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After anti-India posts, 3 Maldives leaders in dock

● **Responsible for the comments have been suspended from their post effective immediately**



Dubai
The row erupted over the weekend after some Maldivian leaders, including Zahid Rameez, a leader of the Progressive Party of Maldives that is part of the government, and deputy minister Mariyam Shiuna, reacted to posts on social media describing Lakshadweep as a tourist destination that rivals the Maldives following Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to the islands.

"All government officials responsible for the comments have been suspended from their post effective immediately," said Ibrahim Khaleel, spokesperson

for the President of Maldives. While Khaleel didn't name the officials, reports in the Maldivian media identified them as Malsha Shareef, Mariyam Shiuna and Abdulla Mahzoom Majid, all of whom are deputy ministers in the ministry of youth empowerment, information and art. It could not be confirmed if any action was taken against Rameez.

People familiar with the matter said on condition of anonymity

that the Indian side had conveyed its concerns over the derogatory remarks to the Maldives. The row comes at a time when the new President of Maldives, Mohamed Muizzu, who is perceived to be pro-China, has called on India to withdraw some 77 Indian military personnel posted in the Indian Ocean archipelago to operate two helicopters and an aircraft.

Following his recent visit to Lakshadweep, Modi highlighted the

"stunning beauty" of the islands and the "incredible warmth" of its people in a post on X and said: "For those who wish to embrace the adventurer in them, Lakshadweep has to be on your list."

This spurred several posts on social media urging Indians to visit Lakshadweep instead of the Maldives because of the pro-China tilt of the government in Male. Muizzu, who assumed office last November.

Congress kicks off Lok Sabha polls seat share talks with Bihar allies

New Delhi

The Congress on Sunday began the formal seat-sharing talks with its allies in Bihar, the Janata Dal (United) and the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD), with an aim to reach a "reasonable and respectable" arrangement in order to unitedly take on the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, people familiar with the matter said. Congress leader SoniThe Congress's five-member national alliance committee



(NAC), headed by senior leader Mukul Wasnik, initiated the seat-sharing talks with authorised leaders of the JD(U) and the RJD in New Delhi, in a development that comes after several rounds of deliberations within the party, leaders of the Bihar Pradesh

Congress Committee (BPCC) said. "The NAC is armed with statistics of past elections, party workers' aspirations and worked out winnability factors for each and every seat before embarking on the seat-sharing exercise.

We are ready to

compromise but not willing to sacrifice everything for the sake of keeping INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc intact," a senior AICC leader familiar with the development said, requesting anon

The first round of talks was held on a positive note, the senior leader said, adding that the party is hoping that an all-agreeable solution would emerge in the talks with JD(U) leader Sanjay Kumar Jha and RJD leader Manoj Jha.

PM Modi lauds Navy commandos for pulling off daring rescue

Jaipur

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday lauded the Indian Navy for its "daring operation" to rescue 21 crew members on board a hijacked merchant vessel in the Arabian Sea as he addressed the country's

top security brass on the concluding day of the closed-door annual security conference. In his address at the annual director general of police/inspector general of police conference in Jaipur, the PM also said that the three new crimi-

nal laws would mark a paradigm shift in the criminal justice system. "Two days ago, Indian Navy carried out a very daring operation. As soon as an SOS message was received from the merchant vessel, which had 21 crew members

including 15 Indians, Navy's marine commandos actively responded, reached about 2,000 kms in the Arabian Sea and rescued all of them. You must have seen the (rescue) video in which crew is chanting Bharat Mata Ki Jai," the PM said.

EaseMyTrip suspends all Maldives flight bookings amid row over anti-PM Modi posts: 'Chalo Lakshadweep'

EaseMyTrip, in a significant move amid the boycott Maldives campaign online, has decided to suspend all Maldives flight bookings following the derogatory remarks made by some ministers, now suspended, against India and Prime Minister Narendra Modi over his recent visit to Lakshadweep. Standing in support of India, Nishant Pitti, co-founder and chief executive officer (CEO) of the Indian online travel company, took to social media X (formerly Twitter) stating, "In solidarity with our nation, @EaseMyTrip has suspended all Maldives flight bookings." Online travel solutions provider EaseMyTrip began visit Lakshadweep campaign by #ChaloLakshadweep. EaseMyTrip, headquartered in New Delhi, was founded by Nishant Pitti, Rikant Pitti, and Prashant Pitti in 2008. In his post on January 4, Prashant Pitti wrote, "Water & beaches of Lakshadweep are as good as Maldives/Seychelles We at @EaseMyTrip will come up with crazy special-offers to promote this pristine destination that our PM @narendramodi has recently visited! Amid the row between India and the Maldives, hashtag #BoycottMaldives gained traction on social media, with many Indian tourists reportedly started cancelling their scheduled vacations to the island nation.

Maldivian politicians trigger controversy

On Sunday, the Maldivian government suspended three deputy ministers for derogatory social media posts against Prime Minister Modi following a backlash with India strongly raising the matter with Male and the island nation's top opposition leaders slamming the ruling establishment over the row.

Congress to go for temple run amid suspense over Kharge

New Delhi

Even as suspense looms over Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge and former party chief Sonia Gandhi attending the January 22 Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya, the party has decided to go for a temple run with its general secretary incharge of Uttar Pradesh Avinash Pande and state unit president Ajay Rai,



along with some others, declaring their plan to have darshan of Ram Lalla at Ram Janmabhoomi on Makar Sankranti (January 15). When asked, if the move is

political, Avinash Pande on Sunday said: "No. We want to make it clear that there should be no doubt about our firm belief in Lord Ram. There is no one in the nation

who doesn't respect Lord Ram. Temple is being made today, but we went there whenever we got time even when temple was not there." "The temple is being made on orders of the court. The Congress never opposed it neither stopped anyone from going there nor even compels anyone for doing the same. People are emotionally connected with it.

Kejriwal declares jailed AAP MLA Vasava as Bharuch candidate for LS elections

Bharuch

Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convener Arvind Kejriwal on Sunday announced that Gujarat's Dediapada MLA Chaitar Vasava, who is currently in jail, would be the party's candidate for the Bharuch seat in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Kejriwal declared that Vasava would contest



the Bharuch Lok Sabha seat even while being incarcerated. The Delhi chief minister, while addressing

a rally in the tribal dominated Netrang region of Bharuch along with Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann, claimed that Vasava was arrested last month as he was fighting for the rights of the tribal community. Wrap up the year gone "The BJP has ruled Gujarat for 30 years. However, it

always neglected the Adivasi community. Vasava spoke up because the BJP failed them," Kejriwal said in his speech. He added, "The BJP harbors animosity towards the tribal community from the start. Another 30 years under BJP rule, and it will devastate the tribal community."

Absence of a law that makes adultery an offence cannot provide individuals with a blanket

New Delhi Vatika Times

A woman had alleged that her husband married another woman in 2015 and a daughter was born out of said marriage. Absence of a law that makes adultery an offence cannot provide individuals with a blanket immunity of marrying another person secretly during the subsistence of their first marriage, the Delhi high court said, adding that it was crucial to legally protect those partners who have committed to the sanctity and values of marriage.

The court was of the view that insisting the victim spouse to provide evidence regarding performance of the ceremonies of a second marriage for the offence of

Row erupts after victim's kin name BJP leader as 'VIP guest' in Pauri receptionist murder case

Dehradun

The family of the receptionist, who was murdered in September 2022 for allegedly refusing to provide "extra services" to a "VIP guest" at a resort in Pauri Garhwal district, has claimed that the guest in the case is a Bharatiya Janata Party leader, triggering a political row in Uttarakhand between the opposition Congress and the ruling BJP. A video that was uploaded on the social media platform of a local news outlet on Saturday evening purportedly showed the victim's mother accuse chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami of making "false promises" and doing "nothing to

ensure justice" in the case. She also suspected state BJP general secretary (organisation) Ajaey Kumar to be the "VIP guest" and suspected him to be the VIP guest for whom the victim was being pressurised to provide "extra services"—euphemism for sex work demanded by a leader, triggering a political row in Uttarakhand between the opposition Congress and the ruling BJP. Action should be taken against him immediately," she said and burst into tears. The case pertains to the murder of 19-year-old woman, who was working as a receptionist at a resort in Pauri Garhwal, by three accused, including expelled BJP leader Vinod Arya's son Pulkit Arya.

US de ported at least one Indian a day either for not having the proper papers

AHMEDABAD: In late December, a flight bound for Nicaragua with 303 Indian passengers was grounded at a French airport, reigniting concerns about illegal immigration from India. Turns out, in 2023, the US de ported at least one Indian a day either for not having the proper papers or entering/

residing in the country un lawfully, according to data from the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The American authorities sent back 370 Indians in the past year, revealed figures from ICE. Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 5,477 Indians were deported from the US to India for illegal entry and

stay. ICE was established in 2003 by merging the former US Customs Service and the Immigration and Naturalization Service. ICE data indicated that the highest number of Indians, 2,312, were deported in 2020 — the year that then US President Donald Trump visited India in February.

Maken, Ramesh in Congress publicity panel for LS polls



● Congress on Saturday also constituted a 'central war room' for general elections with Vaibhav Walia

NEW DELHI: Stepping on the gas on its preparations for the Lok Sabha polls, Congress set up a publicity committee with AICC treasurer Ajay Maken as its convener and party general secretaries Jairam Ramesh and K C Venugopal among its members. It also constituted the state election committees of Kerala, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Telangana, Himachal Pradesh, Nagaland, Manipur and Tripura. MP, on the other hand, will have a Pradesh election committee as well as a political affairs committee, one headed by the party's newly minted state president Jitu Patwari and the latter by AICC general sec-

retary in charge Jitendra Singh. While the 24-member Rajasthan election committee will be led by state chief Govind Singh Dotasra and will have former chief minister Ashok Gehlot, Sachin Pilot and Jitendra Singh, among others, the Kerala election committee will be led by PCC K Sudhakaran along with 32 leaders including V D Satheeshan, A K Antony, K C Venugopal and Ramesh Chennithala. The 25-member

Telangana Pradesh election panel is headed by newly appointed chief minister A Revanth Reddy, while the Himachal Pradesh election committee will be chaired by Lok Sabha MP Pratibha Singh and will have chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu as member along with 14 others. While Congress appointed a 34-member Pradesh election committee in MP led by Jitu Patwari, the political affairs committee for MP will

be chaired by AICC general secretary in charge Jitendra Singh. While Patwari will be its convener, it will have former CMs Kamal Nath and Divijaya Singh and CLP leader Umang Singhar, among others, as members. Congress on Saturday also constituted a 'central war room' for general elections with Vaibhav Walia heading the communications war room and Sasikanth Senthil S chairing the organisational war room.

Rama Vidyalaya of village Damkora of the sub-division has got first place in the block level Beautification Incentive Award

Loharu

Rama Vidyalaya of village Damkora of the sub-division has got first place in the block level Chief Minister School Beautification Incentive Award Scheme. There is an atmosphere of happiness in the school on this success of the school. Let us tell you that Naresh Kumar, Headmaster of Rama Vidyalaya, Damkora, took charge as the Headmaster of Government Secondary School, Damkora on 1 September 2022. In a short period of just 1 year and 3 months, through his efficient leadership, he formed Team Damkora and achieved many goals in the interest of students, school and society.

For the all-round development of the school, a blueprint was prepared with the participation of all the staff members, SMC members, Gram Panchayat and villagers present and

For the all-round development of the school, a blueprint was prepared with the participation of all the staff members, SMC members, Gram Panchayat and villagers present and moved forward in that direction. The result of these meaningful efforts was that it secured first position in the first block level Chief Minister's School Beautification Incentive Award Scheme and received a prize money of Rs 50 thousand from the Education Department, Haryana Government. Taking these efforts forward, he has now got the first position in the district level Chief Minister's School

moved forward in that direction. The result of these meaningful efforts was that it secured first position in the first block level Chief Minister's School Beautification Incentive Award Scheme and received a prize money of Rs 50 thousand from the Education Department, Haryana Government. Taking

these efforts forward, he has now got the first position in the district level Chief Minister's School Beautification Incentive Award Scheme and has again received an amount of Rs 1 lakh from the Education Department, Haryana Government. On this achievement of the school, DEEO Santosh Nagar, BEO

Vijay Prabha, CRC Ravindra Sharma, Sarpanch representative Azad Sangwan, SMC head Satyaveer Singh, Vikas Mandaviya, Hon. Bharat Singh, former Sarpanch Inder Singh, Sandeep Aladia etc. expressed gratitude to the school head Naresh Kumar and all the staff members.

Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar skips sharing stage with uncle

MUMBAI: Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar skipped the inauguration of a drama event that uncle and NCP founder Sharad Pawar attended with chief minister Eknath Shinde in Pune on Saturday. This prompted speculation that Ajit missed the 100th Natya Sammelan to avoid sharing the stage with Pawar. On Saturday, Ajit stayed away despite being present in Pimpri Chinchwad, where the Sammelan was held. "I had some activities lined up in the morning. I had to skip them because of personal issues," Ajit said.

Asked why he stayed away from Sammelan despite being Pune's guardian minister, Ajit pointed out that "CM Shinde was present" and that he had cleared funds for the event earlier. "I have met my responsibility."

After 40 years, rhinos return to sanctuaries in Assam

GUWAHATI: After 40 years, rhinos have returned to stay at Laokhowa and Burachapori wildlife sanctuaries of greater Kaziranga, Assam, following a massive eviction through which 1,282 hectares of forest and government land were cleared of illegal settlements last year. Until 1983, Laokhowa-Burachapori in Nagaon district had 45-50 rhinos. While poachers killed a few, the surviving rhinos left for Orang National Park on the north bank of the Brahmaputra following encroachment and human settlements over the last several decades. Laokhowa-Burachapori Wildlife Sanctuary (WLS) and the first addition to Burachapori WLS - total 309.20sqkm - has witnessed the return of two rhinos to the landscape after almost a gap of 40 years and they have made the landscape their home since November last year, officials said. While many rhinos were killed, the degradation of grassland habitat amid anthropogenic pressure wiped out the animals from here. "Happy to share that after 40 years our iconic Rhinos have returned to Laokhowa and Burachapori.

Naresh, arrested in a money laundering case, cried before the court

MUMBAI

After a trembling 74-year-old Jet Airways (India) Ltd (JIL) founder Naresh Goyal, arrested in a money laundering case, cried before the special PMLA court on Saturday about how he had lost every hope of life and it would be better that he should die in jail rather than being kept alive in such a situation, the judge

assured him that he will not be left helpless and all possible care for his mental and physical health will be taken with proper treatment. With folded hands and bowing before the court, Goyal submitted that his health is very bad and precarious and he was missing his bedridden wife.

Special Judge M G Deshpande said, "The

court also directed his lawyers to take appropriate steps from the point of his illness.

The court assured him that everything regarding his health will be taken care of." Goyal has been in judicial custody since September 14. Last month, taking cognisance of the chargesheet against Naresh Goyal, wife

Anita Goyal and four companies, the judge held it was found that public money worth Rs 5,716.3 crore obtained from a consortium of banks led by SBI and PNB is the total proceeds of crime generated from the criminal activities related to a scheduled offence by JIL and its promoters. On, Goyal requested that he be produced before the judge.

NIA attaches four properties of Lawrence Bishnoi gang

NEW DELHI

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Saturday attached five properties, including four related to the terrorist-gangster-drug smuggler nexus case and a fifth in another case related to the 2022 Chanapora arms seizure of Kashmir, on grounds

of being "proceeds of terrorism."

The four properties, including an SUV, attached in the terrorist-gangster case are owned by members of the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. In a coordinated swoop by NIA teams in Haryana, Punjab and Uttar Pradesh, these properties were

attached for having been used to hatch terror conspiracies and execute serious crimes. A flat in Lucknow belonging to Vikas Singh, harbinger of the terror gang and two other properties in Fazilka, Punjab owned by accused Dalip Kumar were attached, while an SUV registered in

the name of Joginder Singh was seized in Haryana. While Vikas Singh, as per NIA probe, is an associate of Bishnoi and had harboured terrorists including those accused in the RPG attack on Punjab Police headquarters, Joginder Singh is the father of gangster Kala Rana.

Whisky bottles with golden-hued contents stood tall on the lawyer's table

NEW DELHI

Law and liquor seldom mix in courtrooms, but was an exception as whisky bottles with golden-hued contents stood tall on the lawyer's table in the Chief Justice of India's courtroom in Supreme Court with Pernod Ricard, manufacturer of 'Blenders Pride' and 'Imperial Blue' brands of whisky, accusing a Madhya Pradesh company of selling the deceptively named 'London Pride' whisky and hurting its ₹4,400 crore annual turnover.

Pernod Ricard, which acquired these brands from Seagram, accused Dhar-

based Karanveer Singh Chhabra's JK Trading of copying the "get-up and dressing" of the bottles, and embossing 'London Pride' bottles with the Seagram logo. "They must be either manufacturing the bottles or getting them from scrap dealers," senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi told a bench of Chief Justice of India D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra.

When the bench wanted to have visual evidence of the alleged similarity between the two brands, Rohatgi pulled out the packaged bottles and placed

them on the arguing table, raising the curiosity of many lawyers who stood up from their seats to take a glance. Rohatgi even unpacked the bottles and tried to hand it over to the judges to take a closer look. A smiling CJI told Rohatgi to keep the bottles with him and said he had dealt with a case relating to a vodka brand as a judge of Bombay high court. Rohatgi said the logic applied in that judgment fully covered Pernod Ricard's argument. However, the CJI said 'pride' was a generic name and no copyright could be claimed over it.

'One Indian deported a day from US for illegal entry, stay in 2023'

AHMEDABAD:

In late December, a flight bound for Nicaragua with 303 Indian passengers was grounded at a French airport, reigniting concerns about illegal immigration from India. Turns out, in 2023, the US deported at least one Indian a day either for not having the proper papers or entering/residing in the country un lawfully, according to data from the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). The American authorities sent back 370 Indians in the past year, revealed figure from ICE. Between 2018 and 2023, a total of 5,477 Indians were deported from the US to India for illegal entry and stay. Highest number of Indians deported in 2020: ICE data ICE was established in 2003 by merging the former US Customs Service and the Immigration.

FROM VOCATIONAL TRAINING TO VIBRANT COMMUNITIES: GODREJ & BOYCE'S CSR IMPACT FELT BY LACS IN INDIA

Gurugram: Godrej & Boyce (G&B), the flagship company of the Godrej Group, announced its CSR achievements in 2023. Anchored in its steadfast commitment and significant milestones in nation-building, its initiatives are built on ensuring employability and community development. In line with its strategic emphasis on promising regions and trades, the company has INR 18 crore in its skilling initiative over the past decade. This investment has yielded social returns six times the initial amount. DISHA, the skill development initiative of G&B is committed to advancing vocational training aligned with the company's business needs, encompassing areas from sales through technical aspects. Partnering with 88 Vocational Training Institutes (VTIs) and 24 Govt. VTIs across 22 states in India, the key features of DISHA include specialized training sessions which delve into sales, service, interiors, building construc-

tion, manufacturing, technical training, and digital skills. By March 2023, the DISHA program had trained 1.79 lac youth in target states. The Digital Skills program encompasses a wide spectrum of courses, ranging from Robotics and Automation, Business Analytics and Dashboarding, to Digital Marketing and E-Commerce. While the technical courses cater to engineering students, the latter ones are accessible to all fresh graduates. An essential feature of this program is its on-site training, enabling trainees to practically apply their theoretical knowledge, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of their chosen field. Ashwini Deodeshmukh, Head, CSR, Godrej & Boyce, spoke about the CSR approach of Godrej & Boyce, "At Godrej & Boyce, we deeply believe in the philosophy of 'shared value', seamlessly intertwining business success with societal advancement.

Under the leadership of social worker Ramchandra Jadaula, many people of the constituency joined the Congress

Kaithal: Under the leadership of former director HAFED and famous social worker Ramchandra Jadaula today Karambir Singh from Halka Pundri, former Sarpanch Sanch, Chain Singh former Sarpanch Sirsal, Sanjeev former Sarpanch Khedi, National General Secretary and MP of Congress met at Delhi residence. . Expressing faith in Randeep Singh Surjewala, he accepted the membership of Congress Party. Along with this, Karm Singh Habi left Bahujan Samaj Party and joined Congress under the leadership of MP Surjewala. MP Randeep Singh Surjewala welcomed all the Congress members by wearing the party flag and promised full respect. After this, while talking in a meeting in the new



office in the town, former HAFED Director Ramchandra Jadaula said that with the joining of all the above dignitaries along with their colleagues in the Congress, the party has become stronger and the party will get full benefits. All the colleagues in Congress will be given full respect. He said that Congress National General Secretary and MP Randeep Singh Surjewala will never allow his colleagues to

be harmed. The interests of the public are completely safe in the hands of Surjewala, who is fighting for the interests of the public day and night, taking every section along with him and walking shoulder to shoulder. Surjewala is fighting for the interests of the public from Parliament to the streets. There is a stir in the government due to the immense popularity of Surjewala increasing

day by day. Social worker Ramchandra Jadaula claimed that in the upcoming elections to be held in Haryana in the year 2024, Congress under the leadership of MP Surjewala will work to form the government by waving the flag of victory in Haryana. Jasbir Khanoda, Raj Kumar Munnarehadi etc. were present on this occasion.

Dream of talented girl students will not be broken due to lack of resources

BPMS will run a special campaign on women empowerment and health

New Delhi: 'Chintan Chhoti Kashi Ka' program was organized by Bhiwani Family Friendship Association in Delhi. In this, the president of the organization, social worker and internationally renowned poet Rajesh Chetan, while giving information about the resolution of BPMS for women empowerment, said that BPMS will not let the dream of any talented student be shattered due to lack of resources. By providing resources, full help will be provided to realize his dream. Apart from this, along with awareness campaign regarding health services, BPMS's mission also includes providing services like medicines, life saving kits for heart patients, providing artificial limbs.



The organization also has a special plan for anemia and cancer awareness. Rajesh Chetan told that BPMS is going to organize a doctors meet of 140 doctors of Bhiwani very soon. A committee will also be formed for a health related helpline. Before this, the program was inaugurated by lighting the lamp. The stage was conducted by BPMS publicity minister Pramod Sharma. **Informed about activities through documentary** In the meeting, the service work and other activities done by the organization throughout the year were made aware through the documentary. **new year events** General Secretary of the organization Dinesh

Gupta laid out a detailed outline of the programs to be held for the coming year, which was finalized with everyone's consent. The guests and patrons present on this occasion also informed the officials of the organization with their suggestions regarding the programs completed last year and the programs and service works to be held in the coming year. **Women need financial support** After this, while reflecting on various topics, on the topic of women empowerment, Dr. Vandana Vats shared information about the women of Bhiwani district and also told about the importance of empowering women economically. After this,

Vandana Vats appealed to all the members that in the field of education, they should help those girls who are bright but are not able to get education due to financial condition. **discussion of political scenarios** While reflecting on politics, senior journalist Kesari Sharma, while discussing the past political scenarios, told how the politicians of Bhiwani had an important role in the politics of the country. **Discussion on contribution to the development of Bhiwani** President of Social Servant Representative Assembly, Surendra Jain, discussed in detail about the important contribution made by the social organizations of Bhiwani in the progress of Bhiwani. **Big offer to the needy** While reflecting on the health sector, Secretary of Vaishya Mahavidyalaya, Dr. Suresh Gupta said that the way common people are careless about their health is very worrying.

Srinagar city records coldest night of season thus far

Srinagar A thin layer of ice formed on the surface of the Dal Lake here and other water bodies in Kashmir due to the intense cold wave that is gripping the region, the officials said. Kashmir is currently under the grip of "Chilla-i-Kalan", a 40-day harsh winter period, when a cold wave sweeps the region and temperatures drop considerably, leading to the freezing of water bodies as well as water in pipes. The chances of snowfall are the highest during this period and most areas, particularly the higher reaches, receive heavy snowfall. The Srinagar city recorded a minimum temperature of minus 5.6 degrees Celsius on Saturday night, down from minus 5.4 degrees Celsius the previous night, the officials said. They said Qazigund recorded a low of minus 5.0 degrees Celsius, while in the ski resort of Gulmarg in north Kashmir it was 4.4 degrees Celsius on Saturday night, a notch down from the previous night. Pahalgam in south Kashmir's Anantnag district, which serves as one of the base camps for the annual Amarnath Yatra, recorded a minimum temperature of minus 6.5 degrees Celsius, down from the previous night's minus 6.3 degrees Celsius, they said. The minimum temperature in Kokernag town settled at minus 2.7 degrees Celsius and in Kupwara at minus 5.3 degrees Celsius. People who live in houseboats at the Dal Lake had a tough time breaking the layer of ice over the water body to reach its banks. Water in pipes also froze in several parts of the Kashmir valley. Kashmir has been going through a prolonged dry spell and a 79 per cent deficit in rainfall was recorded for December. There has been no snowfall in most plain areas of Kashmir, while the upper reaches of the valley have received lesser than usual amount of snow. The meteorological department has forecast mainly dry weather till January 12. Srinagar 'Chilla-i-Kalan' will end on January 31. However, the cold conditions will continue after that with a 20-day 'Chilla-i-Khurd' (small cold) and a 10-day 'Chilla-i-Bachha' (baby cold).

PM Modi has changed the picture & destiny of India: Yogi Adityanath

Gorakhpur **Uttar Pradesh** Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has changed both the picture and the destiny of India and that under his leadership, India's global respect has gone up significantly while the borders have become secure. Addressing a program held as part of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp

Yatra in Sanjhai, Gorakhpur, CM Yogi said that under PM Modi's leadership the country is witnessing the construction of world-class infrastructure, including highways, railways, and airports, in addition to world-class health institutes and fertilizer factories.

Yogi added that to enhance public convenience, extensive efforts are being made to connect every vil-

lage with roads and providing villagers access to clean drinking water. The Chief Minister also laid the foundation stone and inaugurated development projects worth Rs 6.47 crore and interacted with the beneficiaries of various schemes on the occasion. He further highlighted that prior to the BJP forming governments at the centre and in the state, people faced

challenges accessing basic necessities like toilets, housing, rations, healthcare, roads, and electricity. However, with the formation of the government under Narendra Modi's leadership in 2014, a familial approach was adopted towards the 140 crore citizens and the government started working for their welfare diligently, he pointed out.

India is touching new heights in space exploration globally: CM Yogi

Lucknow Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has congratulated the Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on the historic achievement of its only solar mission Aditya-L1 spacecraft reaching Sun-Earth Lagrange Point 1 (L1). In a post on his official X handle, CM Yogi wrote: "Congratulations to Team ISRO on this important achievement of #AdityaL1, India's first solar

observatory, reaching its destination. Their dedication and expertise will undoubtedly uncover important solar insights." He added: "Prime Minister Narendra Modi's commitment towards scientific progress has inspired India's space exploration efforts and our country is touching new heights on the global stage." It is noteworthy that ISRO's Aditya-L1 spacecraft will fly 15 lakh kilome-

ters in 126 days. After covering a distance of 1 km, Sun-Earth reached Lagrange Point 1 (L1) on Saturday. L1 is a place in space where the gravitational forces of Earth and Sun are balanced. Aditya will reach L1 on September 2 at 11.50 am. The XL version of PSLV-C57 was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Sriharikota via rocket.

IAF's C-130J aircraft makes historic night landing at Kargil airstrip

New Delhi Located amid the challenging Himalayan terrain at an altitude exceeding 8,800 feet, the Kargil airstrip poses distinct challenges for pilots. In a landmark feat, a C-130J aircraft of the Indian Air Force recently landed at the Kargil airstrip in the night for the first time. Sharing the

video of the night landing, the IAF said, "In a first, an IAF C-130J aircraft recently landed on a night landing at the Kargil airstrip. Employing terrain masking enroute, the exercise also dovetailed a training mission of the Garuds." C-130J aircraft of the IAF recently landed on the Kargil airstrip in

the night for the first time C-130 J aircraft of the IAF recently landed on the Kargil airstrip in the night for the first time. The IAF, however, did not provide more details about the training mission. In November last year, the IAF successfully landed two of its Lockheed Martin C-130J-30 'Super

Hercules' military transport aircraft at a rudimentary and unfeasible airstrip in Uttarakhand.

The mission was carried out in inclement weather, to deliver heavy engineering equipment to help rescue workers trapped inside a nearby under-construction mountain tunnel.

HC: E-commerce platform cannot be haven for infringers, liable for selling fake products

New Delhi This is among the first legal cases that interpret the applicability of safe harbour protections on digital websites E-commerce platforms cannot become a haven for infringers of intellectual property and allow people to sell counterfeits, the Delhi high court has said, in an order laying down that "safe harbour" protections will not apply in such cases as it pulled up a shopping website. This is among the first legal cases that interpret the applicability of safe harbour protections on digital websites and services, which has been key to allowing internet commerce and social media by according companies that play the role of an "intermediary" to be immune from the liability of what a third party does.

Yogi govt to strengthen Prosecution Department, to set up its own office in nine districts of UP

Lucknow The Yogi government has decided to set up the Prosecution department's own offices in nine districts of Uttar Pradesh. The move aims to strengthen the Prosecution Department, which plays an important role in sending criminals behind bars through effective advocacy in the court. Until now, the department's offices were operating from rented premises or within the collectorate premises. Having its own office will enable the department to discharge its role with greater freedom and facilities. It is worth mentioning here that under the Yogi government's zero tolerance policy, while the UP police is cracking down on criminals on the one hand, the Prosecution department in the court is playing a significant role in ensuring punishment to criminals by proving the charges against them. This has

led to a decrease in criminal activities in the state. The Prosecution department has achieved success in awarding of punishment for the crimes in over 30,000 cases within the last three years in various courts across the state. Department faced problem in accommodating witnesses. Notably, prosecution offices are being run in all the districts of the state under the Directorate of Prosecution. However, these offices are mostly operating in rented buildings or on the collectorate premises. This sometimes causes difficulties for the department in accommodating witnesses for cases. The problem worsens when it is necessary to provide security along with accommodating a witness in serious cases. department to prioritize marking districts for setting up its own office.

Winter vacation: Delhi schools to remain closed for next 5 days for students up to Class 5, says Atishi

New Delhi **Schools** in Delhi will remain closed for the next five days for students from nursery to Class 5 due to the prevailing cold weather conditions in the national capital, said education minister Atishi on Sunday. The announcement comes hours after the Delhi government retracted an order on the extension of winter vacation in schools within the national capital. Earlier on Saturday, the directorate stated that the winter vacation in all government

and private schools in the national capital has been extended till January 10 due to cold weather conditions. A Delhi government official said that there was some error in the order. Delhi's directorate of education had said that further orders regarding winter break would be issued in due course. "Order No.DE.23(3)/Sch.Br./2024/18 dated: January 6, 2024, regarding extension of Winter Vacation stands withdrawn with immediate effect. Further orders in this regard may be issued

in due course," the updated order read. On Saturday, Delhi spent yet another day in grey, foggy conditions with daytime peak temperature reaching just 15.2 degrees Celsius and low in the early hours settling at 8.9 degrees. In what may be of some relief, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) predicted temperatures to rise over the next two days, with an approaching western disturbance likely to bring light rain on Tuesday.

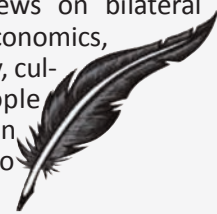
Editorial

India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission

That was for only two days when he met his counterpart Russian Foreign Minister (FM) Sergey Lavrov and the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Trade and Industry Denis Manturov, who also co-chair, along with Jaishankar, the India-Russia Inter-Governmental Commission on Trade, Economic, and Scientific Cooperation. The highlight of the current visit was EAM's meeting with President Putin, which is an opportunity and privilege that is granted to a very select number of foreign ministers. EAM did not get to meet Putin during his last visit in November 2022. India and the Soviet Union shared a special relationship of trust and confidence during the Cold War years. The first decade after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991 witnessed some turbulence in bilateral ties between India and the successor state, Russia. However, since 2000, when the two countries signed a Strategic Partnership Agreement during the first visit of President Vladimir Putin to India in October 2000, bilateral relations have been on an upward trajectory.

The relationship was subsequently upgraded to a Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership during Putin's visit to India in 2010. It was also agreed during the visit in 2000 to hold annual summits between the two countries, alternately in India and Russia. Twenty-one annual summits were held from 2000 until 2021. The only year when the summit did not take place was 2020, ostensibly due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Summits did not take place in 2022 and 2023 either, apparently due to Russia's pre-occupation with the conflict in Ukraine in 2022 and because India was tied up with the responsibility of the G20 Presidency in 2023. However, in the warm and effusive interaction between President Putin and EAM Jaishankar on December 27, 2023, the former invited his "dear friend, Prime Minister Modi" to visit Russia in 2024. This invitation was accepted on behalf of PM Modi by Jaishankar, who said that PM Modi looks forward to visiting Russia in 2024. The fact that regular summits have been held for most of the period since this highest-level institutional mechanism was put in place is testimony to the high importance that the two countries and their leaders attach to the partnership. In view of the growing acrimony and polarisation in global affairs in recent years between the East (Russia and China) and the West (USA, Europe, Japan, Australia), as well as the North (Developed) and South (Developing/Global South), strong and steady relations between India and Russia are a factor of peace and stability in international relations. While leaders in India have changed over the last 23 years since the Strategic Partnership was signed in 2000, leadership in Russia has stayed in the hands of President Putin. He can be termed one of the prime architects of modern-day partnerships between the two countries. On the Indian side, PM Modi has played a critical role in keeping the relationship stable and consistent over the last nine years, when the world has witnessed cataclysmic changes in relations between different major power centres. In these unpredictable times, PM Modi has guided bilateral ties with sure and firm hands. As with the Soviet Union, strong relations with Russia have been a key pillar of India's foreign policy. The visit's interactions with Deputy PM Manturov and FM Lavrov, the EAM had a comprehensive exchange of views on bilateral cooperation in trade and economics, energy, defence, connectivity, cultural and people-to-people exchanges, and cooperation between regions of the two countries.

He also shared perspectives on global and regional developments.



Israel regrouped and launched a ferocious counter-attack

West Asian region broke out when Hamas launched a surprise terror attack across Gaza into Israel in the early hours of 7 October 2023. As would have been expected, Israel regrouped and launched a ferocious counter-attack vowing to eliminate Hamas from the face of the Earth. Three months down the line, there is no signs of fighting coming to a close or a ceasefire despite best efforts of the international community including the UN. Estimates suggest that already more than 22,000 civilians have been killed in Gaza including 9,000 children. Two issues have been of primary concern ever since the war broke out. Firstly, how soon will the war come to an end and with that hopefully, end of the crippling humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The second concern was if the conflict would spread across the region and more countries would join in. On the first, Israel has dismissed all calls for an early end to the war stating that it is ready to fight a prolonged war in order to achieve its military objective of eliminating the Hamas threat forever. Although Israel had expected that with its military superiority and technical prowess, it would be able to hunt down and eliminate Hamas soon, it is, however, nowhere close to it. On 29 December

There has also been an increase in violence in the West Bank too, mostly instigated by attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers on Palestinians. The latest entrant into the conflict was the Houthis who have blocked the passage of Israel flagged ships or ships carrying cargo bound from/to Israeli ports.

2023, The Israeli Chief of Staff of the Army was quoted stating that Israel does not have a magic solution to eliminate Hamas. Thus, despite enjoying limited military success and incurring significant losses, Israel is expected to continue its military operations for some time, at least. The second concern is even trickier and dangerous. Till now, the conflict has been largely confined to the Gaza Strip. There have been exchanges of rocket attacks and even drone strikes in Syria and Lebanon where Hezbollah is active.

There has also been an increase in violence in the West Bank too, mostly instigated by attacks perpetrated by Israeli settlers on Palestinians. The latest entrant into the conflict was the Houthis who have blocked the passage of Israel flagged ships or ships carry-

ing cargo bound from/to Israeli ports. Despite the best efforts of the US, including deploying an Aircraft carrier led fleet, the Houthis are determined to attack Israel through attacks on its ships. In fact, on 26 December, while briefing Knesset lawmakers, the Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant said, "We are in a multi-front war. We are being attacked from seven fronts; Gaza, Lebanon, Syria, Judea and Samaria (the West Bank), Iraq, Yemen and Iran. We have already responded and acted on six of those fronts."

As the war prolongs, it is Israel which is enduring increasing casualties and economic costs. The rest of the Muslim countries around it wait and watch, without getting directly involved in the military conflict while the three 'H' of Iran i.e. Hamas, Hezbollah and Houthis are

taking the fight to the Israeli defence forces. It is perhaps because of this realisation that Israel and its primary benefactor, the US have decided to increase the costs on the region, especially Iran, as it is considered the shadow and influence behind repeated attacks on Israel and the US in the region.

Provocations and attacks on Iran

As a result, in the past week or so, there has been a spate of attacks on Iran and its assets in the region. A terror attack on 03rd January involving twin explosions at an event near the tomb of Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) General Qassem Soleimani in the Iranian city of Kerman, killed almost 100 people, marking it as the worst terror attack since Iran's Revolution in 1979. It may be recalled that Qaseem Soleimani was killed through a US drone strike in Iraq on 3 January 2020. On 2nd January, Hamas's deputy leader abroad Saleh al-Arouri was killed in an Israeli strike in the Beirut suburb of Dahiyeh, he was considered the de facto leader of Hamas's military wing in the West Bank. The assassination of Arouri came barely a week after the killing of Iran's most influential military commander in Levant, Seyed Radhi Mousavi, in a suspected Israeli airstrike in Syria's

capital Damascus on 25th December. Mousavi, a Quds Force general, is the most senior IRGC commander killed since Soleimani.

On 4 January, another blow was dealt when a suspected US drone attack killed Mushtaq Talib Al-Saidi, deputy commander of operations in the Iraqi capital of Harakat Al-Nujaba, a pro-Iran Militia group. Earlier, on 18th December 2023, around 70 percent of Iran's petrol stations had their services disrupted after a massive cyber-attack by the hacker group Gonjeshke Darande, which translates to "Predatory Sparrow", linked to Israel's Mossad. The terror strike on 3rd January is the latest attempt to provoke Iran to join the war directly. Iran has already dispatched its war-ship,

, the Alborz, on 1 January to the Red Sea, one day after the US Navy destroyed and sank three Houthi small boats. Iran's President, in a public statement, has taken a pledge to avenge the death of its IRGC commander Mousavi. However, this is not the first time that Iran is under attack. There is a consistent history of attack on Iran's assets in the recent past. Shortly after the assassination of Soleimani, a cyberattack hit computers in Iran on 19 May 2020 that regulated maritime.

Crypto-values across the board tanked

The year has barely begun and crypto-values across the board tanked. About 600 million dollars in crypto went up in smoke in just a few hours. This was due to a report about Bitcoin Spot Exchange Traded Funds, or ETFs, which is something like a Bitcoin mutual fund. For months, there were rumours that these would be made legal in the US. The final decision is expected next week, but on Wednesday, a report said that these Bitcoin funds could get delayed by a few months, and that caused the market to crash. This highlights the volatility of cryptocurrencies. Before this, cryptocurrency values had been rising steadily. On January 1, Bitcoin was at a 21-month peak. Its value had crossed 45,000 dollars. Now, it is trading slightly lower. But nowhere near its bottom

value seen in the last few months. Next week could see cryptocurrencies across the board rise again. It depends on how the US chooses to deal with them. So it raises the question: Should one invest in something as volatile as crypto? That is of course best answered by a financial professional, someone who understands your individual situation, because there's no one size fits all answer. Crypto has made some people enormously wealthy, but many have lost their life-savings as well. One thing for sure is that crypto is volatile. Investing in it is akin to gambling. And you should never gamble with more than you're willing to lose. Of course, this is if you're allowed to gamble at all. Some countries like India don't officially allow crypto-trading, and that should

have been the case for Indian investors. But it hasn't worked out that way: Indian investors have been trading on foreign exchanges, away from the scrutiny of Indian financial market regulators. And of course, the regulators aren't happy. So last week, India began banning what it calls 'illegal' foreign exchanges. Cryptocurrencies tanked on Wednesday. It was the first 'crypto crash' of 2024. Hundreds of millions of dollars in market value were wiped out in just a few hours. Before this, most cryptocurrencies were on the rise. Most of them made gains throughout 2023. That streak seemed to have ended. Apparently, crypto volatility is back. There is an old saying: 'The greater the risk, the greater the reward.' These days, nothing quite epitomises.

Modi's return to office in 2019 was one of the biggest pro-incumbency

While other governments have suffered anti-incumbency, Modi's return to office in 2019 was one of the biggest pro-incumbency mandates in the country's history. While the Congress has returned to power in the past, it has either been in the initial years of Independence when no opposition to Congress existed, or due to a sympathy wave as in the case of the 1984 victory in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. The increase in the BJP's votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election was an unprecedented phenomenon in India's political history. It is Modi alone who has been voted back to power with an even bigger mandate than achieved in the first term solely based on his popularity fuelled by his governance model. The BJP built on this popularity by expanding the organisation, which has rapidly expanded over the last 10 years.

The countdown for elections to the 18th Lok Sabha has started, and all estimates suggest Narendra Modi will return to 7, Lok Kalyan Marg with an absolute majority. While the Opposition parties are trying to put up a united front to stop Modi, the attempts to unite are limited to parties meeting at various locations in the country and dispersing without arriving at any concrete agenda.

Opposition disunity apart, there are several factors that make Narendra Modi's re-election as Prime Minister imminent. **Charisma intact**

In the post-Independence electoral history of India, there has been no mass leader whose popularity has soared consistently like that of Narendra Modi. Today, no other leader can match up to Modi's 'image' and 'leadership'. 'Brand Modi' evokes a trust among people that the country has not seen in the past, or the present. The absence of any other credible face is a major reason why BJP's return to power is assured.

What constitutes the BJP's biggest strength is the opposition's biggest weakness. There is no face in the parties trying to take on the BJP that garners the kind of confidence Modi instils in the people. The fact alone sets the BJP ahead in the race against the rest. Because of Modi's leadership and his charisma, a large section of the country joined the BJP after 2014. This was the reason that in the 2019 general elections, the BJP achieved its best vote percentage. The result was a big stamp of approval of the people on Prime Minister Modi because the party had contested the election in his name, taking to voters the development work initiated under him. While other govern-

ments have suffered anti-incumbency, Modi's return to office in 2019 was one of the biggest pro-incumbency mandates in the country's history. While the Congress has returned to power in the past, it has either been in the initial years of Independence when no opposition to Congress existed, or due to a sympathy wave as in the case of the 1984 victory in the aftermath of Indira Gandhi's assassination. The increase in the BJP's votes in the 2019 Lok Sabha election was an unprecedented phenomenon in India's political history. It is Modi alone who has been voted back to power with an even bigger mandate than achieved in the first term solely based on his popularity fuelled by his governance model. The BJP built on this popularity by expanding the organisation, which has rapidly expanded over the last 10 years. Not only have the numbers swelled, first under Amit Shah and then Jagatprakash Nadda, the organisational structure has been made more cohesive and dynamic. Today, the BJP has a disciplined and structured organisation which has seamless communication up to the booth level. This is a model unique to the BJP. Powered by the structural cohesion, the BJP campaigns 365 day.

Doklam and Galwan worsened the India-China relationship and the involvement of extra-regional actors

In the last three years, India has emerged as a major weapons supplier to Armenia. These big-ticket defense deals include the sale of Pinaka multi-barrel rocket launchers, a USD 40 million contract of SWATI weapon-locating radars, ammunition anti-tank missiles, and 155 mm artillery guns. The author's interlocutors in India's Ministry of External Affairs informed that Armenia is interested in more defense deals, including drones and counter-drone systems, loitering munitions, and mid-range surface-to-air missiles. In October 2022, Armenia's defense minis-

ter, Suren Papikyan, visited the defense expo in New Delhi and met his counterpart Rajnath Singh. In Sept 2022, both countries signed MoUs in culture, digital infrastructure, and renewable energy to promote business ties at the India-Armenia Conference 2022 in Bengaluru. The delegates explored the trade and investment potential in pharma, agriculture, information technology, film-city, and tourism.

Additionally, one can witness a major uptick in think tank-level cooperation between India and Armenia. Most recently, the

author represented Usanas Foundation, India's premier foreign policy think tank, at the Yerevan Dialogue Series organised by the Prime Minister's Office of Armenia, in collaboration with Armenia's top-level think tank, Applied Policy Research Institute (APRI).

After the Chinese incursions in Doklam and Galwan worsened the India-China relationship and the involvement of extra-regional actors like Turkey in the Kashmir conflict, India's foreign policy vision, approach, and strategic calculus are expanding beyond South Asia. India's out-

reach to Armenia, a faraway country in the South Caucasus, is part of this new change. The October 2021 visit of S Jaishankar, India's External Affairs Minister, to Yerevan is historic because it was the first such visit of the Indian foreign minister to Armenia in the last 30 years.

Before this, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Armenian PM Nikol Pashinyan on the sidelines of the 74th UNGA in New York, seeking Yerevan's support in finalising a trade arrangement with the Eurasian Economic Union (EaEU).

Effective leadership leads to an increase in respect for everyone: Yogi

● **CM Yogi participates in 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' program in Raptinagar and Nanda**



Gorakhpur Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Sunday, stated that when leadership is good, everyone's respect increases. In the last ten years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi India has emerged as a global power, he said. "The country is witnessing the expansion of highways, railways, and air connectivity. AIIMS is being established, and industries are flourishing. Employment is being generated on a large scale. Every eligible person is benefitting from welfare schemes, without any discrimination", he added. CM Yogi made the remarks while addressing the programs organized under Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra in Raptinagar and Nanda Nagar of Gorakhpur. He

also interacted with beneficiaries of various schemes. He further added, "The government's schemes are not based on caste, religion, or region and are meant for villages, the poor, farmers, women, and youth. Free housing facilities have been provided to 4 crore people in the country and 55 lakh people in Uttar Pradesh. In the state, 15 crore people have been receiving free ration for the last three and a half years, and this will continue for the next five years. A large number of people are benefiting from the Ayushman Yojana, receiving free medical treatment". CM Yogi stated that what never happened before is happening now. Presently, employment is being generated, development is taking place, women are getting security, and farm-

ers are receiving respect, he remarked. The large crowds gathered serve as testimony that the benefits of the schemes have reached the common people on a large scale, he pointed out. He also appealed to those who, for any reason, have not been able to avail the benefits of the schemes to come forward and get registered for relevant scheme. While mentioning the developmental activities, the Chief Minister stated that the changing face of Gorakhpur reflects the new Uttar Pradesh. "Here, the fertilizer factory has started, AIIMS is operational, and BRD Medical College has become a centre of medical excellence. The place that used to be a stronghold of crime, Ramgarh Taal, is now shining on the tourism map. The

encephalitis that used to cost the lives of thousands of children has been brought under control", he asserted. The Chief Minister extended his wishes for Makar Sankranti and consecration ceremony of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya on January 22 to all the people in advance. Furthermore, CM Yogi exhorted people to conduct a cleanliness campaign for the consecration ceremony and make religious sites clean and beautiful. Member of Parliament Ravi Kishan also addressed the program on this occasion. In the two programs of the 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra,' Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath also interacted with beneficiaries of various schemes, including PM Awas Yojana, PM SVANidhi Yojana, National Rural Livelihood Mission, BC Sakhi, Ujjwala, and Ayushman Yojana. Everyone expressed their gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Chief Minister CM Yogi, sharing their experiences. The Chief Minister mentioned that providing benefits of schemes without discrimination is a guarantee from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Ramotsav 2024 Ayodhya's four main paths are inspired by the four Vedas

Ayodhya

The Yogi government is leaving no stone unturned to revive the ancient glory of Ayodhya while equipping the city with world-class facilities. The four main paths in Ayodhya, namely Bhakti Path, Janmabhoomi Path, Ram Path, and Dharma Path, have been developed based on the concepts of four Vedas and four eras. These paths, adorned with mural painting, wall painting, pebble stone sculpture, modern lighting, and Wi-Fi connectivity, represent a global standard achieved through the appropriate utilization of solar energy. It is noteworthy that the double-engine government has accelerated the development of Ayodhya, transforming its dilapidated, narrow, and pothole-ridden roads into roads of global standards since 2017. After decades of neglect, Ayodhya is now rapidly establishing new benchmarks in development, and is



moving forward continuously to solidify its identity as the spiritual capital by the year 2047. Undoubtedly, the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is instrumental in making this possible. Prior to 2017, Ayodhya was plagued by restricted power supply, irregularities in drainage systems, and a lack of cleanliness. Stray animals roaming around the single-lane, pothole-ridden paths were a great traffic hazard. This had become the identity of Ayodhya. However, since 2017, Ayodhya has rapidly caught up with the pace of devel-

opment, made possible by the double-engine government and particularly due to the commitment of the Chief Minister. Presently, the four main paths—Bhakti Path, Janmabhoomi Path, Ram Path, and Dharam Path—are being transformed with world-class modern facilities and artistically crafted vintage aesthetics. These major paths now boast features such as facade lighting, mural painting, vintage Victorian solar tail lamps, artistically designed arc lamps, proper pavement, inland drainage and concrete layout car-

riageway, greenery enabled divider, use of fiber glass in infrastructural development and concrete modelling. Besides, a smart traffic regulation system through CCTV surveillance has also been implemented on these four main roads in Ayodhya. **Box The names of the four main paths in Ayodhya, their past, present status, and the difference between both: Ram Path Extension: Connects Sahadatganj to Lata Mangeshkar Chowk (Naya Ghat). Total length: 12.94 kilometers. Cost: Rs 844.94 crore. Type: Four Lane Condition before 2017: Single lane with uneven, pothole-ridden roads, with congestion and traffic jams caused by disorderly movement of vehicles being regular features. Current Situation: In the government of the double engine, rapid development took place. The restoration and beautification of Naya Ghat Chowk took place.**

"Cold day" to "severe cold day" conditions are likely to continue

NEW DELHI: Indian Meteorological Department (IMD) on said that, "cold day" to "severe cold day" conditions are likely to continue over some parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi and Rajasthan for next two more days and significantly decrease thereafter. According to the latest forecast from the India Meteorological Department (IMD), dense to very dense fog is expected to persist over Northwest India for the next two days, gradually diminishing afterward. In their daily bulletin, the IMD reported minimum temperatures ranging from 6 to 10 degrees Celsius across significant regions. These areas include most parts of Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, Delhi, West Rajasthan, and select portions of East Rajasthan and West Uttar Pradesh. This information provides valuable insights into the prevailing weather conditions, aiding residents and authorities in making informed decisions based on the forecasted temperatures. "These are above normal by 3-5°C over many parts of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Maharashtra and some parts of Haryana, Delhi, Chhattisgarh, Odisha. These are below normal by 2-4 degree Celsius in some parts of West Rajasthan. Today, the lowest minimum temperature of 2.8 degree Celsius reported at Bikaner (West Rajasthan)," said the IMD.

The IMD also forecasts the persistence of dense to very dense fog conditions during the night and morning in certain areas and isolated pockets across Punjab, Haryana, Chandigarh, and East Rajasthan until January 7. Additionally, dense fog is expected in isolated pockets for the following 24 hours after that period. "Dense to very dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in morning in isolated pockets over West Uttar Pradesh and West Rajasthan on Saturday and dense fog in isolated pockets till January 8," said IMD. According to IMD, dense fog conditions are very likely to prevail for a few hours in morning in isolated pockets over East Uttar Pradesh till January 9.

, over West Madhya Pradesh,

55 candidates selected from Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Coaching

Lucknow, The Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Yojana is bringing new hope into the lives of poor competitive exam aspirants. Recently, 55 candidates who prepared for the Lekhpal Recruitment Examination through Abhyudaya coaching have been selected. It is worth mentioning here that the Social Welfare

Department is operating Abhyudaya coaching centres in offline and online modes across 75 districts of UP. Besides, the department is providing the facility of 8 residential coaching centres for competitive exams, from where a total of 83 candidates who received training have been finally selected in various

exams in the year 2023. Out of these, 55 candidates have been selected for the Uttar Pradesh Revenue Lekhpal Recruitment Exam. Scheme fulfilling dreams of youth. The main objective of the Mukhyamantri Abhyudaya Yojana is to provide free coaching to students for competitive exams such as IAS, IPS, PCS, NDA,

CDS, NEET, and others. Through this scheme, all students who are unable to afford coaching due to their financial situation are provided with free coaching. Under this scheme, students do not need to go to another state to receive coaching; they can avail of coaching from their own state and district.

Transport secretary 'misses' speed signs, fined thrice

NEW DELHI: The road transport secretary got three challans for speed violation on a particular stretch in the capital. Guess why? He missed the speed limit sign which was placed "almost" behind a tree. Poor placement of signs - often behind trees and poles - on Delhi roads result in vehicle owners getting "challan surprises". It was no different for Union road transport secretary Anurag Jain. "The system does not

recognise who the owner is and I've paid challan thrice for speeding. But my problem was different. I took up with police the point that the speed signs should be visible to me. I thought the speed limit was 60 kmph on that stretch and my vehicle was at 61 kmph. Usually, this should not have been the reason for getting a challan," he said. Sharing his experience on Friday, Jain said "technology treats all com-

muters equally", and also flagged how it is essential to place road signs "at the right spot" so that no driver misses them. Massive protest erupts across India against Central government new hit-and-run law Jain said he sent a person to check the speed limit so that he could take a call whether to challenge the challans. "The person told me that 50 kmph was the speed limit sign mentioned on the board.

Govt committed not to allow injustice to anyone: CM Yogi

Gorakhpur Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday said that the government is committed not to allow injustice to anyone and determined to bring happiness in everyone's life. Listening to the problems of around 200 people at Janata Darshan held in the auditorium of



Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan on Gorakhnath Temple premises, CM Yogi instructed officials to take strict legal

action against those who forcibly encroach on someone's land. "Solving people's problems is the prior-

ity of the government and any kind of negligence or laxity in this will not be tolerated", CM Yogi told officials. The Chief Minister went to the people, listened to their problems one by one patiently and assured them of prompt and satisfactory resolution to each of their problems.

Dawood childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Ratnagiri went under the hammer

NEW DELHI: Dawood Ibrahim's childhood house and three other properties owned by his family in Maharashtra's Ratnagiri went under the hammer. The properties were registered under the name of Dawood Ibrahim's mother, Amina Bi. The auction was organised under the Safema act, officials said. The auction took place at the Aayakar Bhavan in south Mumbai. Only two of the four listed properties, which received four and three bidders, respectively, attracted suc-

cessful bids, with a single person emerging as the successful bidder for both. There were no bids for the other two properties. An agricultural land with the reserve price of Rs 15,440 was auctioned for Rs 2.01 crore, the highest bid at the auction. A total of four bidders came for this property. Another agricultural land fetched the highest bid of Rs 3.28 lakh against the reserve price of Rs 1,56,270, officials said. The name of the successful bidder was not disclosed. According to a participant

the winning bidder was a Delhi-based lawyer. Earlier in 2017 and in 2020, over 17 properties belonging to the underworld don were auctioned off by Safema. Dawood, a key accused in 1993 Mumbai serial blasts, lived in the Mumbai village before moving to Mumbai in 1983. Dawood is also designated as a 'global terrorist' by the United Nations under United Nations Security Resolution 1267, and listed under the Fourth Schedule of the UAPA Act, 1967. (With agency inputs)

Delhi-Jaipur & Bengaluru-Mysuru to soon get GPS toll

NEW DELHI: Delhi-Jaipur highway (NH-48) and Bengaluru-Mysuru expressway will be the first two stretches where GPS-based tolling system will be introduced ensuring commuters pay user fee for just the number of kilometres travelled.

TOI has learnt that preparatory work has started and better geofencing of the Delhi-Jaipur stretch has begun for exact calculation of the stretch travelled and toll payable for the journey. Sources said currently more than 18 lakh commercial vehicles are fitted with GPS-based vehicle location tracking system and to begin with, these vehicles can start paying the user fee.

Sources said this new GPS-based tolling system will be tried on different stretches and will be expanded gradually.

Yogi govt to install 500 prefab toilets at ghats of Saryu river in Ayodhya for visitors' convenience

Ayodhya

As a part of ongoing projects under Vision Document 2047, Ayodhya Development Authority (ADA), in line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's mission to promote religious tourism in Uttar Pradesh, has initiated a project to install prefabricated toilets at all the scenic ghats along the holy Sarayu River so that tourists coming to Ayodhya for consecration ceremony as well as for Magh Snan do not face any inconvenience. Notably, after the consecration ceremony on January 22, there will be a huge gathering of devotees at the Sarayu ghats and Shri Ram Janmabhoomi temple. Moreover, on the auspicious occasion of Makar Sankranti on January 15, saints, devotees, and the local population of Ayodhya will take a dip in the holy Sarayu at various ghats under Magh Snan. In view of this, the Yogi Government is going to install prefab toilets to provide sanitation facilities for the visitors. Quality will be determined by cost-based selection. The process of installation, operation and maintenance of 500 prefab toilets has already been started at all the major ghats along Sarayu river through selection of an agency. The agency will be determined with due consideration to cost and quality. Under this, the agencies willing to work will have to implement the processes like demonstrating the working prototype of these toilets in front of ADA and providing the best facilities at a low cost. General public will be able to use these toilets for free. The operation of these toilets through the agency will be implemented for a minimum of 12 months. The designated agency must ensure that the entire block is in good operational and hygienic conditions. Toilet seat blocks supplied with all necessary sanitary fittings should be of the highest quality. Moreover, effective cleaning of septic waste, uninterrupted water supply, and proper maintenance of sanitation equipment using environmentally friendly chemicals, as well as tasks such as maintaining a gang-chart, registers/attendance records/caretakers/management oversight as well as organising cleanliness programs will be carried out. Additionally, the agency will have to ensure that toilet seat blocks have proper ventilation, lighting, and operate 24x7 with auxiliary tools. The agency will provide all necessary information/signage and public awareness tools, in order to fulfil the objectives of Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0.

Turkey and others can do to exert influence, particularly on Iran and its proxies

CHANIA: Blinken's fourth visit in three months comes as developments in Lebanon, northern Israel, the Red Sea and Iraq have put intense strains on what had been a modestly successful US push to prevent a regional conflagration since Hamas attacked Israel on October 7, and as international criticism of Israel's military operation mounts.

Blinken held talks with Turkey's president, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, and foreign minister, Hakan Fidan, in Istanbul about what Turkey and others can do to exert influence, particularly on Iran and its proxies, to ease tensions, speed humanitarian aid deliveries to Gaza and begin planning for reconstruction and governance of postwar Gaza.

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Much of the territory has been reduced to rubble by Israeli bombardments. Hours before Blinken's meetings, Lebanon's Iran-backed Hezbollah militia fired dozens of rockets at northern Israel and said the barrage was an initial response to the targeted killing, presumably by Israel, of a top leader from the allied Hamas group in Lebanon's capital this past week. Stepped-up

attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels have disrupted international trade and led to increased efforts by the US and its allies to patrol the vital commercial waterway and respond to threats. The coalition of countries issued what amounted to a final warning to the Houthis on Wednesday to cease their attacks on vessels or

face potential targeted military action. Since December 19, the militants have carried out at least two dozen attacks in response to the Israel-Hamas war. From the Turkish officials, Blinken sought at least consideration of potential monetary or in-kind contributions to reconstruction efforts in Gaza and participation in security arrangements, according to US officials. Erdogan has been harshly critical of Israel and prime minister Benjamin Netanyahu for the prosecution of the war and the impact it has had on Palestinian civilians. Blinken "emphasized the need to prevent the conflict from spreading ... and work toward broader, lasting peace that ensures Israel's security and advances the

establishment of a Palestinian state," the US State Department said in a statement summarizing Blinken's meeting with Erdogan. Blinken also stressed the importance that the US places on Turkey's ratification of Sweden's membership in Nato, a long-delayed process that the Turks have said they will complete soon. Sweden's entry to the alliance is seen as a significant response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. A Turkish official said Fidan told Blinken that Israel's "increasing aggression" in Gaza was a threat to the region and he called for an immediate cease-fire and the delivery of "uninterrupted" humanitarian aid. Fidan said negotiations for a two-state solution should begin.

By 2030, Russia to produce over 32,000 drones each year

Moscow

Drones have been widely used by Moscow and Kyiv since Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine and both sides are sharply increasing military production as the war drags on.

"The annual production volume of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs) - excluding educational UAVs - is planned at 32,500 units," Belousov told TASS. "This is almost three times higher than current production volumes. At the same time, it is planned that the share of Russian UAVs will make



up 70% of the market in this type of UAV." Russia plans to produce more than 32,000 drones each year by 2030 and for domestic

producers to account for 70% of the market, the TASS news agency cited first deputy prime minister Andrei Belousov.

Tech companies sue Ohio over law on parental consent

COLUMBUS: A trade group representing TikTok, Snapchat, Meta and other major tech companies sued Ohio on Friday over a pending law that requires children to get parental consent to use social media apps. The law was part of an \$86.1 billion state budget bill that Republican Gov Mike

The NetChoice trade group filed its lawsuit against GOP attorney general Dave Yost in US district court for the southern district of Ohio

DeWine signed into law in July. It's set to

take effect January 15. The administration pushed the measure as a way to protect children's mental health. The NetChoice trade group filed its lawsuit against GOP attorney general Dave Yost in US district court for the southern district of Ohio. It seeks to block the law from taking effect.

Pak-Arrested terrorists belong to the TTP and Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan

LAHORE: Pakistan's law enforcement agencies on claimed to have foiled a major terror plot by arresting seven terrorists, mostly linked with the banned Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), in Punjab province. The Counter Terrorism Department (CTD) of Punjab police said in a statement that it conducted 59 intelligence-based operations in different districts of Punjab province during this week in which seven alleged terrorists were arrested with weapons, explosives and other prohibited

materials. Most of the arrested terrorists belong to the TTP and others to the Sipah-e-Sahaba Pakistan, it said and added they have been arrested from Lahore, Sargodha, Kasur and Sheikhupura. The CTD recovered 2,195 grams of explosive material, one IED bomb, four detonators, two safety fuse wires, one pistol and banned literature from the possession of the terrorists. The CTD further said the terrorists wanted to target important installations in the province. The police have regis-

New York

US President Joe Biden launched his harshest attack yet on Donald Trump, accusing the Republican of echoing Nazi Germany and posing a threat to democracy. Biden branded his likely challenger a 'loser' and 'sick' in a speech on the eve of the third anniversary of the deadly January 6 Capitol attack. He accused Trump of instigating the Capitol attack and warned that if Trump won a second term, democracy itself was at risk. US president Joe Biden launched his harshest attack yet on Donald Trump as he kickstarted his 2024 re-election campaign Friday, accusing the Republican

Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi militants have stepped up attacks



CAIRO:

Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi militants have stepped up attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea in protest against Israel's war in Gaza. Various shipping lines have suspended operations, instead taking the longer journey around Africa.

A drone launched from Yemen was shot down in self-defence by a US ship in the southern Red Sea on Saturday in the vicinity of several commercial vessels, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

The Houthis have vowed to continue attacks until Israel halts the conflict in Gaza, and warned that it would attack US warships if the militia group itself was target-

ed. Yemen's Iranian-backed Houthi militants have stepped up attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea in protest against Israel's war in Gaza. Various shipping lines have suspended operations, instead taking the longer journey around Africa. A drone launched from Yemen was shot down in self-defence by a US ship in the southern Red Sea on Saturday in the vicinity of several commercial vessels, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said in a statement.

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The justices will hear the case on an expedited basis

Colorado

The US Supreme Court agreed to consider whether Colorado can bar Donald Trump from the presidential ballot, taking up a landmark constitutional and political clash stemming from his attempt to overturn the 2020 election. The justices will hear the case on an expedited basis, with arguments on February 8. They will review a Colorado Supreme Court decision that said Trump engaged in insurrection - and forfeited his right to run for president again - by trying to nullify Joe Biden's election victory and inciting the deadly January 6, 2021, Capitol assault.

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The clash over the Constitution's insurrection clause promises to be a pivot point in Trump's bid to reclaim the White House. A broad Supreme Court decision in the ex-president's favour would end efforts around the country to remove him from the ballot. A ruling against Trump would raise new questions about the viability of his candidacy.

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be a pivot point in Trump's bid to reclaim the White House. A broad Supreme Court decision in the ex-president's favour would end efforts around the country to remove him from the ballot. A ruling against Trump would raise new questions about the viability of his candidacy. The party nominating contests are getting underway -- Iowa caucus for Republicans is on Jan 15; New Hampshire primary on January 23.

Pakistan:

Peshawar Court bars KP government from disqualifying PTI members from February 8 polls

ISLAMABAD:

The Peshawar High Court (PHC) on Friday barred the inclusion of the names of the former National Assembly speaker and other members of the Pakistan Assembly of Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) in the fourth schedule aimed at keeping the petitioners out of the February 8 polls, Pakistan-based Pakistan Today reported.

The Peshawar High Court asked the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa government not to take any action against the petitioners and sought a response from them by January 23. The caretaker government of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa's decision to include the names of former Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) ministers.

Bangladesh train arson: Opposition BNP leader among eight arrested

DHAKA: Dhaka police on Saturday arrested eight people, including a prominent leader of the opposition BNP, for planning and financing Friday's arson attack on a train in the heart of Dhaka that left at least four people dead, ahead of elections in Bangladesh boycotted by the opposition. Four carriages of the Benapole Express that runs from Benapole, bordering West Bengal, were set on fire at around 9 pm on Friday at the Gopibagh area.

Write-up reiterated his "engineered" removal

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan government has said it will approach a British media outlet over the publication of a scathing write-up attributed to jailed former premier Imran Khan, as it questioned its editorial judgement and the credibility of the content. The write-up was published in The Economist on Thursday with the title 'Imran Khan warns that Pakistan elections could be a farce'. Raising serious doubts over whether the scheduled February 8 polls in Pakistan will be held as announced, Khan in the write-up reiterated his "engineered" removal from power in 2022 by the establishment "under pressure from America" and the lack of "level playing field" in the elections. The write-up has already been denied both by the Pakistan government and the US Department of State. The 71-year-old founder of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party is incarcerated at the high-security Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, convicted in the Toshakhana corruption case and being tried under multiple other cases. Caretaker Information Minister Murtaza Solangi on Friday said the government will be writing to the editor of the British publication The Economist in connection with an essay attributed to incarcerated Khan, the Dawn newspaper reported. "We are writing to the editor of The Economist about an article purportedly written by Imran Khan," Solangi said. It is puzzling and disconcerting that such an esteemed media outlet published an article in the name of an individual who is in jail and has been convicted, he said. "We believe it is critically essential to uphold ethical standards and promote responsible journalism," the paper quoted Solangi, a former journalist, as saying. "We would like to know how the editorial decision was made, and what considerations were taken into account regarding the legitimacy and credibility of the content by The Economist," he said. "We would also be interested to know if The Economist has ever published such ghost articles by jailed politicians ever from any other part of the world. If jailed convicts were free to write to the media, they would always use the opportunity to air their one-sided grievances," the minister said. Khan in his piece also reiterated his allegations about how a regime change brought about after US government pressure led to a vote of no-confidence against him and described the May 9 riots as a "false-flag operation" which was "pre-planned".

The Dawn newspaper also reported that while sources within Khan's party were hesitant to comment on how the writing may have been relayed to the publication from inside prison, they had insisted that the words were indeed those of Khan. Some observers had expressed doubts over whether the article was indeed written by Khan but many noted that the tone and content of the article was consistent with his views.

T20I squad for Afghanistan series: Rohit to lead, Kohli also makes comeback after more than a year

NEW DELHI: Team India stalwarts Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli on Sunday made a return in the T20I setup for the three-match series against Afghanistan, starting January 11 in Mohali.

Both Rohit and Virat return for T20Is after a gap of 14 months. The duo last featured in India T20 internationals in the T20 World Cup in Australia in 2022 -- in semis loss against England in November. Pacers Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj and all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja have been rested for the Afghanistan series.

On the other hand injured all-rounder Hardik Pandya and swashbuckling middle-order batter Suryakumar Yadav (torn ligament) will not be participating in the series.

"Decisions on Rohit and Virat can't solely be taken by the selection committee. There is a lot at stake, broadcasters, sponsors and you can't pick one and drop the other. Ajit and his team needed to maintain a status quo," a former



India selector told PTI on conditions of anonymity.

While Rohit's chances of leading India in the T20 World Cup has considerably brightened, the development comes across as a big blow to Hardik's captaincy ambitions at the global event in June. However, he has replaced Rohit Sharma as Mumbai Indians skipper for IPL 2024.

Interestingly KL Rahul has not been included in the side with Jitesh Sharma and Sanju Samson featuring as keeper-batters in the 16-member squad. Ishan Kishan has been ignored for the shortest format. "Ishan wasn't happy that

he was travelling without much game time. He is on a break right now and is vacationing. In any case, selectors are in all likelihood are looking beyond Kishan. "It will be interesting if he is picked for England Test series where KS Bharat will be back behind the stumps," a BCCI source said. All-rounder Shivam Dube has been included in the squad in Hardik's absence while leggie Yuzvendra Chahal was once again ignored. Ravi Bishnoi and Kuldeep Yadav have been included as spinners while Washington Sundar and Axar Patel are the spin all-rounders in the side.

Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar will be sharing the responsibilities in the pace department in the absence of rested Bumrah and Siraj. Emerging 'finisher' Rinku Singh, who had a successful T20I series in South Africa has also been retained in the squad. The T20I series between India and Afghanistan will kick off on January 11 in Mohali; the second game will be played on January 14 in Indore; and the series will conclude on January 17 in Bengaluru.

The Afghanistan series is India's last bilateral T20I series before the T20 World Cup, which starts on June 1.

India Squad for Afghanistan series - Rohit Sharma (C), S Gill, Y Jaiswal, Virat Kohli, Tilak Varma, Rinku Singh, Jitesh Sharma (wk), Sanju Samson (wk), Shivam Dube, W Sundar, Axar Patel, Ravi Bishnoi, Kuldeep Yadav, Arshdeep Singh, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar

AB de Villiers not happy after India-South Africa Test series

NEW DELHI:

Legendary batter AB de Villiers expressed his dissatisfaction with the recently concluded Test series between India and South Africa, lamenting the absence of a third match. He attributed the scarcity of Test matches to the growing influence of T20 leagues. South Africa secured victory in the opening Test in Centurion by an innings and 32 runs within three days. Subsequently, India triumphed in the second Test at Cape Town by seven wickets, concluding in just four and a half sessions, marking it as the shortest match played in the format. "I am not happy that there is not a third Test. You have to blame the T20 cricket going around the world for that. I do not know whom to blame, but I sense something is wrong. If you want to see all the teams compete and see who is the best Test team in the world, something has to change," said de



Villiers on his Youtube channel. Despite concerns about the pitch conditions at Newlands Cricket Ground in Cape Town, characterized by excessive variable bounce and seam movement for fast bowlers, De Villiers described the Cape Town pitch as 'fairly typical' or 'standard.'

"It was a pretty stock-standard wicket, in my opinion. I remember jumping around there on day one. If you can just get through the first session on day one, it gets easier. If you see the players playing their shots and not hanging around, they were doing well." "I remember Ben

Stokes scoring a double-hundred there. I scored some hundreds there. You cannot allow bowlers like Vernon Philander, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Siraj, Kagiso Rabada to keep bowling on off stump." South Africa's upcoming Test challenge involves a two-match tour of New Zealand in February.

However, their key players are set to remain in the country to participate in the second season of SA20, commencing on January 10. This decision is due to a scheduling conflict between the league and the Test tour of New Zealand.

Wasim schools Aussie commentators for their struggle to pronounce 'Fakhar'

NEW DELHI: In a funny incident, Pakistan legend Wasim Akram humorously schooled Australian commentators over their inability to pronounce the name 'Fakhar' properly in the commentary box during Australia-Pakistan Test series.

A video of the hilarious conversation is doing the rounds on social media in which Akram can be seen asking his fellow commentators to try pronounce 'Fakhar'. Akram said, "And there's another name you guys mess up as well. Try pronounce Fakhar." Akram's



request had everyone bursting into laughter, clearly showing Aussies' struggle to pronounce the word. Akram went on to share an incident with his wife and said, "So Shaniera came to Pakistan and my son's

friend's name was Fakhar. He brought his friend who was about 12-year-old and he said, 'this is my friend, Fakhar'. She said, 'hang on a minute'. Because Australians can't pronounce K in their language, it took her

about two years to pronounce his name."

Akram and the Australian commentators also discussed the amusing incident where the legendary Mark Waugh struggled to pronounce the name 'Fakhar Zaman' during a show. The viral video moment occurred during the third and final Test match in Sydney and has since been humorously embraced by fans. Pakistan suffered a 0-3 whitewash against Australia in the three-match Test series and 17th successive defeat on Australian soil.

Shakib yawns on stage, takes uninterested selfies during election

NEW DELHI: One of the biggest cricketers in Bangladesh, all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan recently found himself in an awkward situation when he was seen yawning on stage and taking uninterested selfies with fans during an election campaign.

Shakib recently entered politics in the country as he became a part of the Awami League, the ruling party in Bangladesh. In what looked like an election campaign ahead of the upcoming 204 elections in Bangladesh, Shakib was seen on stage during the event and when young fans came to take selfies, gave them an unin-

terested look. Soon after the incident, the hilarious Shakib video immediately went viral on social media.

Shakib, 36, has been actively campaigning for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's ruling party and the outcome of the elections is almost certain.

Shakib recently said he was not facing any serious hurdle to his election but admitted it made him a bit anxious. "The competition and challenges are always there, be it a small team or big team," he said in his hometown Magura, where he is contesting a seat for Hasina's Awami League.



Players in dhoti-kurta, commentary in Sanskrit in unique Bhopal cricket tournament

NEW DELHI: Vedic pandits, adorned in traditional dhoti-kurta attire and displaying religious marks on their foreheads, are competing on a cricket pitch in Bhopal as part of an annual tournament aimed at promoting Sanskrit.

The victors of this competition, organized to commemorate the birth anniversary of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, who introduced transcendental meditation to the West, will be rewarded with a visit to Ayodhya.

Ayodhya is significant as the consecration of the Ram temple is scheduled to take place on January 22, according to one of the organizers.

The four-day tournament commenced at Ankur ground in the Madhya Pradesh capital on Friday, with players and umpires engaging in fluent Sanskrit conversations.

Even the commentators narrated the on-field events, such as hits, misses, and catches, in the ancient language.

Recovering Rashid Khan included in Afghanistan team for India T20Is

NEW DELHI: Premier leg-spinner Rashid Khan was on Saturday selected in a 19-member Afghanistan squad, captained by young Ibrahim Zadran, for the upcoming three T20 Internationals against India, scheduled to commence on January 11 in Mohali. While Rashid, the regular T20I captain, has been included in the squad, there is uncertainty about his participation in any game as he is currently recovering from a recent back surgery. Mujeeb Ur Rahman, who was absent from the recent three-match T20I series against UAE, makes a return to the squad to face India, as per a press release issued by the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB). Ikram Alikhil, previously among the reserves against the UAE, has been elevated to the main squad to serve as the backup wicketkeeper-batsman.

Mukesh's disciplined bowling secured 4 crucial dismissals, aiding India's comeback

NEW DELHI: In a splendid turnaround during the second Test against South Africa at Newlands, Mukesh Kumar, initially sidelined in the series opener, emerged as a pivotal force, contributing significantly to India's series-levelling triumph. The seasoned duo of Mohammed Siraj and Jasprit Bumrah dominated the wicket column, but Mukesh's disciplined bowling secured four crucial dismissals, aiding India's comeback.

Mukesh, known for his astute approach to the game, shared insights with reporters, expressing contentment with his performance in the critical encounter. Recognizing the unique challenges posed by South African conditions, Mukesh adjusted his lengths judiciously, avoiding the risk of bowling too full. "In India, when you try to bowl a fuller length, the ball moves in the air, but here, if you try to bowl

too full, you get smashed. So we decided that we will bowl between 6 to 8-meter length (back of length). And since there is a lot of bounce on offer, you can get wickets," Mukesh explained, shedding light on his strategic adaptation. Following India's setback in Centurion, Mukesh engaged in a rigorous net session, honing his skills while bowling to skipper Rohit Sharma. This experience proved invaluable as he incorporated specific lengths and channels into his game plan for the subsequent Test.

"He [Rohit] always tells us about areas to bowl when we seek feedback in the nets. He would tell us 'if you pitch the ball in this particular length and channel, you can trouble us'," Mukesh said. This reflection indicated Mukesh's ability to leverage feedback from team leaders in shaping his on-field strategy.

PANAJI: Sunil Chhetri is among the oldest players at the AFC Asian Cup 2023 and at 39 years could possibly feature in a major continental competition for the last time. When the Indian team arrived at the Doha international airport last week, Indian fans applauded all the players with the loudest cheer reserved for the captain. Fans were singing his name till



ground has with his great," remarked Muralitharan. Murali, who was earlier part of the now defunct IPL side Kochi Tuskers, batted for an IPL side from the state. "Football is

the end. The phenomenal support will continue when India play their games at the continental showpiece, according to Asian Cup 2023 local organising committee CEO Jassim Abdulaziz Al Jassim. "Sunil is one of the best players in this tournament and we have seen that a lot of spectators are buying tickets to attend India matches for that

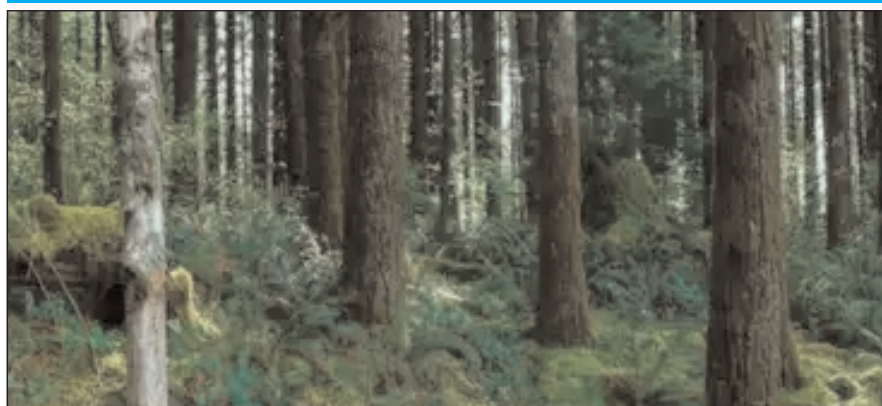
Sunil Chhetri is among the oldest players at the AFC

reason," Al Jassim told TOI in an exclusive interaction. "When India arrived, a lot of fans were waiting for Sunil outside the airport. It was nice and gives the team a good vibe ahead of the tournament." With 145 caps, Chhetri will be among the top-three capped players at the Asian Cup, starting next week. Only Qatar forward Hassan Al-Haydos (175)

and Bahrain goalkeeper Sayed Mohammed Jaffer (161) are ahead of the record-setting India striker. Qatar hosted the FIFA World Cup 2022 with India recording the second-highest number of visitors after neighbouring Saudi Arabia. According to a report published by FIFA, 56,893 fans travelled to Doha making it the biggest group of support-

ers from a non-participating nation. The 2023 AFC Asian Cup will be India's fifth appearance in the continental tournament, but for only the first time have they qualified for two straight editions. "We have seen very high sales for Indian matches. I think after Qatar matches, India comes next in sales," said Al Jassim.

Forest certification scheme launched, origin of tree-based products can be checked by



NEW DELHI: In order to encourage sustainable forest management and agroforestry practices in the country, the environment ministry has recently launched the Indian Forest & Wood Certification Scheme that will provide an environmental label informing both domestic and international consumers about the origin and source of the forest and tree-based products.

Since the scheme will allay concerns of such green-conscious consumers over deforestation and illicit timber trade through certification, it will

● Since the scheme will allay concerns of such green-conscious consumers over deforestation and illicit timber trade through certification

increase the export potential of India's wood-based products. Certified products would be sold on competitive domestic and global markets and thus encourage consumers towards green products," said envi-

ronment secretary, Leena Nandan. She said, "Certification under the scheme is available to individual farmers, groups of farmers, institutions, or industries engaged in agroforestry, wood-based industries, or any entities involved in the wood value chain." The scheme offers a certification logo, bearing the brand name PRAMAAN, which can be applied and used on the certified wood products or processed items. It includes forest management certification, tree outside forest management certification and chain of custody certification.

Kinetic Green Energy and Power Solutions appoints new manufacturing and operations director

CHENNAI: Kinetic Green Energy and Power Solutions which makes electric two and three-wheelers, has announced the recent appointment of S Sundareswaran as the director of manufacturing & operations. With over three decades of experience in the automotive and auto component industries, Sundareswaran brings expertise and a track record in leading manufacturing, operations and strategic sourcing teams. In his new role, Sundareswaran will spearhead the direction and monitoring of plant performance to support



the organization's objectives.

His responsibilities will encompass leadership in production, quality assurance, supply chain management and manufacturing engineering activities. Additionally, he will play a pivotal role in ensuring the implementation of manufacturing capacity augmen-

tation strategies and install advanced processes aligned with business objectives, focusing on price, quality and delivery targets. Sundareswaran's distinguished career includes senior positions at companies such as Ashok Leyland Ltd., Switch Mobility Automotive Ltd.

Evan Luthra wins 'Angel Investor of the Year' and Tech Influencer of 2023

PUNE: In the dynamic realm of innovation and entrepreneurship, Evan Luthra, has been honoured with the 'Angel Investor of the Year' at Indian Blockchain Week, alongside the 'Tech Influencer of the Year' crown. Luthra continues to ripple through the tech domain and

signifies innovation, inspiring a new generation to co-create and make a positive impact in the world of technology, a statement issued by Luthra said here. Luthra said, "From the tender age of 13, I had a fervor for technology which led me to create over 30 apps independ-

ently, culminating in the remarkable sale of his first app for USD 1.7 million at the age of 17. My journey extends beyond personal success. My incubator fund and startup studio has played a crucial role in fostering the growth of over 100 Web2 companies."

CAPSULES

Banks quietly raise interest rates on car, personal loans

MUMBAI: Interest rates on some retail loans, excluding home loans, have started inching up, with several banks revising their marginal cost of lending rate (MCLR). Although banks have linked their home loans to the repo rate (the rate at which the Reserve Bank of India lends), which has stayed the same since February 2023, many other loans are not linked to the repo rate.

SBI, which offered auto loans beginning at 8.65% until December has hiked the starting rate to 8.85% to clients with high credit scores. Several other banks have increased their personal loan rates as well. Bank of Baroda, which was charging 8.7% on auto loans last month, is charging 8.8% and has reintroduced its processing fees, which were waived during the festival months. Union Bank of India too has hiked rates on auto loans and some of its personal loans by revising the spread over the external benchmark. The public sector lender now has car loans starting at 9.15% as against 8.75% earlier. IDFC First Bank has increased interest rates on personal loan from 10.49% in November to 10.75% while Karnataka Bank has hiked personal loan rates from 14.21% to 14.28% during the same time period. A bank executive told that the lenders were waiting for the festival season to get over to revise rates. There has been an increase in the cost of funds due to revision in deposit rates coupled with the tightness in the money markets. Interestingly, on January 3, Bank of Maharashtra reduced its home loan interest rate to 8.35% from 8.5% earlier. A senior banker said the move was tactical as home loans are seen as almost risk-free, and they contribute to the bank's deposit base as the borrower ends up having a savings account with the lender.

Rupee rises 8 paise to close at 83.16 against US dollar

● Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies



MUMBAI: The rupee appreciated 8 paise to close at 83.16 against the US dollar on Friday, helped by a positive trend in domestic equities and fresh foreign capital inflows. However, rising crude oil prices in international markets and a strong greenback overseas restricted gains for the local unit, forex traders said. At the interbank foreign exchange market, the local unit opened flat at 83.23

against the greenback. The rupee oscillated between an intra-day low of 83.24 and a high of 83.12 against the greenback and finally settled at 83.16, higher by 8 paise from its previous close of 83.24. "The Indian rupee remained the second-best performer among the Asian currencies following Chinese cur-

rencies. The dollar inflows and stable crude oil prices helped the rupee to buck the past two week's bearish trend," said Dilip Parmar, Research Analyst at HDFC Securities. The expectations of a strong December US jobs report could temporarily reverse the soft-landing playbook, Parmar said. Traders will also closely watch India's 2024 growth forecast for next week's rupee directions, Parmar said, adding that from the level front, spot USD/INR has support at 83.10 and resistance at 83.35. Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.25 per cent lower at 102.68. Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, advanced 0.90 per cent to USD 78.29 per barrel.

Adani's rollercoaster ride: From Hindenburg's hit to historic comeback

New Delhi

The Hindenburg shockwave in late January 2023 sent shockwaves through the financial world. A report by a New York-based short-seller accused the Adani Group, led by industrialist Gautam Adani, of a brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme. This allegation triggered a nosedive in the share prices of Adani Group companies, erasing over \$100 billion in market value. Gautam Adani, the richest Indian and Asian, saw his wealth plummet,



dropping him to the 22nd spot in the Forbes billionaire list. Gautam Adani's rollercoaster ride: From Hindenburg's hit to historic comeback "Truth has prevailed", said Gautam Adani after the SC ruling. In late January 2023,

Hindenburg Research, a US-based short-selling firm, caused a stir in the financial world with its report targeting Gautam Adani, who was then Asia's wealthiest individual. The report accused Adani Group, the apples to airport con-

glomerate, of "brazen stock manipulation and accounting fraud scheme over the course of decades". This allegation triggered a nosedive in the share prices of Adani Group companies, erasing over \$100 billion in market value. Gautam Adani, who was the richest Indian, riches Asian and a prominent figure on the global billionaire list, saw his wealth plummet, pushing him out of top 20 spots in the Forbes and Bloomberg billionaire lists.

Tata Power drive helped 4K consumers change name in electricity bills

MUMBAI: Tata Power organised a drive called 'Naam Badlav' for simplifying changing names on electricity bills for Mumbai consumers in which 4,000 citizens benefitted recently, a senior official said on Friday. The drive was organised from December 1 to 15 and later



extended upto December 31 on public demand, he said. It was conducted across customer touch points and in residential societies across Mira Road, Ghatkopar, Kurla, Lower Parel, Goregaon and Malad. "We received over 9,000 name change related inquiries, of which over 4000 consumers got their name changed in electricity bills.

In these camps, Tata Power employees helped

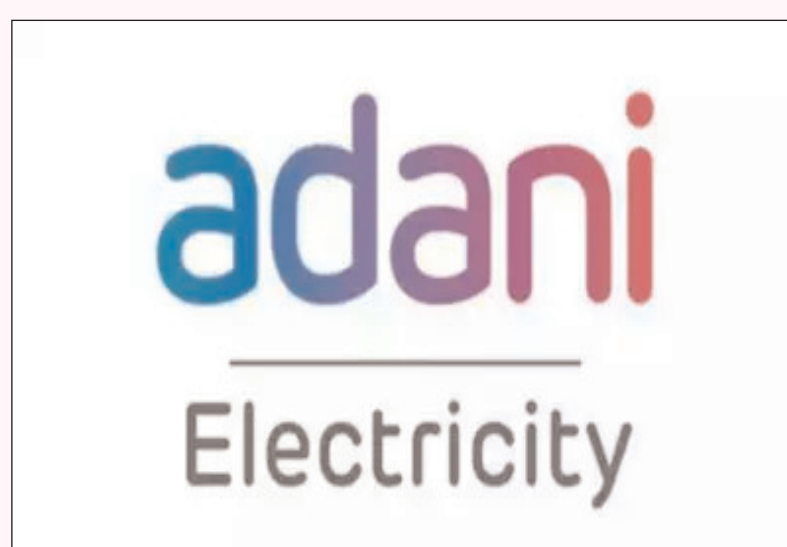
consumers to fill and submit the application form, and guide them with the process along with required documents such as ownership and identity proof documents etc.," an official said. At these camps, officials also encouraged consumers to adopt digital services such as digital payment methods, e-wallet offers, conversion to e-bill, switching to green power, updating contact details online etc.

38% electricity supply from solar/ wind; 2532 consumers switched to green energy : Adani

● "The report mentioned : "On the day of Diwali, we achieved 100% renewable energy for four hours which prevented 9.82 million kg of Co2 emissions." As many as 74,243 electricity pillars stretching 24,732 km have been set up for reliable, uninterrupted supply to over 3 million consumers in the city."

MUMBAI: While 2,532 consumers of Adani Electricity have opted for green energy in 2023, 38% of electricity supplied in the city was from solar and wind sources, revealed a trend report released by the power utility firm for last year. According to the report, around 88% of the consumers - Adani has 31.5 lakh consumers in the eastern and western suburbs of Mumbai -- had opted for digital payment of bills.

"Over 3 lakh consumers also signed in to receive digital electricity bills and ditched the paper bills," an official said, adding that this indirectly



helped save the cutting of several trees. While June 9 was the day when the city hit peak demand, Adani Electricity had a record demand of 2160 MW. The report further said that the consumption of air-conditioners in Mumbai was the highest in May last year.

The power utility had 270 rooftop solar installations in order to promote renewable energy. The firm also planted enough trees (452,892, to be exact), as per the trend report. The report mentioned : "On

the day of Diwali, we achieved 100% renewable energy for four hours which prevented 9.82 million kg of Co2 emissions."

As many as 74,243 electricity pillars stretching 24,732 km have been set up for reliable, uninterrupted supply to over 3 million consumers in the city. "In CSR initiatives, Adani Electricity touched 3,563 lives which included educating 237 women and empowering the underprivileged" the report added.

Sebi makes short selling disclosures mandatory

MUMBAI: Days after the Supreme Court asked Sebi to probe if losses due to short selling in Adani stocks were in violation of any law, the markets regulator on Friday made disclosures mandatory for such trades and allowed institutional investor participation. Short selling was earlier restricted to retail and HNI investors, but without disclosure requirement. The new rules come after solicitor general Tushar Mehta, during hearing of the Adani-Hindenburg case at the apex court, said that the Centre and Sebi will frame rules to regulate short selling.

Sebi said that institutional investors will have to disclose upfront whether a transaction in shares involves short selling, while retail investors will have to do so by the end of the day when a trade is made. Under the new framework, exchanges need to disclose the details before the start of the next day's trading.