well-established theatrical tradition, where, for instance, in the 14th century Jaydesvara Bhattacharya's explosive play, *Hasyarnava Prahasanam*, fearlessly mocked the king and his inept courtiers. More recently, we have classics like Srilal Shukla's Raag Darbari (1968), and OP Vijayan's, *The Saga of Dharmapuri*, which were fearless and scathing satires on the politically powerful. I am perturbed, therefore, that our politicians have become so thin-skinned about jokes cracked at their expense. Prime Minister Narendra Modi himself, on the floor of the House, mimicked Rahul Gandhi, and while Rahul himself and the Congress may have found it distasteful.

How Mehmood is caught in the legal crossfire of Pakistani politics

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party's Vice Chairman and former foreign minister Shah Mehmood Qureshi before being arrested by the police officials. Qureshi, who was last week granted bail in the cipher case by the Supreme Court, was re-arrested outside the Adiala jail on 27 December 2023. In the ever-evolving landscape of Pakistani politics, the recent events surrounding Shah Mehmood Qureshi, former foreign minister and a key figure in Imran Khan's party, have taken centre stage. From legal battles to dramatic arrests, the political drama in Pakistan seems to be reaching new heights. Shah Mehmood Qureshi, a close associate of former prime minister Imran Khan, finds himself entangled

in a web of legal troubles. Recently granted bail in the cipher case by Pakistan's Supreme Court, Qureshi's freedom was short-lived. Caught outside the Rawalpindi jail, he was re-arrested in connection with another case. The manner of his arrest, marked by force and rough handling, raises eyebrows, especially considering his previous role as a representative of Pakistan on the international stage. Imran Khan, the head of the party to which Qureshi belongs, is facing a staggering 150 cases. Last week, Khan was granted bail, but his legal woes persist. His party's strategy appears to hinge on legal manoeuvring, seeking relief from the courts to enable him to contest the upcoming elections. However, the courts, so

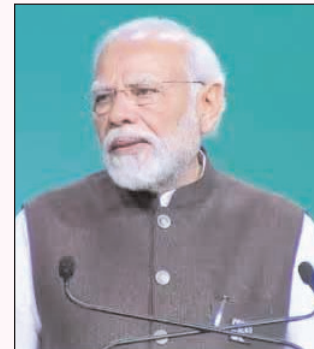
far, have not been entirely accommodating.

Legal gambit

Khan's legal team approached Pakistan's Supreme Court with a specific demand—to suspend Khan's conviction in the Toshakhana case, which involves allegations of corruption, accusing Khan of stealing from the state treasury. The party argues that suspending the conviction is crucial for Khan's participation in the forthcoming elections. However, the court deferred an immediate hearing and expressed reservations about the effectiveness of suspending the conviction due to the lingering election ban. In the complex world of Pakistani politics, rivalries add another layer of intrigue. Nawaz Sharif and his party,

COP28 highlights concerns of India, developing world towards sustainable transition

India, while remaining a strong supporter of climate action measures towards mitigation and adaptation, has rightly adopted a cautious approach during the 28th annual Conference of Parties (COP28) held in the UAE from November 30 to December 12, 2023. Although the COP28 initiated a number of historic climate action measures and commitments, the lack of clarity on the framework to ensure their successful implementation has remained a cause for concern for developing countries like India that are more vulnerable to climate change. The major historic development at the COP28 was the successful launch and operationalising of Loss and Damage Fund (LDF), which was first suggested way back in 1991. But, so far, it received only around USD 700 million funding commitments against the estimated requirement of about USD 150 billion per year with commitment to progressively increase the replenishment to USD 300 billion per year by 2030 as per the Report, *Taking Responsibility Towards a Fit-for-Purpose Loss and Damage Fund*, by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) released in November 2023. In addition, no clarity



Nevertheless, India has launched a green credit initiative and led the launch of Global River Cities Alliance at COP28 towards conservation and sustainable management of rivers. Another important first at COP28 decisions is acknowledgement of the fact that fossil fuels have been the cause for global warming. The final outcome report of the global stock take (GST) at COP28 indicated "transition away from fossil fuels by 2050", as the major oil producing countries, including the OPEC, opposed the term "phase-out of fossil fuels". Further, there were no clear time-schedule and targets for ensuring the smooth transition away from fossil fuels. At the same time, the outcome report calls for accelerating the efforts towards phase-down of unabated coal power. But, any further acceleration in phasing out of coal based power plants is a major cause for many emerging countries including India and China, as more than 60 per cent of their power generation is sourced from coal. Nevertheless, the proposal for no new coal based power plants without carbon capture and storage facilities was strongly opposed by developing economies including

Light, lean, agile: How US plans to counter Chinese threat in Indo-Pacific

On 6 and 9 August, 1945, as the propellers of the two B-29 Superfortress 'Enola Gay' and 'Bockscar' ominously whirred, Japan's history was about to be rewritten. Little Boy and Fat Man obliterated 70,000 Japanese in Hiroshima and another 46,000 in Nagasaki, respectively. The B-29s took off from Tinian, one of the four constituent municipalities of the Northern Mariana Islands (the overseas autonomous states of America), around 200 km north of Guam, a United States (US) territory in the Western Pacific.

In 1946, the US Air Force (USAF) abandoned Tinian, which, along with Saipan and Guam, housed fleets of B-29s during WWII. India raises objection with Sri Lanka, Maldives over inbound Chinese survey vessel. After 77 years, the USAF has reclaimed the 101 sq km island, whose six runways are covered with jungle, by requesting \$78 million from the Joe Biden government. America has started constructing "an extensive" facility at the Tinian North airfield and the Tinian International airfield, General

Kenneth Wilsbach, Commander of the US Pacific Air Forces, told Nikkei Asia last week. "If you pay attention in the next few months, you will see significant progress, especially at Tinian North. We'll be clearing that jungle between now and summertime," Wilsbach said.

Why US focused on Tinian

Once the Tinian mission is complete, it would boost the US military's firepower in the Indo-Pacific, which has the Naval Base and the Andersen Air Force Base on Guam and the secretive US Navy Support

Facility on the Indian Ocean's British atoll Diego Garcia. Clearly, the decision to reuse Tinian is to counter the rising Chinese threat and Beijing's muscle-flexing in the Indo-Pacific, which stretches from the US's West Coast to the eastern coast of Africa. In its 2023 annual report to Congress titled 'Military and Security Development Involving the People's Republic of China' (PRC), the US Department of Defence (DoD) stated that the 2022 National Defence Strategy identifies China as the "pacing challenge".

India's nuclear sector will power future space missions, says Isro chief



Mumbai: India's nuclear sector is set to fuel and power future space missions of the country, Isro chairman S Somanath said at Indian Institute of Technology-Bombay's Techfest. He said the space agency will also go for nuclear propulsion in collaboration with the department of atomic energy. Stating that two radioisotope heating units that were included in the propulsion module of Chandrayaan-3 on a trial basis worked flawlessly, Somanath said the atomic energy department was enthusiastic about the project. His statement

● Somanath said Isro is working on an Integrated Lunar Exploration Roadmap, which, among other things, envisages setting up a moonbase habitat at a lower cost, compared to other nations

assumes significance with global space agencies entering the nuclear power sector. He said the first phase of the Bharatiya Antariksh Station will be ready by 2028, while the entire facility will be completed in 2035. "It will be an international platform for collaborative research," he said,

adding that the space station will be a gateway for interplanetary missions, microgravity studies, space biology, medicine and research. Speaking on other projects, Somanath said Isro is working on an Integrated Lunar Exploration Roadmap, which, among other things, envisages setting up a moonbase habitat at a lower cost, compared to other nations. The lunar roadmap also includes a lunar sample return mission. Further, Isro is set to launch Xposat mission on new year's day to study Black Holes and neutron stars.

AAP, BJP lock horns over rejection of Delhi tableau

NEW DELHI: Aam Aadmi Party on Thursday accused the BJP-led Centre of scuttling Delhi government's plans of showcasing its health and education models at the Republic Day parade by rejecting its tableau in a political move.

Delhi government was not provided any reason for the exclusion, said AAP's chief national spokesperson Priyanka Kakkar at a press conference. "This decision is driven by politics. The Delhi government wanted to showcase its education and health model at the Republic Day parade. But Delhi and Punjab tableaux were excluded from selection," added Kakkar.



Hitting back, Delhi BJP secretary Bansuri Swaraj said one fails to understand AAP's hue as a specialised committee decided upon the proposals for Republic Day tableaux received from state governments and departments. "It is shameful that without telling reasons for rejection of their tableaux proposals the AAP leaders are politicising the

decision of a specialist committee," Swaraj added. Kakkar claimed that BJP-ruled states like Assam, Gujarat, and Uttar Pradesh have been given opportunities to showcase their tableaux continuously for the last five years. Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann had earlier hit out over non-inclusion of the state's tableau in the Republic Day parade.

MTP reform: LG gives nod to health dept's proposal...

New Delhi: Lieutenant governor VK Saxena has given his approval to a proposal of the department of health and family welfare to issue a notification regarding statutory forms under the Medical Termination of

Act, 2021, which provides for universal access to women to comprehensive abortion care and termination of certain pregnancies by registered medical practitioners (RMP). Saxena, however, expressed his "grave displeasure and

surprise" that the matter was presented for approval more than two years after the Parliament amended the MTP Act and the central government sent a communication to all states and union territories to notify them.

Delhi only 2nd state to adopt amendment: Saurabh Bharadwaj

● "I would request the LG to use his good offices to advise the governments of all states, apart from Odisha"



NEW DELHI: Health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj said on Thursday that Delhi was only second to Odisha in notifying the amended statutory forms under the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (Amendment) Act passed by the Parliament in 2021. Reacting to LG VK Saxena's observation that the file related to the gazette notification was placed more than two years after the central

government wrote to all states and Union territories in this regard, Bharadwaj added that he accepted the former's displeasure in a "good spirit". "It goes further in firming this elected government's resolve to be ahead of all other states/UTs, including all the states ruled by BJP. The government of NCT of

Delhi is behind just Odisha in issuing notification of the said statutory forms," Bharadwaj said, adding that the LG was apparently not informed about the fact till date. He said that the intention of the LG for the welfare of women was "commendable" and assured him of his government's commitment to providing "affordable and quality healthcare" to all citizens. He said that being a state subject, health falls directly under the purview of the elected government, which is sensitive to universal healthcare for all, including women. "I would request the LG to use his good offices to advise the governments of all states, apart from Odisha, to expedite the issuance of the said notification," Bharadwaj said.

Depts trade fire as HC says lake protection pivotal

Hyderabad:

Telangana high court on Thursday expressed serious concern over preservation of Ramanthapur lake and other water bodies even as GHMC, HMDA, irrigation and revenue departments were engaged in a blame game against each other over protecting the lakes, failing to stop rampant encroachments around them and fixing the full tank level. A bench of Chief Justice Alok Aradhe and Justice Anil Kumar, which heard an 18-



year-old plea of an OU professor, said that lake protection measures take precedence over everything else. "The professor also spoke about the need to fence the lake to protect it from encroachers," the bench said. The bench took up the cause of Hindi professor KV Vyas, who wrote

a letter (converted into a PIL) to the high court 18 years ago, highlighting the need to protect 532 lakes and 200 gardens in Hyderabad. While all the key departments blamed the revenue wing for the mess, the latter said the high court had given directions to GHMC, HMDA and irri-

gation department to notify the lake areas. Irked by the blame game, the bench sought to know who the competent authority was. Everyone pointed fingers at HMDA. At this juncture, the bench asked HMDA to explain and later gave time to the HMDA to appoint a new counsel. Vyas, in his letter, said that Ramanthapur lake area shrunk to seven acres from its original 34 acres, while the number of lakes had been reduced to 170 from 532.

72-yr-old from Kolkata state's 1st Covid casualty in 4 months

KOLKATA: Bengal on Thursday recorded its first Covid death in four months - one of four registered nationally in the last 24 hours - even as it logged 14 fresh cases, the highest single-day spike in months. Health department sources said the deceased was a 72-year-old Kolkata resident admitted at CMRI with multiple comorbidities. Hospital sources said Covid was an incidental finding. "The patient was brought in a very serious condition with severe cardiac issues and septic shock. He happened to test positive for Covid," the sources said. The last time the state reported a Covid death was in August, when three patients died on three consecutive days in Burdwan. The number of active Covid patients in Bengal now stands at 22, of whom at least 11 are admitted in hospitals. Most of them have



comorbidities. The ID Hospital at Beliaghata currently has two patients, both middle-aged women. "One is a 55-year-old patient with a kidney ailment who was referred by a private hospital in Salt Lake after testing Covid-positive. The other is a COPD patient, who has both malaria and Covid. Her condition is unstable," said a hospital official. "Like influenza, Covid-19 will persist with periodical uptick. The elderly and those with comorbidities are vulnerable and should adhere to protective measures," said pulmonologist Kausik Chaudhury, Covid-19

nodal officer at ID Hospital. An 85-year-old man admitted to Fortis, Anandapur, on Wednesday with fever, shortness of breath, low oxygen saturation and lower respiratory track infection tested positive for Covid on Thursday. "This is the second Covid patient we have admitted in the past few days. While we plan to discharge the other patient, the condition of the new patient is not stable," said a hospital official. In the last two days, Belle Vue Clinic admitted two Covid patients, both senior citizens with comorbidities.

Not just drunken driving vigil, drug abuse checks too on NYE

Hyderabad: This New Year eve, cops manning the streets of Hyderabad will not just be armed with breath analysers to crackdown on drunk drivers but they will also have on them hi-tech gadgets, to ensure that revellers aren't hitting the road after downing a dose of drugs. This first-of-its-kind enforcement drive in the city will be activated outside pubs, at traffic check-posts and even around farmhouses, cops said.

Two Hi-Tech Gadgets

In the last few days, the TS-Anti Narcotics Bureau (TS-NAB) has distributed two different kinds of gadgets to the three commissionerates of Hyderabad, Cyberabad and Rachakonda, as part of this drive against drugs. TS-NAB sleuths have bought 20 Drager Kits which can detect drugs in a person's body by testing his/her saliva sample. To add to that they have also sourced 100 Abbott Kits that's more accurate and use urine samples of a person to check for drugs. "It is for the commissionerates to decide where and how they want to use these kits. If there is an input about



drug abuse in a pub or at a rave party, police will reach the concerned place and conduct the test on the suspects by collecting saliva samples. We can ascertain the facts there and then," a senior officer of TS-NAB told. Even if the substance is flushed down in the washroom, which is the most common method used by accused to escape getting caught, police will make the suspects undergo the test to screen for evidence of drug use. A similar enforcement drive will be rolled out at traffic junctions, alongside drunken driving checks. Members of the clues team are expected to be stationed at junctions alongside traffic police, to conduct tests.

"Motorists will be picked based on suspicion and will be made to take the saliva test," the official added. Cops will also use Abbott Kits. "We want to use this test in front of doctors and make a scientific analysis," a police official said. Both the gadgets will not only give details of the drug used but also the amount consumed.

Destigmatisation

"We will keep family members of the drug abusers in the loop so that they can help the concerned undergo de-addiction. Apart from that, serious deliberation is being done to inform the institute if the abuser is a student or the employer. Our top priority is to make sure the abuser is not stigmatised, but the concerned persons can have surveillance on them during the de-addiction period and support them to avoid them becoming repeat offenders," official said. As per 54 A of the NDPS Act, once a drug abuser undergoes de-addiction sessions and periodically tests negative, the concerned person is treated as witness and no more as an accused.

BMC staffers turn sleuths, track down Dadar shops dumping waste on roads

Mumbai: Staffers of the BMC's solid waste management (SWM) department did a bit of sleuthing to catch hold of those who dump waste on roads and get away with it. Civic body staffers were often troubled by shopkeepers in Dadar (West) who dumped garbage from their shops on the roads after civic staffers were done with sweeping and cleaning in the mornings. Store owners often denied dumping the waste. The staffers thus decided to inspect the waste and found receipts of one cloth store and approached the owner, who then paid up a fine of Rs 200. "SWM staffers collect waste and sweep the roads and footpaths daily between 7am and 8.30am. Many of the shopkeepers open their stores between 9am and 10am. Thereafter, these shopkeepers just collect the waste they have generated in a plastic bag and throw it on the roads.

If poll bonds scrapped, cash may be back in play, fears EC

TEL AVIV: In the aftermath of the October 7 attacks carried out by Hamas in southern Israel, a horrifying pattern of sexual violence against women has come to light. The New York Times conducted a two-month investigation, uncovering distressing details that indicate sexual assault and mutilation at multiple locations targeted by the terrorists.

One of the victims, Gal Abdush, a mother of two from central Israel, disappeared from a rave that turned into a massacre site. A viral video shot by a woman searching for her missing friend showed Gal Abdush lying on the road, partially clothed, with her face burned



beyond recognition. Israeli police officials, based on video evidence, believe that Gal Abdush was raped, and her tragic story has become a symbol of the horrors inflicted upon Israeli women during the attacks.

The investigation identified at least seven locations where Israeli women and girls appear to have been sexually assaulted or mutilated.

Witnesses, medical personnel, soldiers, and rape counsellors were among the 150 people interviewed by The New York Times, providing a comprehensive picture of the widespread gender-based violence on October 7. The terror unfolded at the rave, military bases along the Gaza border, and Kibbutzim. Witnesses described graphic scenes of women being

raped and killed at different locations along Route 232, the highway where Gal Abdush's body was found. Volunteer medics and soldiers reported discovering more than 30 bodies of women and girls in a state similar to Gal Abdush's—legs spread, clothes torn off, and signs of abuse in their genital areas, according to the NYT. The report further states that The Times viewed disturbing photographs and videos, including one woman's corpse with nails driven into her thighs and groin.

Another video, provided by the Israeli military, showed two dead soldiers at a base near Gaza who

appeared to have been shot directly in their genital areas. Hamas has denied accusations of sexual violence, leading to outrage among Israeli activists. United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres and UN Women faced criticism for not acknowledging the accusations promptly, the NYT report stated.

The Israeli police, acknowledging challenges during the chaotic events of October 7, revealed they were not initially focused on collecting forensic evidence from women's bodies. Chaos, grief, and religious duties led to hasty burials, with many bodies remaining unexamined.

Israel troops ignored pleas for 'help' before hostage killings

JERUSALEM: Israeli soldiers ignored cries for "help" when they stormed a Gaza building holding three hostages just days before killing them by mistake, said a military investigation published on Thursday. The soldiers also heard "hostages" shouted in Hebrew on December 10, but interpreted that as a "terrorist deception attempt" by Hamas militants to lure them into the building in the Gaza City district of Shejaiya, the probe said. Believing the building was rigged with explosives, the sol-

diers exited and killed five Hamas militants trying to escape, it added. The hostages then probably fled the building also, and on December 15 Israeli soldiers shot them after mistakenly identifying them as a threat, the investigation said. Two were killed instantly. The third hostage fled and soldiers were ordered to hold fire in order to identify him, the probe said. Hearing cries of "help!" and "they're shooting at me", Israeli commanders asked the surviving hostage to advance towards the soldiers.

But two soldiers "who did not hear the order" because of "noise" from a nearby tank shot him dead. The three hostages were all shirtless and one had been carrying a white flag. On December 14, an army drone had identified signs of "SOS" and "help, three hostages" on a building close to where the three hostages were shot. The army "failed in its mission to rescue the hostages in this event," army chief Herzi Halevi said in a statement published along with the report of the investigation.

Haley says 'of course' civil war was about slavery amid backlash



New York Former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley sought to clarify her remarks about the US Civil War, stating that slavery was unquestionably the cause of the war but that it was also about the freedoms of every individual and the role of government. Many historians agree that slavery was the catalyst for the Civil War. The incident has injected debates about race and slavery into the 2024 presidential contest. Haley's campaign has gained momentum, but she still trails behind Donald Trump and Florida governor Ron DeSantis. Haley has enjoyed new momentum of late, buoyed by a series of strong performances in the Republican debates.

Former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley sought to tamp down controversy over remarks that failed to list slavery as the cause of the US Civil War, following criticism from both Democrats and Republicans. "Of course the Civil War was about slavery, we know that. That's unquestioned, always the case," Haley said Thursday at a campaign event in New Hampshire. "But it was also more than that," she added. "It was about the freedoms of every individual.

It was about the role of government." Haley at a town hall in New Hampshire on was asked, "What was the cause of the United States Civil War?" by an audience member.

US military launches secretive X-37B robot spaceplane on mysterious high-orbit mission

The secretive X-37B robot spaceplane, operated by the US Space Force, was launched atop a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket. This marks its seventh mission and the first time it has been launched on the Falcon Heavy. The launch from Florida's Kennedy Space Center was delayed but finally went ahead after a smooth countdown. The Falcon Heavy, the most powerful operational rocket, lifted off in a dazzling display of fire and smoke. The collaboration between the US military and private space industry showcases advancements in rocket technology. US military launches secretive X-37B robot spaceplane on mysterious high-orbit mission



plane lifts off on its seventh mission to orbit. In a significant development for US military space operations, the secretive X-37B robot spaceplane was launched from Florida on Thursday night. This marks its seventh mission and the first to be launched atop a SpaceX Falcon Heavy rocket, potentially reaching higher orbits than ever before.

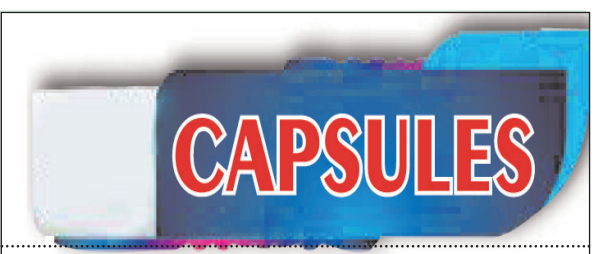
Driving the news The Falcon Heavy, the most powerful operational rocket in the world, lifted off from

NASA's Kennedy Space Center in Florida in a dazzling display of fire and smoke.

The launch was delayed for more than two weeks due to bad weather and technical issues, but finally went ahead after a smooth countdown and liftoff. The X-37B, a reusable, uncrewed spacecraft that looks like a mini space shuttle, is operated by the US Space Force for classified missions that test new technologies and conduct experiments in orbit.

'We are not equipped to deal with this', migrant surge overwhelms US border

ARIZONA: At a remote spot in the Arizona desert, near a hole in the border wall, dozens of migrants huddled over wood fires. After fleeing war in Sudan, violent gangs in Central America or Mexican cartels, the men had all crossed into the United States illegally, walked on foot over rugged terrain for hours and arrived at this outpost exhausted, hungry and cold. They wanted to turn themselves in to authorities to ask for asylum but were stranded here, miles from the closest town, Sásabe. Then, as temperatures dropped Tuesday night, a convoy of Border Patrol agents rolled in, loaded the men into a van to be processed and sped away off to search for more people in need of rescue.



Donald Trump barred from Maine's primary ballot

Maine's secretary of state Shenna Bellows disqualifies Trump from Republican primary ballot due to his alleged involvement in the Capitol assault; decision faces legal challenges. Bellows invokes 14th Amendment's insurrection clause, citing Trump's incitement of supporters to storm the Capitol. Maine's move challenges Trump's eligibility for office and sets a precedent for other states. Rulings based on the 14th Amendment bring election integrity and candidate eligibility to the forefront. Trump campaign opposes ruling, accusing Democrats of an "attempted theft of an election." The rulings in Maine and Colorado are based on the 14th Amendment, which prohibits individuals from holding office if they have engaged in insurrection after swearing to protect the country. In a landmark decision, Maine's secretary of state Shenna Bellows has disqualified former US President Donald Trump from appearing on the state's Republican presidential primary ballot. This move, rooted in Trump's alleged involvement in the January 2021 assault on the US Capitol, marks a significant turn in the upcoming presidential race.

Driving the news

The decision by Shenna Bellows, a Democrat, is the first of its kind by a state election official and will likely face legal challenges from the Trump campaign. Bellows invoked Section 3 of the 14th Amendment, which bars anyone who has "engaged in insurrection or rebellion" against the US from holding office. She said Trump's actions on January 6, 2021, when he incited his supporters to storm the Capitol in an attempt to overturn the election results, amounted to an assault on the foundations of American democracy and violated the oath he took to protect the Constitution.

Why it matters

Maine's decision is pivotal as it directly challenges Trump's eligibility to run for office again. By invoking the 14th Amendment's insurrection clause, Maine joins Colorado in a growing trend of states scrutinizing candidates' constitutional eligibility. Maine's primary is scheduled for March 7, 2024. The state has four electoral votes and has voted for the Democratic presidential nominee in every election since 1992. This move could set a precedent for other states and potentially reshape the political landscape ahead of the 2024 presidential election.

The big picture

The rulings in Maine and Colorado are based on the 14th Amendment, which prohibits individuals from holding office if they have engaged in insurrection after swearing to protect the country. This constitutional provision, rarely invoked in modern times, has brought the issue of election integrity and candidate eligibility to the forefront of national discourse. The Supreme Court's impending decision on this matter could have far-reaching implications for future elections and candidate qualifications.

Biden says American Judith was killed by Hamas on October 7

CHRISTIANSTED: American Judith Weinstein, who was believed to have been kidnapped by Hamas, was killed by the Palestinian Islamist group on October 7 when it attacked Israel, President Biden said on Thursday, adding he was devastated by the news. Weinstein, 70, was also an Israeli and the last missing Canadian from the October 7 attack.

Last week Biden said her husband, Gadi Haggai, 73, was killed on October 7. "This tragic development cuts deep, coming on the heels of last week's news that Judith's beloved husband, Gad Haggai, is believed to have been killed by Hamas," Biden said in a statement, vowing to continue attempting for the release of other hostages still held by

Hamas. Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly said her country also mourned the loss of Weinstein. Working while on holiday in the US Virgin Islands, Biden said he would never forget what the couple's daughter and the family members of other Americans held hostage in Gaza told him when he met with them this month.

US warship shoots down drone, missile fired by Yemen's Huthis

WASHINGTON: An American warship shot down a drone and an anti-ship ballistic missile fired Thursday by Yemen's Iran-backed Huthi rebels, the US military said.

The Huthis have repeatedly targeted vessels in the vital Red Sea shipping lane with strikes they say are in support of Palestinians in Gaza, where Israel is battling militant group Hamas. "The USS Mason (DDG 87) shot down one drone and one anti-ship ballistic missile in the Southern Red Sea that was fired by the

Huthis," US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement, referring to a guided-missile destroyer. "There was no damage to any of the 18 ships in the area or reported injuries," CENTCOM said, adding that it was the 22nd attempted attack on international shipping by the Huthis since mid-October. The attacks are endangering a transit route that carries up to 12 per cent of global trade, prompting the United States to set up a multinational naval task force earlier this month to protect Red Sea shipping.

American-Canadian-Israeli woman believed to be held hostage in Gaza pronounced dead

TEL AVIV: A hard-hit Israeli kibbutz on Thursday announced the death of Judith Weinstein - an American-Canadian-Israeli woman who had been thought to be held hostage in Gaza. The news came six days after Weinstein's husband, Gad Haggai, was also pronounced dead. Weinstein, 70, and Haggai, 73, were taking an early morning walk near their home in Kibbutz Nir Oz on the morning of Oct. 7 when Hamas militants burst across the border into Israel, killing about 1,200 people and kidnapping 240 others. In the early hours of the morning, Weinstein was able to call emergency services and let them know that both she and her husband had been shot and send a message to her family. Weinstein and her husband had been thought to be among the



hostages still held in captivity in Gaza. But six days ago, the kibbutz announced that Haggai was killed Oct. 7 and his body was taken to Gaza. On Thursday, the kibbutz said it had learned that Weinstein was also killed on Oct. 7 and her body is also being held in Gaza.

It was not immediately clear how Israeli authorities determined their deaths. The couple

are survived by two sons and two daughters and seven grandchildren, the kibbutz said. President Joe Biden said he was "devastated" to learn of Weinstein's death, especially after hearing about the couple during a meeting with their daughter. The families "have been living through hell for weeks.

No family should have to endure such an ordeal," he said in a statement. Weinstein was born in New York and was an active member of Kibbutz Nir Oz, a small community near the Gaza border where she taught English to children with special needs. The kibbutz said she also taught meditation techniques to children and teenagers who suffered from anxiety as a result of rocket fire from Gaza. Haggai was a retired chef and jazz musician.

India vs South Africa: Rohit promises India fightback in second Test against South Africa

NEW DELHI: India captain Rohit Sharma promised to rally strongly following their crushing innings and 32-run loss to South Africa on Thursday when they play the second and last Test of their brief series next week. Even though India lost the opportunity to win the series, captain Rohit Sharma, who was dismissed for low scores in both innings, predicted that his team would rally and return stronger. Since South Africa is the only nation where India have not won a Test series, the short journey there was nicknamed the 'final frontier.' However, they are unable to achieve so at this time. "Honestly,



look, we're not good enough to win this match," said Rohit, whose side was dismissed for 131 in their second innings on the third day. "I thought we got decent runs on the board on that track in the first innings, KL Rahul did brilliantly to

get us that century. But then we failed to exploit the conditions with the ball. "Then again, we didn't show up with the bat today as well. Our batting was poor in the second innings. If you want to win test matches, you've got to come together collectively.

But we failed to do that." Rohit also singled out Virat Kohli's second innings knock as he scored 76 of the Indian runs as a one-man bulwark with wickets tumbling all around him. "When you lose a game in three days, there's not a lot of positives

but like I mentioned, the way KL Rahul batted in the first innings showed a lot of us what you need to do on that kind of pitch. A lot of our bowlers haven't been here before, they're still learning. So I don't want to be too critical of them. "We will regroup, and we'll fight back," Rohit said. India have never won a Test at Newlands, where the second Test starts next Wednesday. "It's important for us to regroup as quickly as we can. It's tough to take a loss like this. But as sportsmen, we all go through these kinds of times, and you need to pick yourselves up, get ready for the next challenge, which is in front of you," he added.

S. Africa coach hails 'phenomenal' team after thrashing India

NEW DELHI: Following an innings-and-32-run victory against top-ranked India in the first Test in Centurion, South Africa's coach Shukri Conrad expressed his dissatisfaction on Thursday over his players' perceived undervaluation. On the third day, South Africa improved their first innings score to 408 for a 163-run lead, led by opening batsman Dean Elgar, who will retire after the two-Test series, with 185 and Marco Jansen with a career-best 84 not out. Proteas pacers dismissed India for 131 runs in 34.1 overs, with only Virat Kohli (76) standing in their way as they stormed to victory. On his debut, Nandre Burger collected four wickets for 33, taking his total to seven. Meanwhile, fellow left-armers Marco Jansen claimed three wickets for 36, and first-inning hero Kagiso Rabada



added two wickets to 32 to his five first-day wickets. "This win was massive for us and what makes it bigger is that it makes sure India have never beaten us in a Test series here," Conrad told reporters. "We know what a quality side India are, but we also know what we are," the coach said after South Africa's first innings win over India since 2010 at the same venue. "We are a brilliant team at home and we have really gelled as a unit. A lot of the time that has been about freeing the guys up, allowing them to be the best versions of themselves. "People have questioned whether South Africa still produce good players and

we have shown that we do. "Sometimes I think we are too humble, raving about overseas players and not realising what we have. "These guys are absolutely phenomenal. And we have put succession plans in place. You need a bit of luck and things will fall into place," Conrad said. Since his hiring as the red-ball national coach at the beginning of the year, South Africa has won three Tests in a row, snapping a five-match losing skid. The loss was referred to as "a very upsetting loss" by India captain Rohit Sharma, who also stated that at the Test level, players' mindsets were what distinguished the good players from the bad.

NEUFC plot to end Goa's unbeaten run

Guwahati

The joy of a victory has eluded the Highlanders fans in the festive season. But NorthEast United FC will hope to step into 2024 on the back of a win as they take on second-placed and in-form FC Goa at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium in Guwahati. Having remained undefeated across the first nine games of their current ISL campaign, FC Goa will aim for a similar result against the Highlanders. If they succeed, the Gaurs would wrap up the first half of the season with



an unblemished record, for the first time in their history. With 23 points from nine matches and sitting on second spot on the table, Goa have won seven times so far in the league, drawing the remaining two games since the appointment of head coach Manolo Marquez

in June. NEUFC, meanwhile, may be in eighth place currently — but they have had a negative result in the form of losses only on four different occasions across the 11 matches they played so far. And as the Gaurs are already aware from their recent encounter against them in the Durand Cup which ended in a 2-2 draw, the Highlanders do possess enough firepower to derail any opposition on their day, as the likes of Jamshedpur FC and Chennaiyin FC discovered lately.

India slip to fifth spot in WTC table after embarrassing defeat against South Africa

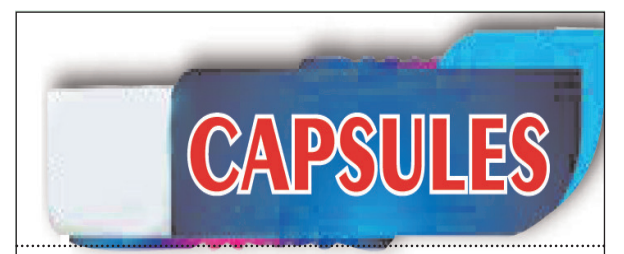


NEW DELHI: South Africa steamrolled India in the Boxing Day Test to register a massive win by an innings and 32 runs inside three days in Centurion on Thursday. After putting up a brave fight with the bat in the first innings, India bowlers disappointed in bowling-friendly condition. The batters then had a shock outing in the second innings, crashing to 131 all out in the final session on the third day. After the embarrassing defeat, India lost the top spot in the updated WTC points table and slipped to fifth position in the standings. On the other hand, the win put the Proteas on the top spot on the table. "We were not

good enough to win. Having been put in to bat, KL (Rahul) batted well to get us that score but then we didn't exploit the conditions with the ball and then again didn't show up today with the bat," said Rohit during the post-match presentation. "If we have to win Test matches, we have to come together collectively and we didn't do that. Guys have come here before, we know what to expect and everyone has their own plan." Our batters were challenged and we didn't adapt well. This is a boundary-scoring ground, we saw them score many but we need to understand the opposition and their strengths as well.

Bumrah didn't get required support: Rohit

NEW DELHI: India captain Rohit Sharma expressed his dismay at the lack of support for Jasprit Bumrah from the other end. He highlighted that there was no justification for conceding over 400 runs on a bowling-friendly track, especially when the South African speedsters demonstrated how to approach the task effectively. In the opening Test, India faced a defeat within three days, managing scores of 245 and 131 across two innings. However, the turning point of the game revolved around South Africa's remarkable innings, where they amassed 408 runs. While Bumrah stood out by claiming four wickets, Mohammed Siraj showcased some resilience. However, Shardul Thakur and Prasidh Krishna encountered substantial challenges.



1st ODI: Ellyse Perry, Phoebe Litchfield power Australia to easy win over India

MUMBAI:

Even before she could settle in the dugout, Ellyse Perry was summoned in the middle of the fourth ball of Australia's chase. With skipper Alyssa Healy back in the pavilion, and youngster Phoebe Litchfield at the other end, the onus was on her to set them up to chase a total of 282 — the highest ever put on by India women in ODIs against them. With the target still far away, the ideal approach would have been to block, get your eye in before putting back the pressure on the home side. But it's Perry we are talking about. After facing just three balls, the 33-year-old allrounder hit Pooja Vastrakar for a four and a six in the second over to put India on the backfoot. Perry's counter-attack, on a wicket that had freshened up under the lights, gave 20-year-old Litchfield the confidence and she too opened her shoulders after initially playing watchfully. By the time Perry holed out at long-on, she had stitched a 150-ball 148-run partnership with Litchfield which effectively set-up Australia's six-wicket win in the first of the three-match ODI series at the Wankhede Stadium on Thursday. Perry, who battled cramps towards the latter half of her innings, scored 75 from 72 balls with the help of nine fours and two sixes to continue her rich vein of form this year. It was her fourth half-century of the year in which she has scored 417 runs in 11 games at an average of 69.50. She had a decent outing in the Women's Big Bash as well where she hammered 496 runs in 13 matches with the help of three fifties. Litchfield was the top-scorer for Australia with 78 from 89 balls during which she hit eight fours and one six. The left-hand batter had struggled in the one-off women's Test last week but on Thursday she looked more assured with her footwork and shot selection. When Perry and Litchfield fell in space 25 balls India would have sniffed an opportunity with Australia still needing 113 runs from 19.5 overs. But Beth Mooney (42, 47b; 4x4) and Tahlia McGrath (68*, 55b; 11x4) — her first half-century after nine innings — kept cool heads to take Australia to safety with their fourth-wicket association of 88 from 67 balls and continued their hold over India in ODIs. Earlier, half-centuries from Jemimah Rodrigues (77-ball 82) and Pooja Vastrakar helped India post 282-8. Pooja remained unbeaten on 62 which came off 46 balls with the help of seven fours and two sixes. India suffered a blow before the start of the match when Smriti Mandhana was ruled out due to illness. It got worse for them when they were reduced to 95-4 after choosing to bat first. What



Chennaiyin FC look to make the most of Mumbai injuries

CHENNAI: Chennaiyin FC could not have asked for a better time to face heavyweights Mumbai City FC. Mumbai, the reigning League Winners Shield holders, will miss a host of players to suspensions and injuries, when they host Chennaiyin in the Indian Super League at the Mumbai Football Arena on Thursday. Although Mumbai do

not have a full-strength squad at their disposal, CFC head coach Owen Coyle feels it won't make a difference. "Nobody's had more players missing than Chennaiyin with the injuries we have. But the great thing about a big club like Mumbai is that they have the luxury. These big clubs spend well and when they have players

injured or suspended, they have quality players that can come in. So, I think we'll see two very attack-minded teams go all out to win a tough game," said Coyle at a press conference before leaving for Mumbai. Chennaiyin were unbeaten for four matches before a forgetful loss to minnows Punjab FC 0-1 in their last outing.

'Competitive animal' Nadal back for one last hurrah

SYDNEY: More than two decades after bursting on the scene, the sun is setting on Rafael Nadal's storied career with the Spanish gladiator hoping his creaking body can hold up long enough to see out the season. The 37-year-old returns to the courts in Brisbane this week, almost a year since he last played professionally before an injury curse that has long plagued him returned with a vengeance. It has been a recurring theme of a record-breaking career which has brought 22 Grand Slam titles and global respect, a painful by-product of his all-action, brutal-

hitting style that has led to struggles with serious knee, wrist and foot problems. His most recent setback, at the 2023 Australian Open, resulted in two rounds of hip surgery and fears that he would never grace the courts again. But Nadal didn't want it to end like that, and he has battled back for what he admits is likely his last season, to say goodbye to the fans, "enjoy myself again", but also be competitive. "I don't know at what level (I can play at), I don't know what to expect, I have no idea, but I don't care right now," Nadal said this month, looking ahead to 2024.

Yearender 2023: Indian men's hockey rose from the Ashes

NEW DELHI: After a disastrous World Cup, coach Craig Fulton has bled young talent, ushered in refreshing changes in the team. The Asian Champions Trophy victory in Chennai in August was a validation of the efforts the core group put in. The changes Fulton had brought about began to show. At the Asian Games in Hangzhou, the team exhibited refreshing calmness to defeat Japan 5-1 in the title clash and book its ticket to the 2024 Paris Olympics. On a nippy night at the Birsamunda Hockey Stadium in Rourkela in January, Indian men's hockey skipper Harmanpreet Singh led his team's lap of honour, acknowledging the unflinching support of the spectators. The joy and the cheers were misleading enough to create an impression that India had ended their 48-year-old wait for a gold

at the World Cup. In reality, the hosts had just carved out a hardfought 5-2 win over South Africa to finish joint ninth with Argentina. The disappointment notwithstanding, the followers of the sport were willing to back the team, but were the players backing themselves? It was an abysmal fall for a team, which had raised the hope of the rebirth of Indian hockey with a bronze-medal finish at the Tokyo Olympics the previous year.

Given the fourth-place finish in the FIH Pro League earlier, it felt like it was back to square one for India. The talk of a rise again seemed like all bluff and bluster. To make matters worse, the administration was back to doing what it always does. Pin the blame for failure on the coach. In the aftermath, a day after the quadrennial show-

piece event, chief coach Graham Reid went home with his team of support staff. In a statement, Australian Reid said, "It is time for me to step aside and hand over the reins to the next management."

The question then was, who will the next management comprise? With eight months to go for the Asian Games, where a Paris Olympics berth was at stake, who would be willing to risk coming to a country where the only measure of performance is success? Top coaches from across the world were approached but with little success as most of them were already committed to the Olympic cycle. That is when Hockey India president and former India skipper Dilip Tirkey convinced South African Craig Fulton to take over in testing times.

"I Am 58 Now And Feel I Should Do Age-Centric Roles": Shah Rukh

Delhi : Shah Rukh Khan's latest film, Dunki is hitting all the right notes. Directed by Rajkumar Hirani, the movie depicts Hardy (SRK) in his younger days and also features a middle-aged version of the character. 'King Khan' discussed taking on "age-centric roles" and being age-honest in "Dunki. He said, "I am 58 now, aur mujhe aise lagta hai ki mujhe age-centric roles karne chahiye [And I feel that I should take age-centric roles.] And if I get an opportunity in a film, of course, 100 percent. Jab hum... Jawan zada commercial [Jawan was too commercial]... in your face kind of character hai, I won't call it caricature, but it is an over-the-top old person. But in this film, yeh bahut real hai [It's very real.] Dunki mein bahut real hai. [It is very real in Dunki.]" SRK also said, "I would say I have been age honest for the first time in Dunki. It's closer to my age."



Rajkumar Hirani reveals why he had to 'wait 20 years to collaborate' with Shah Rukh Khan

Delhi : Filmmaker Rajkumar Hirani, whose film Dunki starring Shah Rukh Khan released recently, spoke about why and when he decided to work with the actor.

He is 'enam-

To ek journey hai, to vohi is film ki I think intriguing quality hai. Ki vo jo journey hai vo ek span krti hai time, so like a saga. [In Dunki, there's a lot of reality. And within Dunki, there's a small thing - it's a promise,

oured' by the actor's charm. Rajkumar said, "I remember studying in a film school and the real struggle for any filmmaker was how we would make our first film. Will we get a

vow, of a soldier. So, it's a journey; that, I think, is the intriguing quality of this film. The journey spans across time, so it's like a saga."

Shah Rukh Khan added while talking about his film.

Ankita Lokhande looks shocked as Vicky Jain tries to slap her

Delhi: Vicky Jain was seen arguing with Abhishek Kumar over food items recently. Actor-wife Ankita Lokhande was also trying to talk in between Vicky's conversation with Abhishek in a video that has surfaced online. In it, Vicky got irritated and tried to raise his hand on Ankita and she appeared to be in shock for a moment. Abhishek and Arun Mashetty also reacted in shock at Vicky's action towards Ankita. Sharing the video on X, a Bigg Boss fan page said, "During the argument, Vicky aggressively tried to get out of the blanket and it looked like he was trying



to hit his wife Ankita Lokhande on national television (screaming face emojis)." In response, an X user said, "Yaar Ankita ka natural reaction bahut zyada sad tha (Anika's natural reaction was too sad)."

Another wrote, "Ankita's reaction makes it clear this has happened before too... feeling bad for her." A person also tweeted, "Only winner material in the show is Ankita Lokhande."

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

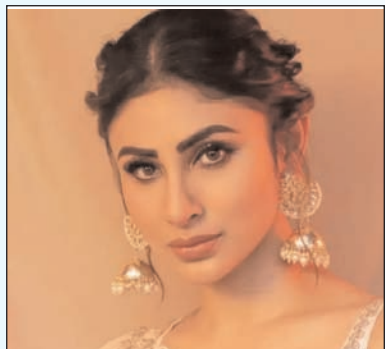
Delhi : As soon as I meet Mona Singh, I tell her I won't be exaggerating if I pronounce 2023 as her year. She laughs and responds, "And I won't be modest about it either." With three shows - Kafas on SonyLIV, Made in Heaven Season 2 on Prime Video India, and Kaala Paani on Netflix India -

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

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

Mouni, Emraan and Naseeruddin give a sneak peek into the dark side of Bollywood

Delhi : Mouni Roy, Emraan Hashmi and Naseeruddin Shah provide a sneak peek into the dark side of Bollywood, laced with stories of nepotism and changing power dynamics, in the teaser of Disney+ Hotstar and Dramatic Entertainment's upcoming series Showtime, dropped by the makers. The 50-second-long teaser introduces Emraan, Mahima Makwana, Mouni and Naseeruddin as industry insiders grappling with fame, internal politics and dark secrets. As the camera rolls for action, we see the star cast going about their daily routine of shooting, attending promotional events and



greeting fans. Emraan, who plays the 'Badshaah of Bollywood', mentions in the teaser that in today's film industry, every "outsider" wants to become an "insider" under the veneer of nepotism. "Nepotism ke mukhaute ke peeche aakhir mein har outsider insider banna chah-

ta hai," he says, before it cuts to scenes of protest and boycott calls against a young actor. Mouni plays an actor-dancer in the series. The teaser shows Naseeruddin's character confessing that cinema is not a business but a religion for him and expressing grief over the dilapidated condition of the industry. Sharing the teaser on Instagram, Karan Johar wrote, "Welcome to world which functions on - lights, camera & action! Entangled in a struggle for power, Showtime is a web series that will draw boundaries...only to cross them." Created by Sumit Roy, Showtime is directed by Mihir Desai and Archit Kumar.

Oscar 2024 shortlists for 10 categories: 'Barbie' leads with five nominations

Delhi : Greta Gerwig's meta-comedy 'Barbie' has received five nominations for the Oscar Awards 2024. It includes sound, original songs for its three submissions from Billie Eilish ('What I Was Made For'), Dua Lipa ('Dance the Night') and Mark Ronson and Andrew Wyatt ('I'm Just Ken'), and original score, from the latter duo. But 'Barbie' missed the nomination for makeup and hair-styling, which was the category that surprised the people most. But 'The Color Purple', and



'Guardians of the Galaxy Vol. 3' failed to make it to the shortlist. Instead, A24's eccentric 'Beau is Afraid' and

Universal Pictures' horror summer film 'The Last Voyage of the Demeter'. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts

and Sciences announced the shortlists in 10 categories for the upcoming 96th Oscars ceremony.

Mad masc on fury road: Bollywood's riding on rage machines

What ties together the world of Pathaan, Jawan, Gadar 2 and Animal Well, they might be set in different spheres, but the presence of alpha males strings them together in one thread. And that was the trend which made it big in Bollywood as well as the box office. Shah Rukh Khan had a great year on the box office, which started



with Pathaan. The year 2023 witnessed a remarkable surge in the prominence of alpha males, reshaping the industry's narrative and captivating audiences with their charismatic presence while raking moolah at the box office. If there was a Pathaan, essayed by Shah Rukh Khan, out there to foil a terrorist threat, there was also a Tiger, played by Salman Khan, going on a threatening crusade to clear his and his family's name. Not to forget the vengeful mission of Jawan, or the intense fight sequences in Gadar

2 featuring actor Sunny Deol. "This year proved that audiences are enjoying hyper masculinity, from the presence of alpha male characters to the main leads being aggressive. A lot of action, blood and larger than life -- these are some things which people enjoyed seeing on the big screen.

In fact, Prabhas' Salaar also fell in the same category. We see this trend going big in 2024 with Pushpa 2 and other similar movies ready for release," says trade expert and producer Girish Johar.

Saiee Manjrekar to have an intimate birthday bash with family, childhood friends

Delhi : Actress Saiee Manjrekar, who is known for 'Major' and 'Dabangg 3', has shared her birthday plans ahead of her 22nd birthday. The actress celebrates her birthday and will host an intimate party at her home with her family and friends. Talking about her plans for the day, the actress said: "I am very excited for my 22nd Birthday. I will celebrate it like every year with an intimate party at home with my close childhood friends, cousins, and family. Every year we listen to the same songs, eat the same food, dance to the same songs, and play the same games, so it has become a beautiful, cute ritual that forms one of my core memories. I have been doing this since I was a child. This year will be the same and I am excited to start the celebrations," she added. Meanwhile, on the work front, the actress will be soon seen in the film 'Kuch Khatta Ho Jaay' in which she stars opposite Guru Randhawa. She also has 'Auron Main Kahan Dum Tha' in the pipeline.

She will share the screen space with Ajay Devgn and Tabu in the film, and will be



Monaz aka Mrs Roshan Sodhi reveals when Dayaben will return in the show

Delhi: Taarak Mehta Ka Ooltah Chashmah is in the news. The show has been running for 15 years now and it is still loved by the audience. The TRPs of the show have been quite decent. Recently, the show was in the news when Dayaben's return track was shown. Disha Vakani was loved as Daya and

she has been away from the show since 2015. People have been missing Dayaben in the show and recently, the track was shown to bring back Daya. However, when she did not return, fans were disappointed.

They trolled the makers for hurting the sentiments of the audience.

Can't wait for everyone to witness the world of 'Auron Main Kahan Dum Tha'.

Conman Suresh responds to Jacqueline's charges

Delhi : Conman Suresh Chandrashekar, the prime accused in a Rs 200-crore money laundering case, has now turned against Bollywood actress Jacqueline Fernandez after the latter made allegations against him in her recent plea. Jacqueline recently moved a Delhi court seeking protection from intimidation from Suresh. She's also moved Delhi HC seeking quashing of case against her saying that she is an innocent victim of Suresh Chandrashekar's targeted attack. In her appeal, Jacqueline, who is also accused in the money laundering case, claimed that Suresh trapped her. Responding to Jacqueline's allegations, Suresh said that he would now reveal all "unseen" evidence against her, claiming that the investigations done were biased as he was protecting the interests of "this person". Suresh Chandrashekar's lawyer Advocate Anant Malik confirmed that the person he has referred to in the letter is Jacqueline.