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

Make consecration a special event: PM Modi to Kerala BJP workers

Modi also urged party workers to make the consecration of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya a special occasion in the state."



KOCHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday wound up his two-day visit to Kerala by calling upon BJP workers to focus on voters at the booth level for electoral success and dedicating projects worth Rs 4,000 crore to the nation. This was his second visit to the state within a gap of two weeks.

Addressing a gathering of nearly 7,000 Shakti Kendra (cluster of booths) in charges in Kochi, Modi urged them to ensure victory in their respective booths. "If we win our booths, we will win Kerala. For that, you have to focus your attention on every

voter in every booth-level area and work hard.

You should have a list of every beneficiary in your booth, meet them, get to know their names, meet their families; that should be the first priority."

Modi also urged party workers to make the consecration of Ram Lalla at Ayodhya a special occasion in the state. Maintaining that

BJP was the only party in India with a proven track record of speedy development and clear vision for the future, he asked party workers to highlight that the track record of LDF and UDF in Kerala was "synonymous with a history of corruption". Earlier, at Cochin Shipyard, he dedicated to the nation a 310-metre-long dry dock of international standards and an interna-

tional ship repair facility (ISRF). In the morning, Modi visited Guruvayur Sri Krishna and Triprayar Sree Rama temples. He spent about two hours at Guruvayur, offering prayers besides attending the wedding of actor-turned politician Suresh Gopi's daughter. He also offered blessings to some other couples who tied the knot at Guruvayur.

CPR loses FCRA licence for 'hurting India's eco interests'

NEW DELHI: The registration of Centre for Policy Research (CPR) under the Foreign Contribution (Regulation) Act, 2010, was cancelled last week over multiple violations of the Act, the most serious being "hurting India's economic interests" by alleged misutilisation of foreign receipts for organising protests and funding non-FCRA entities to fight legal battles against development projects, including coal mines, home ministry sources said. Another key violation cited by MHA as a ground for



scrapping the think tank's FCRA licence was the latter's engagement in production of current affairs programmes such as 'Overview on the Commission of Air Quality Management Act, 2021', 'Policy Challenges for the New Government' etc. Section 3(1)(g) of FCRA

prohibits acceptance of foreign contributions by any entity engaged in production or broadcast of audio news or audio visual news or current affairs programmes through electronic or other mode of mass communication. CPR on Wednesday said the basis of the MHA notice

cancelling its FCRA status "is incomprehensible and disproportionate". It said actions like the income tax 'survey' in Sept 2022, followed by suspension of its FCRA status in Feb 2023 and now cancellation "have had a debilitating impact on the institution's ability to function by choking all sources of funding". "Equating publication of policy reports emanating from CPR's research on its website with current affairs programming challenges the very basis of the functioning of a research institution," it added.

Girl freed from 'illegal detention' by parents

NEW DELHI: Scripting a movie-like rescue of a 25-year-old Tamil girl from her parent's "illegal confinement", SC Wednesday criticised Karnataka high court for its "total lack of sensitivity" in adjourning hearing on a habeas corpus petition filed by the girl's Kerala beau seeking her release on 14 occasions,

finally to April 2025. A bench of Justices B R Gavai and Sandeep Mehta passed the order on a petition filed by Kevin Joy Verghese, who had moved SC after being frustrated with HC's 'tareekh pe tareekh' approach despite the girl unequivocally saying she has been illegally confined by her parents, who

incensed by her relationship with him had brought her from Dubai on the pretext of her grandfather's illness. Both Kevin and the girl, Ms Chidambaram, worked in Dubai prior to her being taken to Bengaluru and confined without being provided with any communication device. On Wednesday, the girl, her

parents and Kevin's parents were present before the court and the judges interacted with them separately in chamber before ruling that "continued detention of the girl by her parents is illegal", directing them to forthwith release her from their custody and allow her to proceed as per her wishes.

2 cops killed, 3 injured in fresh Manipur violence

IMPHAL: Militants struck simultaneously at multiple security outposts in Manipur's Moreh township bordering Myanmar early Wednesday, killing two police commandos and wounding three in yet another shock-and-awe assault.

The coordinated onslaught involved rocket-propelled grenades and incessant gunfire against the backdrop of several houses going up in flames in the conflict-torn township of Tegnoupal district, the epicentre of violence in Manipur since the end of last year.

Two fire engines from neighbouring Myanmar crossed the border and doused the flames engulfing houses at Kanan Veng in Moreh Ward 3 and another cluster of homes near Moreh Hospital, sources said. As news of the deaths spread, a large number of women took to the streets of Imphal to protest BJP-led government's alleged failure to rein in the militants attacking security forces in the township repeatedly.

Some of them attempted to storm the bungalows of CM N Biren Singh and governor Anusuiya Uikey but were stopped by police. The attacks came a day after Philip Khongsai and Hemkholal Mate, two Moreh residents arrested for killing subdivisional police officer Chingtham Anand last year, were remanded in custody for nine days. One of the slain commandos was Havildar of 1st India Reserve Battalion. He was from Lamsang in Imphal West district and goalkeeper of Manipur Police Sports Club team. The other casualty was Wangkhem Somorjit Meitei of Manipur Rifles' 6 Bn. "We were having a group video call around 9am when our kaka (uncle) Saileshwor said his group had come under attack, with bombs and bullets raining on them from different sides at Moreh. He said one of his colleagues was injured before the call ended," said Prashanta, a nephew of the deceased commando. He had left home for Moreh on January 5 after a break, Prashanta said. A joint action committee set up by Malom residents in protest against Somorjit's killing decided not to accept his body until government arrested those responsible for his death.

HC: Unmarried daughter to get maintenance; faith, age no bar

PRAYAGRAJ: The Allahabad high court has held that unmarried daughters, regardless of their religious affiliations or age, have the right to obtain maintenance under the domestic violence act, from their parents. Dismissing a petition filed by Naimullah Sheikh and another, Justice Jyotsna Sharma observed, "There remains no doubt that an unmarried daughter, whether Hindu or Muslim, has a right to obtain maintenance, irrespective of her age. This is made clear again that the courts have to look for other laws applicable when the question pertains



to the right to be maintained. However, where the issue does not pertain to mere maintenance, the independent rights are available to an aggrieved under section 20 of the domestic violence Act itself." The present petition was filed under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence (DV) Act, 2005 by parents of three daughters chal-

lenging the order of granting them maintenance. Three sisters had filed a case claiming maintenance under the DV Act, alleging ill-treatment by their father and step-mother.

The trial court ordered interim maintenance, which was challenged by the respondents, arguing that the daughters were adults and financially independent.

Security stepped up in Jammu ahead of Temple consecration, Republic Day

JAMMU: Security arrangements have been fortified in Jammu division ahead of the Ram Temple consecration ceremony in Ayodhya on Jan 22, followed by Republic Day. "Forces have intensified vehicle-checking drives and frisking of pedestrians in several parts of the city as well as in other places in the region," an official said. Jammu SSP Vinod Kumar carried out an



on-ground security review, including at checkpoints and other places, on Wednesday. Security forces and police have been put on alert across Jammu, including in places along the international border to ensure fool-

proof protection. Special nakas (checkpoints) have been established in important locations across the city as well as entry and exit roads manned by additional police and paramilitary personnel.

Amid religious fervour, CM Naveen dedicates Puri project to devotees

BHUBHANESHWAR: Amid reverberation of Vedic hymns and Jai Jagannath chants, Puri Jagannath dham, one of the four holy dhams of India, was teeming with tens of thousands of people as Odisha CM Naveen Patnaik inaugurated the heritage corridor project (Shree Mandira Parikrama Prakalpa) on Wednesday.



Coming days ahead of the Jan 22 inauguration of Ram temple in Ayodhya, thousands of devotees gathered on Grand Road, braving light rain and the winter chill, to witness the unveiling of the Rs 800-crore project in the presence of Puri king Gajapati

Dibyasinha Deb. The king later offered the "Purna Ahuti" to the three-day maha yajna, which had begun on Monday. The key feature of the project is devotees can get a clear view of the Meghanada Pacheri (outer wall of the shrine) and 214ft-high main temple by standing at the corridor site.

Death blow to scholarship: Congress on action against CPR

NEW DELHI: Congress on Wednesday slammed government's decision to cancel Centre for Policy Research's FCRA licence and said such action will serve as a "death blow to India's rich tradition of scholarship and rigorous thought". The chairman of All India Professionals' Congress, Praveen Chakravarty said it was a "shame" that the government of India should be "so timid to feel bullied by a group of scholars and their research", referring to the cancellation of CPR's FCRA licence as an "extraordinarily petty act of cowardice by an insecure, thin-skinned government, that ironically craves for international acknowledgement and respect." "Glitzzy shows of G20, ubiquitous posters of the PM and hugging World leaders are not what will propel India to the global stage.

China told women to have babies, but its population shrank



China's ruling Communist Party is facing a national emergency. To fix it, the party wants more women to have more babies. It has offered them sweeteners, like cheaper housing, tax benefits and cash. It has also invoked patriotism, calling on them to be "good wives and mothers". China's population was 1,409,670,000 (or 1.4 billion) at the end of 2023, the National Bureau of Statistics said Wednesday. The number of people in the second-largest economy fell by 2.08 million, or 0.15%. That was well above the population

decline of 850,000 in 2022, which had been the first since 1961 during the Great Famine of the Mao Zedong era. China said that 9.02 million babies were born in 2023, down from 9.5 million in 2022 and the seventh year in a row that the number has fallen. New births fell 5.7% and the birth rate was a record-low 6.3 births per 1,000 people, down from a rate of 6.7 births in 2022. Taken together with the number of people who died during the year — 11.1 million — China has more older people than anywhere else in the world, a number that is rising rapidly.

Navy set to deploy women Agniveers on warships in February

NEW DELHI: Navy will begin deploying a small batch of women Agniveers, who now number 1,119 in the force, as sailors on frontline warships, towards end-Feb to join the almost 50 women officers already serving on them.

Lt Commander Prerna Deosthalee is also set to soon take over as the first woman



commanding officer of a warship — the 260-tonne fast-

attack craft INS Trinkat on the western seaboard — after completing her "pre-commissioning training" that's underway. "In a few weeks from now, when she (Deosthalee) takes command of the warship, she will set course in uncharted waters for women, but will lead the way for many more to follow," Navy's controller personnel services Vice

Hit-&-run victim run over by 'hundreds of cars' on fog-covered NH9

'Police teams are visiting nearby villages and colonies to identify the body. "We are also checking the missing complaint reports to identify the person," she said'



GHAZIABAD: Invisible to motorists in the dense fog that had descended on NCR on Monday night, a hit-and-run victim was run over by several cars on NH9. By the time police received information, the body was mangled beyond recognition, even the fingers were severed from the palm. Cops are yet to identify

the victim and are scanning over 16-hour footage from CCTV cameras installed near the Wave City area of the speedway to ascertain the chain of events. ACP Wave City Saloni Agrawal said some commuters who spotted blood on the road alerted the cops around 10 am on Monday. "Police and

NHAI quick response teams took an hour to find the severely mangled parts of the body. We found some tattered cloth pieces, blood and some bones along with a few fingers.

It is still unclear if the deceased was a man or woman," the ACP said. Police teams are visiting nearby villages and

colonies to identify the body. "We are also checking the missing complaint reports to identify the person," she said. Cops suspect that the person was hit by a vehicle while trying to cross the stretch. The body was lying on the road for several hours and may have been run over by hundreds of vehicles,

crushing it repeatedly, due to zero visibility amid dense fog, Agarwal said. NCR recorded the worst fog of the season on Monday leading to the cancellation of several flights at IGI airport. As per an India Meteorological Department (IMD) report, the visibility in Delhi-NCR was reduced to 50 metres at 2.30 am on Monday, dipping further to zero metres around 3 am. The visibility remained zero till 5 am. It improved slightly to 50 metres from 5.30 am to 8 am. The visibility started increasing from 8 am onwards and reached 700 metres by 10.30 am. Dense fog was also recorded in the region on Tuesday.

Two incidents of skirmishes between Indian, Chinese troops along LAC come to light

NEW DELHI: There have been two recent revelations of two previously undisclosed instances of clashes between Indian and Chinese troops along the Line of Actual Control (LAC). These incidents were brought to light through citations for gallantry awards bestowed upon Indian Army personnel. The citations were read out during an investiture ceremony by the Army's Western Command, which took place last week. They provided brief accounts of how Indian troops responded firmly to the aggressive behaviour exhibited by soldiers from China's People's Liberation Army (PLA) along the LAC. The Army's Western Command, headquartered in Chandimandir, had initially uploaded a video of the ceremony on its YouTube chan-



nel, featuring commentary on the gallantry awards. However, the video was deactivated on Monday. The incidents mentioned in the citations occurred between September 2021 and November 2022. The Army has not yet issued any official statement regarding these developments. Since the clashes in Galwan Valley in June 2020, the Indian Army has maintained a high level of combat readiness along the 3,488 km-long LAC.

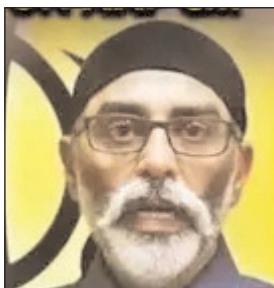
Over the past three and a half years, there have been multiple skirmishes between

Indian and Chinese troops following the border dispute in eastern Ladakh that began in May 2020. The Chinese troops also attempted a transgression in the Tawang sector of the LAC. On December 9, 2022, PLA troops made an unsuccessful attempt to transgress the LAC in the Yangtse area of the Tawang Sector, resulting in a unilateral change in the status quo. Defence Minister Rajnath Singh addressed Parliament four days later and confirmed that the Indian troops firmly contested the Chinese attempt.

Designated Khalistani terrorist Pannun issues fresh threats ahead of Republic Day

NEW DELHI: US-based pro-Khalistani terrorist Gurbat Singh Pannun has once again issued threats against India with several pictures showing pro-Khalistan graffiti in the national capital going viral. The Delhi Police has registered an FIR over the graffiti found on a pillar in Nihal Vihar.

Ahead of Republic Day, the founder of the banned Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) said his outfit aims to "avenge" the death of Khalistani terrorist Hardeep Singh



Nijjar, who was killed outside a Gurdwara in Canada's Surrey on June 18 last year by unknown men. SFJ was declared an 'unlawful association' by the Centre on July 10, 2019. Pannun, who was declared a terrorist by

India on July 1, 2020, has been actively exhorting Punjab-based gangsters and youth over social media to challenge the sovereignty, integrity and security of the country. This is not the first time that Pannun has issued such threats against India. In December last year, he threatened to attack Parliament on or before December 13. In November 2023, Pannun warned Sikhs to not fly in Air India aircraft after November 19.

Scindia inaugurates first Air India Express flight connecting Ayodhya to Bengaluru



NEW DELHI: Days ahead of the Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha event, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia inaugurated the first Air India Express flight between Ayodhya to Bengaluru and between Ayodhya to Kolkata on Wednesday. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath who was at Lucknow received the boarding pass for the first flight between Kolkata and Ayodhya. Speaking at the inauguration event, Union Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia said that the development of Uttar Pradesh is reaching new heights under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

"The development of Uttar Pradesh is reaching new heights. If we look at the population of Uttar Pradesh, almost 70 per cent of the population of the US is in Uttar Pradesh. Half of

Europe's population is in Uttar Pradesh. We celebrated Diwali last November, the second Diwali was on December 3 when the election results were declared and not for the entire country but for the entire world the third Diwali is going to be celebrated on the coming 22nd," Scindia said. Adityanath who joined the inauguration event through video conference said that along with new airports, four international airports have come up in the state. "In the last nine years, not only new airports have come up in Uttar Pradesh but with 4 international airports, Uttar Pradesh has become an important state in the field of air connectivity. PM Modi inaugurated the Maharishi Valmiki International Airport in Ayodhya on 30th December," the Chief Minister said.

Sharad Pawar turns down Ram Temple invite, says will visit later

NEW DELHI: Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) leader Sharad Pawar has decided to not attend the pran pratishtha ceremony of the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22. In a letter addressed to Champat Rai, the General Secretary of Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, Pawar expressed his intention to visit Ayodhya at a later date for "darshan".

Expressing gratitude for receiving the invite, the NCP Chief, in a letter, wrote, "After the pran pratishtha ceremony is completed on January 22, I will freely take out time and come for darshan and by then the construction work of Ram temple will also be completed." He also said that Lord Ram is a symbol of faith and devotion for crores of people across the world.



Ayodhya: Ram temple to have all 5 mandaps, shikhar on January 22



Ayodhya: Ram temple to have all 5 mandaps, shikhar on January 22 The trust is also planning to place the Ram Dhwaja, a flag over the temporary shikhar ahead of the consecration ceremony Ayodhya: When top dignitaries arrive for the pran pratishtha ceremony on January 22 in Ayodhya, they would get to experience the grandeur of the Ram temple as it has been envisaged.

The last and most crucial milestone would be crossed before the midnight of January 21, with the construction workers at the site preparing a temporary shikhar atop the garbha griha. The shikhar would be brought down later. Similarly, out of the five mandaps that had to be constructed while the fifth - Gudh mandap - is being prepared temporarily. Gudh mandap is the place under which top dignitaries (besides the group of five who would remain in the garbha griha) will be housed. The two structures are being prepared with scaffolding made of bamboo and would be covered with appropriate material. "For now, instead of pink sandstone we will use some sturdy cloth material similar to that used over huge Durga puja pandals. It also needs to be in line with the overall theme of the temple," said a source. "We are putting scaffolding over the shikhar and Gudh mandap. We do not know what will be used to cover the scaffolding," said a worker who stepped outside the temple complex on Tuesday afternoon for a lunch break. The trust is also planning to place the Ram Dhwaja, a flag over the temporary shikhar ahead of the consecration ceremony.

One commando dead as militants attack security forces in Manipur's Moreh

IMPHAL: Police reported an exchange of fire between security forces and suspected Kuki militants in the border town of Moreh in Manipur's Tengnoupal district on Wednesday morning. According to authorities, the militants launched bombs and fired at a security forces post near SBI Moreh. A commando died in the attack, according to reports. Security forces responded to the gunfire, officials stated. Reports suggest that one security personnel suffered minor injuries during the exchange, though specific details are yet to be confirmed.

Man kills wife, chops body into six pieces in West Bengal

KOLKATA: In a chilling reminder of Delhi's Shradha Walkar murder case, a 55-year-old construction materials supplier in M a d h y a m g r a m chopped his wife into six pieces, packed the body parts in a jute bag, immersed it in a canal and then lodged a missing dairy with police on Saturday. When accosted the next day by his mar-

ried daughter, who found blood stains on her missing mother's cellphone, he tried to kill himself by consuming poison. Interrogated by cops in hospital, he confessed to the crime. Cops retrieved the dismembered body parts from the Noia canal and placed Nooruddin Mondal under arrest. Cops said Mondal filed a missing person

report for his wife at Madhyamgram police station on Saturday but inconsistencies in his statements raised their suspicion. Barasat SP Bhaskar Mukherjee said, "Matters escalated when on Sunday Nooruddin Mondal's daughter filed an abduction complaint and Mondal attempted suicide, leading to his hospitalisation."

Auto driver beheads wife, keeps severed head in Hyderabad apartment

HYDERABAD: In what could be a fallout of a strained marital relationship, an auto driver murdered his 41-year-old wife and severed her head in a government double bedroom house at JNNURM Colony in Abdullahpurmet. Police nabbed the accused and seized the murder weapon from his possession. Abdullahpurmet police said the accused, Vijay, suspected his wife Pushpalatha's fidelity and used to harass her frequently. This morning, he made Pushpalatha accompany him to his sister's newly-allotted 2BHK house. "On the pretext of cleaning the house,

Vijay took his wife to the flat. He attacked her with a knife and after stabbing her to death, severed her head and kept it aside in the flat," police said. After committing the murder, Vijay came out of the flat with blood-stained clothes much to the shock of locals, who raised an alarm. Police reached the spot, found the body and took Vijay into custody. A murder case was registered under section 302 of the IPC against Vijay. The woman's body was sent for postmortem. Vijay married Pushpalatha 15 years ago and the couple have two children.

Goldman says more global money will flock to India post elections

Goldman Sachs predicts accelerated foreign inflows into India's stock market after national elections. Hesitation due to elections and lofty stock valuations have kept some investors away, but earnings growth should address concerns. Global mutual funds, including those from North Asia, South Korea, and Brazil, are underweight India but may increase exposure post-elections. India may see accelerated foreign inflows into its \$4.4 trillion stock market once the national elections are over, according to a Goldman Sachs Group Inc strategist. "There are some people who are still hesitant ahead of the elections, and once the election is behind us, you could probably see many coming to the market," Sunil Koul, Asia Pacific equity strategist, said in an interview in



Singapore. Lofty stock valuations are another oft-cited reason for staying away but earnings growth should address that, he added. Global investors snapped up \$21 billion of shares on a net basis in 2023, but the pace has slowed this month ahead of the April-May polls where Prime Minister Narendra Modi is expected to win a third term. Many funds remain light on holdings of Indian stocks. "If you look at the global pool of

money, which is even bigger than what the Asia and emerging markets pool is, that is still underweight India," Koul said. Global mutual funds with about \$2.4 trillion in combined assets are underweight India by close to 150 basis points compared to historical positions, Goldman analysis found. India's stock benchmarks, trading at record highs, just clocked their eighth straight year of gains as investors bet on the country's booming economic growth prospects and see it as an alternative to China's struggling market. Goldman has a base case of "policy continuity" for India post-elections, and is overweight the market on expectations of about 15% earnings growth compounded annually this year and the next, Koul said. That should keep a lid on valuations, he added.

Telangana reduced multidimensional poverty by about 10% in last 9 years: NITI report

Global MPI covers three areas: health, education, and standard of living. Nutrition and, child and adolescent mortality indicators are part of the health dimension, whereas education comprises years of schooling



HYDERABAD: In the past nine years, Telangana has seen considerable progress in tackling multidimensional poverty, reducing it by about 10% during the said period. Multidimensional poverty, which is assessed on 12 parameters including health, education, housing,

maternal health and bank accounts, dropped from 13% in 2015-16 to 3.76% (projected) in 2022-23 in the state, according to a new report by the NITI Aayog released on Monday. Along with Telangana, neighbouring Andhra Pradesh (4.1% population) has also seen mul-

tidimensional poverty fall below 5%. Moreover, except Karnataka (5.6%), all other southern states have less than 5% of their population living in multidimensional poverty. Tamil Nadu has 1.4% population living in multidimensional poverty, and Kerala only 0.48%.

Along with these four southern states, two other states with less than 5% of the population living under multidimensional poverty are Punjab (4.3%) and Goa (0.37%), which is the least in the country. Traditionally, poverty has been measured by assessing monetary resources available for an individual or household and is considered to be limited in its scope. But the Multidimensional Poverty Index (MPI) is regarded as a more direct and complete indicator of deprivation and poverty. The MPI captures the outcomes of economic growth and development, income and distribution, and the state's different devel-

opment activities. Furthermore, it has been well recognised that non-monetary measures supplement monetary measures in capturing many elements of poverty. Global MPI covers three areas: health, education, and standard of living. Nutrition and, child and adolescent mortality indicators are part of the health dimension, whereas education comprises years of schooling. The standard of living component contains six household-specific indicators: housing, household assets, type of cooking fuel, access to sanitation, drinking water and electricity. If a person is disadvantaged in three or more of the 10 factors.

3 district court complexes to add nearly 200 courtrooms

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

cases. "The government's dedication to build 200 courtrooms in Delhi proves to be highly significant in strengthening the judicial system," the minister said, adding that the new courtrooms would greatly aid in the swift resolution of legal matters. The new district court complex in Rohini will have 100 courtrooms and 270 lawyer chambers. It will consist of three basements, a ground floor and two 11-storey building blocks. "The cost of the project is estimated to be Rs 714.2 crore," said

a government official. The court complex in Shastri Park will include 48 courtrooms and 175 lawyer stations, and the new block in Karkardooma will have 50 courtrooms. The total cost of the Shastri Park project is estimated at Rs 184.9 crore while the Karkardooma project is expected to cost the exchequer Rs 199.4 crore. "While undertaking these three projects, better public facilities will also be developed, keeping in mind the convenience of judges, lawyers and common people," said a senior official.

Governor not even listening to CM's advice, says Bratya



Kolkata: Accusing Governor C V Ananda Bose of constitutional impropriety, state education minister Bratya Basu on Tuesday said that Governor Bose is not even heeding the advice of CM Mamata Banerjee. Basu said, "Not only the higher education department but the chancellor is also not ready to accept the existence of the office of the chief minister. Following the Supreme Court order chief minister Mamata Banerjee met him (Governor) but he is not ready to solve the matter." Basu was referring to the ongoing impasse over VC appointments in state-run universities. He was speaking at the 17th convocation of St

Xavier's College. Referring to the Jadavpur University impasse, he said, "Raj Bhavan has not replied to the letter that was sent from the higher education department as he is trying to create a wedge between the government and its various administrative departments. Why, I don't know? If it is required then we will again send a reminder" added Basu. "I will advise the Jadavpur University VC to adhere to the court orders and the state directives," he added. Basu said, "People of Bengal know why and for what reason the impasse has been created under the guidance of whom. Everything is now crystal clear."

If anyone can prove I had tea without paying, I'll quit: Mamata



KOLKATA: "If anyone can prove I had tea at a stall and did not pay, I will quit," CM Mamata Banerjee said. "Among my five fingers, one can have a cut... one small incident does not make all bad," she added. Speaking to reporters at Nabanna, the CM said: "I know BJP is saying everyone is a thief. They are the biggest thieves. They are bigger robbers, toughs and criminals. They are being protected by agencies. Agency is today saving them." Asserting that she had not drawn "even one paisa" as CM, Banerjee said: "I have not taken any wages. If I stay in state guest houses, I pay, even for the food. I am entitled to Rs 1.5 lakh as pension; I have been a seven-time MP. I have not taken a single paisa in the last 13 years." "This (pension) and the wages would easily make a monthly earning of Rs 3.5 lakh. Till now that would have been

crores. What do I need it for? I have only one meal a day. I do not even have rice or roti. I am happy that I have a cot to sleep in," she added. Banerjee took a dig at the BJP-led Centre for claiming that the Centre was funding the Jalswapno scheme when the state was providing land and giving water connections as well as maintaining pipelines. "We have a 75% share, while they have a 25% share, that too from GST funds. All people across the state will get potable water by the end of 2024 or latest by February 2025," the CM said. She also blamed the Centre for stopping 100 days of work under MGNREGS, adding: "But I did not stop it." Different state departments in Bengal employed workers for at least 40 days. Job card holders were being employed in Matir Sristi or other PWD projects to construct roads, Banerjee said. She claimed central policies had caused poverty to go up 40% in the country. The CM said while the Centre was sending guidelines to deal with the pandemic, it was she who took to the roads to create awareness, adding that she lost two family members to Covid.

3 govt hosps bag national certification

Kolkata: Two state run teaching hospitals have bagged national certification for quality in maternal care and labour room practices along with quality care in paediatric medical care while the third one has got certification for paediatric care. While LaQshya is programme aimed at reducing preventable maternal and newborn mortality, MusQan is aimed at providing high quality, safe and child friendly services at public healthcare facilities. Dr BC Roy PG Institute of Paediatric Sciences has got MusQan certification. Scoring 96% and 92% in MusQan and LaQshya, respectively, RG Kar has bagged two certifications. NRS has scored 97% overall taking into account all yardsticks under MusQan while it scored 92% under LaQshya.



Gujarat teachers demoted for higher studies!



AHMEDABAD: Gujarat HC has come to the rescue of three primary teachers whose promotions were reversed because they pursued higher studies to obtain graduate and postgraduate degrees. A bench of Justice Nikhil Kariel ordered status quo, meaning Magan Dodiya, Savji Parmar and Haresh Rajyaguru would continue to serve as head teachers until further orders. The court has issued notice to the authorities and posted further hearing on Wednesday. Dodiya, Parmar and Rajyaguru have been serving in Bhavnagar city's municipal board's schools since the 1980s and 1990s. The qualification required then for the post of a primary teacher was only secondary schooling with a certificate course in primary teaching. After the state government introduced certain qualifying criteria for promotions, the three cleared a test called Head Teachers Aptitude Test (HTAT) - required to become a head teacher - and they were promoted to the post in 2012. On December 8, 2023, the Bhavnagar town education committee cancelled their promotions and demoted them to their original post of primary teachers. The punishment was for the "misconduct" of pursuing higher education without due permission from the department. All three rushed to HC, where their advocates Shalin Mehta and Shikha Panchal submitted that these teachers had sought permission to pursue higher studies. While the authority did not respond to Dodiya and Parmar's requests to pursue graduation, permission was granted to Rajyaguru in 1988 to pursue graduation and then in 2010 again to get a master's degree. Still, Rajyaguru was punished. The lawyers also complained that the inquiry reports were never shared with the teachers to enable them to respond to the authority.

Six hurt as LPG gas leakage triggers blast

Bengaluru: Six people, including three women, two men and a boy, sustained injuries in a fireball blast triggered by LPG gas leakage in Yelahanka on Tuesday morning. Asma, 58, and Faria Banu, 45, are undergoing treatment at Victoria Hospital. Four others — Salma, 22, Thammaiah, 38, Afroz, 23, and Shahid, 16, — were discharged after availing treatment at Yelahanka hospital.

Telugu & Persian inscriptions found

Hyderabad: Several new inscriptions in Telugu, Kannada and Persian have been found in the two Telugu states in the last three months. Telugu inscriptions of Chola, Vijayanagara and Kakatiya periods and other dynasties were found and analysed by director of epigraphy, ASI, Dr K Muni Ratnam Naidu, the inscription, in Telugu language and characters, dates to October 18, 1436 CE. "It was regarding gift of land to



the god by the king," he said. A Kannada inscription of 12th century CE was found at Naddivarigudem, Nalgonda. A Persian inscription, engraved on stone and written in Thulth style of calligraphy of 15-16th century CE, was found in Ursu Darga, Karimabad, Warangal. The epitaph says Jalal Mudakkar Shirazi (who lies buried here) seeks prayers from people who have got a big heart.

Revant to decide fate of 'ret'd' officers still continuing in posts

Hyderabad: After removing political appointees, especially corporation chairpersons and advisors, of the previous BRS government, chief minister A Revant Reddy has shifted his focus on to officers who have been working in the same department even after their retirement by way of reappointment, contract or outsourcing basis. The state government has decided to remove 'rehabilitated' officers, without any valid reason to continue them. Chief secretary A Santhi Kumari asked all special chief secretaries, principal secretaries, secretaries and special secretaries of

the secretariat departments to furnish information regarding reappointments, who are working in the departments after their reappointment or on contract or outsourcing basis irrespective of source of payment or remuneration in the secretariat and heads of the department offices, corporations and boards, before Wednesday evening. CM Revant Reddy is likely to take a call on these rehabilitated officers soon. Official sources said the BRS government in the past 10 years had reappointed or continued many officers in various government departments.

Snatcher falls off during getaway bid, man whom he targeted calls emergency number

Gurgaon: A cellphone snatcher in IMT Manesar, Gurgaon, was injured after losing balance on his bike. The man whose cellphone was stolen called emergency services and found his phone in the snatcher's possession. The snatcher is critically injured and under police supervision. Snatcher falls off during getaway bid, man whom he targeted calls emergency number. Image used for representative purpose only. **GURGAON:** A snatcher who was seriously injured after losing balance on his bike got prompt medical attention - courtesy the man whose cellphone he



had stolen just moments before at IMT Manesar on Monday. Snatcher falls off during getaway bid. The snatcher, a youngster, was critically injured and has been operated on. He is yet to regain consciousness, police said on Tuesday. The incident was reported at 6.10pm near Autotech Park in

Sector 8. Pramod Kumar (30), who works at an apparel and textile manufacturing company in IMT Manesar, said he was on his way home with a friend when they stopped to wait for others. "While waiting, I got a call and was talking on the phone when a man on a Yamaha R15

approached from the direction of DRI Chowk and snatched my phone. He sped towards KMP, but just around 200 metres ahead, he lost balance and the bike skidded, throwing him to the ground," Kumar said. Kumar ran towards the biker and on seeing him unconscious, called the emergency number 112. "I tried to ask his name, but he could not speak. He had injuries to his mouth and head. I checked the bag he had tied to his waist and found my mobile phone. I called the emergency number and police arrived soon after," Kumar said.

Editorial

Why India faces a strategic dilemma in the unfolding Myanmar crisis

The past few months have witnessed the civil war in Myanmar taking unpredictable turns and twists. The Peoples' Defence Force which is the armed wing of the Chiang Mai-based National Unity Government and affiliated ethnic militias of the country seem to have confronted Myanmar on quite a few fronts. The setbacks have seen the fleeing of several Myanmar army personnel into Mizoram. The accelerated efforts of the rebel groups have been relentlessly targeting "the military and its assets" and capturing townships that the Myanmar army had been acting as tactical bases. A hitherto disunited resistance has come together to battle the Tatmadaw under a single command and control. However, the last word in the war has not yet been scripted. After all, temporary defeats have never proclaimed the final outcome. One has to just read how Operation Barbarossa unfurled, progressed and concluded.

Clarity, therefore, continues to defy the direction in which the war in Myanmar is heading towards. This is even though the rebel groups presently have an upper hand in the conflict. The country's future would only witness conclusive proclamation in the ensuing months. But the important question that this column wishes to pose is the stand that India should take towards its crucial neighbour even as it watches the unfolding situation in Myanmar. Realpolitik is realpolitik and, therefore, Myanmar—regardless of who governs its polity—is an important linchpin for India's "Act East Policy". This author's visit to Yangon in 2014 as an Indian representative for "Track II Dialogue" and later to the Indo-Myanmar borderlands in 2022 after the military takeover of 1 February 2021 informed that the vital entry points from places such as Moreh in Manipur that would have opened the gates to the seamless causeway all the way to the Pacific are refusing to "Go East". The farsighted dream of the visionary Prime Minister Narendra Modi (who coined the phrase Ashta Laxmi for the eight states that comprise the North East) to open up the North East to trade and commerce that would decisively alter the kismet have come to a standstill.

NSCN (K) (and its various factions), ULFA (Independent), a plethora of Meitei groups and even NSCN (IM) have well-entrenched camps in the Sagaing Division. There was great optimism when the Myanmar army conducted Op Sunrise-I and Sunrise-II in 2019. Although certain observers have termed the Operations as cosmetic, the fact of the matter is that several insurgent camps were demolished. But such a pro-India stance evaporated after the military takeover in Myanmar. Indeed, several Indian Insurgent Groups have come to an understanding with the Myanmar army. It is reported that the insurgent would be allowed undisturbed existence in their established camps and in return for which they would have to aid the Myanmar army to quell the rebellion. Such an understanding is fraught with grave national security implications for India. The state of affairs in Manipur has not shown signs of improvement and it is now known that Valley Based Insurgent Groups or the Group of Five (G-5) billeted in three neat clusters (North, Central and South) in Sagaing have entered the "Land of the Emeralds" with NSCN (IM) aid (via the Somra Tracts) to direct the ethnic pogroms.



Lakshadweep, Maldives and PM Modi's diplomatic playbook

In a surprising turn of events, the serene archipelago of Lakshadweep, India's smallest Union Territory, has emerged from the shadows to seize the limelight on Google Trends. The catalyst? None other than the charismatic Prime Minister Narendra Modi, whose recent visit sparked a whirlwind of speculation that hinted at Lakshadweep becoming the nation's new-found tourist haven. However, the unintended consequence of this new-found interest has stirred the tranquil waters of the Maldives, a popular holiday paradise for many Indians. The surging popularity of Lakshadweep now threatens to cast a shadow over the Maldives' tourism industry, and what was once a diplomatic ripple has transformed into a tempest, fueled by "derogatory" remarks against Prime Minister Modi from certain political quarters in the Maldives. As the dust settles, it becomes evident that promoting Lakshadweep as a beach destination is not just a travel initiative—it's a diplomatic chess move that underscores the strength and influence of India and its unwavering leader. As the buzz around Prime Minister Modi's Lakshadweep visit grew, online speculations hinted at a connection to shifting



dynamics in the Maldives. Unconfirmed reports suggested concerns over the Maldives aligning with China, an issue of strategic importance for India. Despite New Delhi's silence on any direct link, the online discourse intensified, with some Maldivian politicians using derogatory language against PM Modi and Indians. This unfolding narrative unveils deeper geopolitical nuances, laying the groundwork for an exploration into the influence of China in the Maldives.

Maldives President Muizzu inks infrastructure deals with China, thanks Beijing for 'selfless assistance'. As of 13 December, 2023, the Maldives witnessed a robust 12.6 per cent increase in tourism, totalling 1,757,939 visitors compared to 1.5 mil-

lion in 2022. Indian tourists took the lead with 209,198 arrivals, outpacing both Russian and Chinese visitors at 209,146 and 187,118, respectively. These figures highlight India's significant contribution to the Maldives' flourishing tourism sector. As diplomatic tensions peak between India and the Maldives, tour operators in the island nation are grappling with anxiety, amplified by the suspension of flight bookings on a major Indian travel portal. The digital landscape reflects the turmoil, with MakeMyTrip noting an astounding 3,400 per cent surge in Lakshadweep searches post-Prime Minister Modi's visit. This sudden shift in travel interest paints a vivid tableau of geopolitical intricacies entwining the tourism sector, casting an

ominous shadow over the Maldivian travel industry. The recent diplomatic ripples following Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's visit to Beijing, despite the fallout from derogatory remarks against Prime Minister Modi, underscores a nuanced tale of strategic realignment and indebtedness. Muizzu's pivot towards China is not a mere symbolic gesture; it represents a carefully calculated move, mirroring a broader narrative of economic dependency and geopolitical manoeuvring. China's strategic interest in the Maldives dates back to 2008, recognising its geographical significance near vital sea lanes crucial for Beijing's energy supplies. The acquisition of Feydhoo Finolhu, a small islet strategically positioned near the Malé International Airport, serves as a tangible example of China's tactical positioning in this geopolitical chess game.

By Taboola Sponsored Links Economic engagement is a key facet, with China's investments extending beyond visible acquisitions to include securing a 50-year lease for a modest \$4 million. This economic embrace is a calculated move, as China utilizes its financial leverage to court successive Maldivian administrations, creating a complex web of dependency. The

looming debt entanglement is a cause for concern, with the Maldives owing China an astronomical \$1.37 billion, constituting roughly 20% of its public debt. Beijing's role as the Maldives' largest bilateral creditor raises alarms about the potential pitfalls of a debt trap, casting a shadow over the archipelago's economic future. China's geopolitical manoeuvring in the Maldives goes beyond financial ties. In 2018, during a period of political turmoil, China swiftly cautioned India against interference, solidifying its protective stance over Maldivian affairs. Additionally, by orchestrating the Maldives' transition from a Least Developed Country to a burgeoning economy, China strategically fortified its influence, creating a delicate yet precarious dynamic. In a significant move, the Maldives formally requested India to withdraw its military personnel from its shores earlier last year, shedding light on a geopolitical tug-of-war between India and China for influence in this strategically positioned archipelago. Situated along bustling shipping routes in the Indian Ocean, the Maldives has become a focal point for both nations, leading to substantial investments in infrastructure upgrades and the extension of loans to the country.

How security is being beefed up in Ayodhya ahead of Mandir event

Anticipation and spiritual fervour are reaching unprecedented heights as the grand 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony of the Ram Mandir is set to unfold on 22 January in the sacred city of Ayodhya. The town is buzzing with excitement, but it's not just about celebration—security is top-notch.

Authorities are using a mix of manpower and tech, including drones with anti-drone features and AI in cameras. The aim? To keep a close eye on everything during the ceremony.

Transportation won't be a hassle either, with plans to inform the public in advance about any diversions. Local authorities are getting everything in order for the crowd. With

enhanced security measures and logistical planning, they're ensuring a smooth experience for everyone attending this historic 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony at the Ram Temple. Here's a closer look.

In a bid to ensure robust security arrangements for the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony, 10,000 CCTV cameras have been installed in the entire district and multilingual policemen in plain clothes will be deployed at the venue, officials said on Tuesday. "In some of these CCTV cameras, we are using AI-based technology so that we can maintain a strict vigil on the com-muters," Director General (DG), Law and Order, Prashant Kumar, told PTI, adding multi-

lingual police personnel will be deployed in plain clothes at the programme venue and they have been given training in proper soft skills. With a 90-day recording capacity, these high-tech cameras will provide continuous surveillance, capturing footage from key locations across the city. "We have made all the arrangements. We are alert and we are not just relying on our manpower but also taking the help of technology, which we keep on continuously upgrading," Praveen Kumar, IG Ayodhya Zone, told ANI. "Multiple drones will be active throughout the event and with the help of anti-drone solutions, we will keep an eye on drones being flown without permission.

Ram temple in Ayodhya: Modi's tryst with history

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to conduct the auspicious act of opening the eyes of the 'Ram Lalla' idol at the Ram temple's sanctum sanctorum in Ayodhya on 22 January, 2024, with a golden stick in the presence of 11 Vedic priests. This will mark the culmination of the seven-day Pran Pratishtha (consecration) rituals, heralding a new chapter in India's civilisational history. While Jawaharlal Nehru visited Mughal marauder Babur's tomb in Afghanistan in 1959, Indira Gandhi visited the tomb in 1968 and Rahul Gandhi in 2005, it took a leader as tall and fearless as Prime Minister Modi to correct a historical wrong. Babur destroyed an existing temple in the year 1528 to build a masjid (Babri masjid), snatching away from Hindus what was rightfully theirs. And while it is the Supreme Court ruling that paved way for the construction of the Ram Mandir, at the Ram Janmabhoomi site, let truth be told—it is the grand ambition, extraordinary vision, unwavering conviction and flawless execution of Prime Minister Modi that has finally brought the Ram Mandir to fruition. Ram Mandir has been part of the BJP's manifesto for the longest time and the issue of building a mandir at Lord Ram's birthplace was first crystallised in the BJP's Palampur resolution of 1989. 'Jan Jagaran



Abhiyan' slogan, coined by Modi, then the Gujarat general secretary of the BJP, became a rallying cry for the Ram Mandir movement. Three decades back, the BJP actively organised various activities including Mohalla Baithaks, Prabhat Pheris, Sammelans and a massive signature collection campaign. Half a crore signatures were collected from Gujarat alone, all thanks to Modi. Unlike his predecessors like Nehru, Indira or Rajiv Gandhi, Modi has never felt compelled to engage in appeasement politics and therefore never paid obeisance to bloodthirsty Mughals and therein lies his greatness. While Modi has no qualms visiting the Ajmer dargah, the Grand Istiqlal mosque in Indonesia or the Al-Hakim mosque in Egypt, here is a proud Hindutva leader who is equally at ease wearing his Hindu credentials proudly on his sleeves and why should he not? More than 80% of India's population is Hindu. Is Jesus not celebrated at his birthplace in Bethlehem? Is the Prophet in Islam not celebrated at his birthplace

in Mecca? Is Lord Gautam Buddha not celebrated at his birthplace in Lumbini in Nepal? Is Lord Mahavir not celebrated at his birthplace in Kundalpur, in modern day Bihar? The answer to the above questions is "Yes". That being the case, why were Hindus denied their natural right to celebrate Lord Ram at his birthplace in Ayodhya? That is because Hindus are inherently secular and waited tolerantly for the Court verdict. There has now come a time in history though, when nothing can stop the collective consciousness of over a billion Hindus, the most peaceful community anywhere in the world. And that tryst with history is on the auspiciously eventful day of 22 January. Who are the reckless Opposition leaders who allege that Prime Minister Modi has hijacked the Ram Mandir issue for political gains? Who are the Opposition leaders who wrongfully accuse Modi of being majoritarian? It is that very lot from the Congress which filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court, denying the very existence of Lord Ram and the Ram Setu.

India, Indian Ocean Region and the unfolding geopolitical landscape

In 2010/11 Robert D Kaplan, a famous thinker of geopolitics, wrote in his book Monsoon-Indian Ocean and the Future of American Power describing the future changes in the greater Indian Ocean, "Chinese naval expansion originating in the eastern end of the Greater Indian Ocean, and at the western end take a peek at African renewal through the prism of Zanzibar". He goes on further to describe the 'ceaseless currents of historical change as they shape the contours of the new century. It is the

intermingling of challenges in each place—religious, economic, political, environmental than each challenge in isolation, that creates such drama."

This seems to playing out in the Western Indian Ocean Region. Israel-Hamas conflict and incognito indulgence of Iran through Hezbollah and reactionary measures by Houthis, who control 70 per cent of Yemen (backed by Iran) but are ruled by a government backed by Saudi Arabia. It is the indiscriminate targeting of merchant ships in

the Red Sea carrying world trade and energy which is impeding the right of innocent passage and freedom of navigation, leading to US Navy and Royal Navy ships targeting Houthi strongholds in Yemen. There have been calls from Saudi for restraint and not to escalate. Iran has warned of consequences. US and UK have reiterated that the action aligns with international laws to protect world trade and the economy.

Navigating security challenges: India's maritime strategy amid rising proxy threats

It is unlikely that US will allow these threats to prevent its action given the strength of US Navy seems uncertain due to America's economic travails and the diversionary cost of its support to land conflicts between Ukraine and Russia and Israel-Hamas in Gaza. This could act as a warning to the emerging axis that US power is not declining at all. However, as a student of geopolitics, one can observe that five centuries of Westfalen preponderance is gradually declining towards closure.

Will counter non-tariff barriers: Piyush Goyal



NEW DELHI: Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal warned that India will not hesitate to use non-tariff barriers against those countries that resort to apply these tools, including unnecessary registration and compliance requirements or standards and levels of pesticides. "I am going tough on other countries. I have told them very categorically that if you will impose these barriers on us, we will put two. This will be reciprocal," he said at a meeting of Board of Trade (BoT), a platform where Centre,

The minister's statement comes at a time when environmental standards are being pushed, with EU and UK now using carbon border tax to increase levies

states and business come together. Urging businesses to flag these barriers, he said: "Today we face issues because we do not have data of their (other countries) non-tariff barriers." With textiles, food and other products facing repeated hurdles as countries

have chosen to prescribe their own standards, often ignoring what international norms are, India has also resorted to use of some of the tools, bringing trade partners such as EU and the US on negotiating table. The minister's statement comes at a time when environmental standards are being pushed, with EU and UK now using carbon border tax to increase levies on imported steel and other metals. Government has argued these are non-tariff barriers, not allowed under global rules.

Insurance to grow fastest in India among G20: Swiss Re

MUMBAI: India's insurance sector is set to be the fastest growing among G20 countries from 2024 to 2028, reinsurance giant Swiss Re said.

The insurer forecasts a robust inflation-adjusted growth rate of 7.1% for India's insurance market over the next five years, nearly three times higher than the global average of 2.4%. The Swiss Re Institute (SRI) anticipates an increase in insurance penetration (the contribution of insurance to GDP) from 3.8% to 4.5% by 2034. Despite annual economic losses in India reaching \$8 billion (inflation-adjusted) due to natural calamities over the last decade, insurance



protection against such risks remains low, with 93% of exposures uninsured, according to SRI's resilience analysis. The rise in premiums is expected to be fuelled by economic growth, an expanding middle class, and regulatory support, with Irdai aiming for universal coverage by 2047. Emerging markets, including India, are projected to grow at 5.1% over the

next five years, while advanced markets are expected to grow at a slower rate of 1.7%. In terms of segment split, the life insurance market, comprising about three-quarters of total premiums in India, is forecasted to grow at an annual average of 6.7% from 2024 to 2028, while nonlife premiums, including health, are expected to expand by an average of 8.3%.

UK unemployment steadies, as wage growth drops: Data

LONDON: UK unemployment steadied and wages growth retreated in the three months to the end of November, according to official data on Tuesday that eased concerns over inflation. The unemployment rate came in at 4.2 percent, unchanged from the three months to the end

of October, the Office for National Statistics said in a statement. Annual average wages excluding bonuses jumped 6.6 percent in three months to the end of November but this was down on the 7.3-percent reading in the three months to the end of October, the ONS added. "While

annual pay growth remains high in cash terms, we continue to see signs that wage pressures might be easing overall," said Liz McKeown, ONS director of economic statistics. "However, with inflation still falling more quickly, earnings continued to grow in real terms."

The world could get its first trillionaire with in 10 years, anti-poverty group Oxfam says

"We have the top five billionaires, they have doubled their wealth. On the other hand, almost 5 billion people have become poorer"

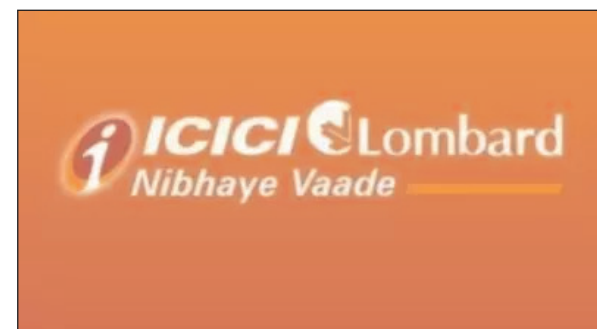


World Economic Forum's annual meeting, reckons the gap has been "supercharged" since the coronavirus pandemic. The group said the fortunes of the five richest men - Tesla CEO Elon Musk, Bernard Arnault and his family of luxury company LVMH, Amazon founder Jeff Bezos, Oracle founder Larry Ellison and investment guru Warren Buffett - have spiked by 114% in real terms since 2020, when the world was reeling from the pandemic.

Oxfam's interim executive director said the report showed that the world is entering a "decade of division." "We have the top five billionaires, they have doubled their wealth. On the other hand, almost 5 billion people have become poorer," Amitabh Behar said in an interview in Davos, Switzerland, where the forum's annual meeting takes place this week. "Very soon, Oxfam predicts that we will have a trillionaire within a decade," Behar said, referring to a person who has a thousand billion dollars. "Whereas to fight poverty, we need more than 200 years." If someone does reach that trillion-dollar milestone - and it could be someone not even on any list of richest people right now - he or she would have the same value as oil-rich Saudi Arabia.

ICICI Lombard posts 22% rise in Q3 profit as premiums climb

BENGALURU: India's ICICI Lombard General Insurance on Tuesday reported a 22.4% rise in third-quarter profit, helped by a growth in premiums and investment income. Profit after tax rose to 4.31 billion rupees (nearly \$52 million) for the quarter ended Dec. 31 from 3.53 billion rupees (\$42.61 million) a year earlier, the ICICI Bank-backed company said in an exchange filing. ICICI Lombard, a non-life insurer, offers insurance for health, fire, and motor seg-



ments. Motor insurance, the company's biggest segment, contributed 50.8% to the total premium earned, while its fastest growing health insurance segment posted 42.4% growth. India saw bumper vehicle sales in

the quarter due to the festive and wedding seasons, resulting in a rise in policies for general insurers. Net premium earned during the quarter rose 13.5% to 43.05 billion rupees. Income from invest-

ments - another key metric - rose nearly 15% to 6.66 billion rupees in the December-quarter. The insurer's combined ratio, an important profitability metric for an insurance firm's underwriting business, improved to 103.6% from 104.4% a year ago. The combined ratio measures the incurred losses and operating expenses as a percentage of premium collected. It does not take into account income from investments.

China's economy expanded 5.2% last year

China China's economy grew at a faster pace in Q4, achieving its 5% annual growth target for 2023. The performance was attributed to strategic measures, including strengthening macro regulation and expanding domestic demand. Key indicators such as industrial output and retail sales showed growth. However, challenges remain, including a property crisis and weakened consumer and business confidence. Addressing the World Economic Forum on Tuesday, Chinese Premier Li Qiang highlighted the achievement of the economic target without resorting to "massive stimulus." China's economy expanded 5.2% last year, hitting target of 'about 5%' even though recovery is uneven. Ferries sail by a containers vessel prepares to dock at a port



in Xiamen in southeast China's Fujian province. China's economy grew at a faster pace in the October-December quarter, allowing the Chinese government to achieve its target of approximately 5% annual growth for 2023, despite uneven trade data and an uncertain economic recovery. The 2023 growth, notably higher than the previous year's 3% due to the economic downturn caused by Covid-19 and extensive lockdowns, indicates a robust rebound. The fourth quarter saw the gross domestic product (GDP) rise by 5.2% compared to the same

period in the previous year. However, the quarter-on-quarter growth decelerated to 1% in Q4, a slight drop from the 1.3% expansion in the July-September quarter. Officials from China's National Bureau of Statistics attributed this performance to a series of strategic measures, saying that "strengthened macro regulation, and redoubled efforts to expand domestic demand, optimize structure, boost confidence and prevent and defuse risks" played a crucial role in bolstering the recovery's momentum, as well as balancing supply and demand.

What AI can do to science will be most interesting: Satya Nadella

DAVOS: Artificial Intelligence may have given new tools to science, but the most interesting thing to watch out for will be what it can do to accelerate science, Microsoft chief Satya Nadella said on Tuesday. He also dismissed concerns that AI cannot be governed or regulated. "There is nothing that cannot be controlled or governed by humankind for better use and this is one of the easiest and simplest technologies. What is needed is that it is governed properly and I'm sure it will happen," Nadella said. He also said that the last thing the world needs is technology creating a divide and "we need to be watchful of it".

Speaking at the World Economic



Forum Annual Meeting 2024, Microsoft's Chairman and CEO said Artificial Intelligence (AI) has been gaining a lot of scale recently with the advent of ChatGPT and many other platforms. "First time, I actually became a believer when I saw GitHub Copilot, that actually made me a convert," he said. "But, what AI will do to science is probably the most interesting thing for me," he said during

a conversation with WEF Founder and Executive Chairman Klaus Schwab. "What can be done about energy transition, what can be done about cancer detection, what it can do with molecule behaviour. So far what we have seen is that it has brought new tools to science, but we are yet to see how it can accelerate science," Nadella said. On the technology front, the top

Microsoft executive said he is always anchoring back to three things, quantum, AI and mixed reality or embodied AI or call it humanoid robots. "Can we give birth to a new quantum revolution that I want to see," he said. He also said the world is not seeing any economic growth if adjusted for inflation but AI can trigger economic expansion just like it happened when PCs came into picture.

Google lays off hundreds of employees in advertising team



Alphabet-owned Google is laying off hundreds of employees in its advertising sales team, Business Insider reported on Tuesday, citing an internal memo. Last week, the company had said it would lay off several employees in its Voice Assistant units, hardware teams responsible for Pixel, Nest and Fitbit, as well as in its augmented reality team. Google did not immediately respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Donald Trump hints at future role for Vivek Ramaswamy at New Hampshire rally

Hampshire

At a rally in New Hampshire on Tuesday, former US President Donald Trump hinted at a potential collaboration with his former GOP adversary Vivek Ramaswamy, following the latter's withdrawal from the presidential race after the Iowa caucuses. Indian-American tech entrepreneur Ramaswamy, who had just suspended his presidential campaign, joined Trump at the rally in Atkinson, endorsing the GOP frontrunner. As Ramaswamy concluded his speech, chants of "Veep!" were heard among Trump's supporters. Trump praised Ramaswamy, acknowledging his remarkable journey from starting with "zippo" to finishing strong in the political arena. "He's a fantastic guy. He's got something



that's very special because he started off with a zippo and he ended up very strong. He did a great job. I was actually surprised when he called because he was doing well. And it's an honor to have his endorsement," Trump remarked. He further added, "He's going to be working with us and he'll be working with us for a long time," eliciting cheers from the crowd. Ramaswamy, a biotech entrepreneur, responded to Trump's comments on social media, emphasizing a

united, America-First movement. The specifics of Ramaswamy's potential role, whether in Trump's campaign or a prospective administration, remain uncertain. When questioned about the possibility of serving as vice president, Ramaswamy expressed his dedication to serving the country in any capacity, saying, "I want to serve this country any way I can." At the rally, Trump sharply criticized Haley, his ex-United Nations ambassador, labeling her a "disaster".

China posts some of its worst growth in decades as recovery stalls

BEIJING: China's economy last year suffered one of its worst annual performances in more than three decades, official figures showed Wednesday, as the country battled a crippling property crisis, sluggish consumption and global turmoil. Gross domestic product expanded 5.2 percent to hit 126 trillion yuan (\$17.6 trillion), China's national bureau of statistics reported. Official GDP figures remain a key source of insight into the health of the world's second-largest economy, despite being eminently political. Wednesday's reading is an improvement on the three percent growth recorded in 2022, a year



that saw business activity hammered by tight health curbs designed to contain Covid-19. But excluding the pandemic years, 2023 marked China's weakest performance since 1990. After lifting its draconian pandemic measures at the end of 2022, Beijing set itself a growth target of "around five percent" for

last year. The economy enjoyed an initial post-pandemic rebound, but ran out of steam within months as a lack of confidence among households and businesses battered consumption. An intractable real estate crisis, record youth unemployment and a global slowdown are also gumming the gears of the Chinese growth engine. The country's exports -- historically a key growth lever -- fell last year for the first time since 2016, according to figures published by the customs agency on Friday. Geopolitical tensions with the United States and efforts by some Western nations to reduce dependence on

Rishi Sunak puts down rebellion for now over Rwanda plan

LONDON: British PM Rishi Sunak put down an initial right-wing rebellion in his party on Tuesday over legislation to deport asylum seekers to Rwanda, a victory of sorts that prompted two of his most vocal supporters to resign. Conservative Party deputy chairmen Lee

Anderson and Brendan Clarke-Smith said they had resigned over government's lack of willingness to toughen the legislation.

The resignations underlined the deep divisions in Sunak's governing party over legislation he believes is crucial in turning round the

Conservatives' popularity before an election this year. Come Conservative lawmakers say the legislation, which aims to block asylum seekers bringing further court challenges against their deportations, goes too far and others that it does not go far enough.

Tokyo governor Yuriko Koike asked to stop \$2.45 billion plan to remake park

TOKYO: Governor Yuriko Koike was asked Tuesday to stop a disputed \$2.45 billion project to convert a Tokyo park district, renowned for its rows of 100-year-old ginkgo trees, into a largely commercial area anchored around three skyscrapers. The plan for the Jingu Gaien area calls for razing a famous baseball stadium where Babe Ruth played and rebuilding it, part of a vast construction project that threatens thousands of trees in a city with limited green space. A group of 420 outside experts including architects, urban planners, environ-



mentalists and economists demanded in an open letter and news conference that the project be suspended and suggested Koike was ignoring public discontent and bowing to the powerful construction industry. The letter said Koike and her government "have made no effort to provide official answers to dozens of

public questions" and policy decisions. It asked for an independent environmental assessment and said some of the ginkgo trees "are in a state of obvious decline" that could be exacerbated by construction. "What she (Koike) is doing with this case is the simple destruction of nature when we need more trees," Kohei Saito,

a political economist at Tokyo University, told The Associated Press. "We should have an open public discussion. This is not something that only politicians and private companies should decide." This is the latest in mounting opposition to a plan led by real estate giant Mitsui Fudosan, the city and the Shinto religious body to demolish the baseball stadium and an adjoining rugby venue, and rebuild them in the same area in order to accommodate a pair of 200-meter (650-foot) towers and an 80-meter (260-foot) companion.

China's population drops for 2nd year, raises long-term growth concerns

China

China experienced a decline in its population for the second consecutive year. The total population decreased by 2.08 million to 1.4097 billion. Factors contributing to this decline include a significant reduction in childbirths, the highest death toll since 1949, and the relaxation of strict health measures. In 2023, India surpassed China as the most populous nation, according to United Nations projections. Experts caution



that China, the world's second-largest economy, is poised to confront several challenges due to this demographic shift. China's population drops for 2nd year, raises long-term

growth concerns. Experts caution that China, the world's second-largest economy, is poised to confront several challenges due to this demographic shift. In 2023, China wit-

nessed a further decrease in its population, marking the second consecutive year of decline since the previous year's historic drop. The total population of mainland China reduced by 2.08 million, settling at 1.4097 billion from the 1.4118 billion recorded in 2022, as per the latest official statistics. The nation observed a significant reduction in childbirths, with only 9.02 million births in the last year, a 5.6% decrease from 2022's 9.56 million.

Trump attends rape defamation case in New York

NEW YORK: Donald Trump went straight from his victory in the Republican Iowa caucuses to a New York courtroom Tuesday for the start of a defamation trial brought by writer E. Jean Carroll after an earlier jury found he had sexually assaulted her in the 1990s. In court, the former US president did not make any statements, and he and Carroll avoided looking at each other while jurors were being selected, according to reporters allowed inside the courtroom. But Trump continued attacking Carroll on his Truth Social platform, reposting a clip from an interview she gave to CNN and writing, "Can you believe I have to defend myself against this woman's fake story?!" Addressing supporters



at a rally in New Hampshire later in the day, Trump said he planned to attend daily court proceedings in the "phony" case in New York over the next several days, while continuing campaigning. "Early in the morning I go to a Biden witch hunt," Trump said in the northeastern state, which will hold the nation's second presidential nomination contest next Tuesday. "And then I come here in the afternoon, and I stop, we make speeches and we get the votes."

The shocking defamation case, which would likely once have been enough to wreck any politician's career, has had no visible impact on Trump's bid to retake the White House -- and if anything is boosting his standing with his party's right wing. Carroll, 80, is seeking more than \$10 million in damages in the civil trial, alleging that Trump defamed her in 2019 when he was president and she had just come out with her allegation, saying she "is not my type."

Malaysia to review migrant labour deals to stamp out exploitation

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will review bilateral agreements with 15 nations from which it sources labourers in a bid to address exploitative practices and manpower imbalances that have left thousands of migrant workers stranded without jobs, officials said. Since last year, thousands of migrants, mostly from Bangladesh and Nepal, have been left in limbo after arriving in Malaysia, where they were told that jobs promised to them in exchange for steep recruitment fees were no longer available. The plight of the migrants coincided with concerns over workplace abuses in Malaysia, with several



companies facing U.S. bans over the use of forced labour in recent years. Many labourers said they had not been paid any wages. Speaking to reporters late on Tuesday, the labour and home affairs ministers said the distribution of labourers was uneven across the economy, prompting a need to review the bilateral agreements. They said Malaysia still had a

shortage of workers in the agriculture and plantations sector, while quotas have been exceeded in other industries. "We will revisit the agreements looking at various elements including fees, costs, contract conditions, health and so on," Home Minister Saifuddin Nasution Ismail said, adding that the government would allow the transfer of

worker quotas across sectors. Workers from Indonesia, Bangladesh and Nepal account for over 70% of Malaysia's migrant labour, with the remainder coming from countries including India, Vietnam, Pakistan, and Thailand. Human Resources Minister Steven Sim said authorities had completed investigations into five firms involved in hiring hundreds of workers who later found themselves without jobs. He said employers who hired such workers must pay them wages even though they do not have jobs, adding that companies and individuals who violate the law will be barred from hiring migrant labourers.

Nigeria blast kills two, dozens hurt as buildings collapse

LAGOS: At least two people were killed and dozens injured when explosives stored at a private residence detonated in Nigeria's Oyo state, its governor said on Wednesday. Several houses collapsed from the impact of Tuesday's blast, witnesses said, sending panicked residents into the streets. In a statement, the governor, Seyi Makinde, said there were two deaths while 77 people were treated for injuries, most of them being discharged. "Preliminary investigations by the security agencies revealed that illegal miners occupying one of the houses in Bodija had stored explosive devices there which caused the blast," Makinde added. The explosion was heard in the state's capital of Ibadan, 130 km (80 miles) from Nigeria's commercial capital of Lagos.

3rd T20I: Rohit stars with record ton as India clinch double Super Over thriller



NEW DELHI: A spirited Afghanistan gave India a run for its money in the nerve-wrenching third T20I in Bengaluru as it took a mammoth 423 in 40 overs and two Super Overs for Rohit Sharma and Co. to sweep series 3-0 on Wednesday. The M Chinnaswamy Stadium witnessed a run fest of a rare kind as India pipped Afghanistan in a memorable battle that saw Rohit Sharma smash a record fifth T20I ton. Leading from the front, Rohit donned the glittering cap of saviour thrice in the night, first with a situation-defying hundred in regulation time and then with two mini assaults to help India fight past a feisty Afghanistan in a dramatic finish. The result meant that India won their final series before the T20 World Cup with a satisfying 3-0 margin. Before Super Overs kicked in, Rohit (121 not out, 69b, 11x4, 8x6) and his perfect sidekick Rinku Singh (69 n.o., 39b, 2x4, 6x6) shared 190 runs for a stellar

unbeaten fifth-wicket stand as India came back from a flaky 22 for four to post a massive 212 for four after opting to bat first. The Afghans started gamely through openers Rahmanullah Gurbaz (50, 32b) and Ibrahim Zadran (50, 41 balls) as they added 93 runs in 11 overs, building a solid foundation for the chase. Their departure saw spinners Washington Sundar (3/18) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/31) tightening things a bit but the experienced Gulbadin Naib (55 not out off 23 balls) played some twinkling shots to keep his side in the hunt. Naib knocked off 18 runs of the required 19 off the final over bowled by pacer Mukesh Kumar, drag-

ging the match into a Super Over. The visitors made 16 for 1 in the first Super Over bowled by Mukesh and India equalled the score with Rohit making 13, and it stretched the game to the second Super Over. In this phase, India made 11 and Rohit made all those runs before getting run out. Afghanistan lost both Mohammad Nabi and Gurbaz to leg-spinner Ravi Bishnoi as they failed to score any runs in the second Super Over, signalling the end of a winding match. Rohit remained the star of the night among all that commotion, also silencing those who doubted his suitability to be in India's T20 scheme of things.

When dramatic Super Over ended in a rare tie in history

NEW DELHI: The third T20I between India and Afghanistan in Bengaluru etched in the history of cricket that required two Super Overs to determine the winner of the match. The match ended in a tie with both teams ending on 212 as the match headed for Super Over. But what followed next left cricket fans on their toes as the Super over also failed to produce a result, meaning both teams scored 16 runs apiece. In the second Super Over, India emerged victorious over their opponents, limiting Afghanistan to 1/2 in their chase of 12 runs.

What is Super Over? Super Overs in cricket are



tie-breakers used to determine the winner of a match that ends in a tie, particularly in limited-overs formats like T20Is and One Day Internationals (ODIs). Super Overs add an extra layer of excitement to cricket matches and provide a thrilling conclusion when the regular game ends in a tie. Here are two notable instances when even the Super Over proved insufficient to determine the out-

come of the match. 2019 ODI World Cup Final (England vs New Zealand): The ODI World Cup Final on July 14, 2019 between England and New Zealand ended in a dramatic tie after both the regular 50-over match and the Super Over. England were declared the winner based on the boundary count rule, having scored more boundaries throughout the match. It was a historic and thrilling encounter at Lord's, where both teams scored 241 runs in their 50 overs and even the Super Over couldn't separate them with both teams scoring 15 runs each.

Rohit Sharma smashes record 5th T20I century

NEW DELHI: Indian skipper Rohit Sharma stood tall and led the team's fightback from the front with a record fifth T20I century during the third and final match against Afghanistan in Bengaluru on Wednesday. Rohit, who failed to open an account in the first two games, made a remark-

able comeback to smash a hundred off 64 balls. He bailed India out from a precarious 22/4 with his superb knock. Having made his return to T20Is after a hiatus of 14 months, Rohit went on to score his highest score (121 not out off 69 balls) in the shortest format. It was his first century in

all T20 cricket since January 2019. He rebuilt the innings and then tore into the opposition attack as he hit 11 fours and eight sixes to go past his previous best of 118. Rohit forged an unbeaten 190-run partnership with Rinku Singh (69* off 39) - highest stand for any wicket for India in T20Is.

Already mera do zero ho gaya hai': Rohit to umpire mistakenly gives leg-by boundary

NEW DELHI: In a hilarious incident during the third and final India-Afghanistan T20I, skipper Rohit Sharma was heard telling umpire Virender Sharma that his decision of giving thigh pad boundary instead of bat extended his wait of opening an account in the series. Rohit, who was dismissed for ducks in the first two matches, guided Fareed Ahmad down the leg side on the second delivery of the match in what would have been his first runs



of the series. But to his dismay the umpire signalled leg-byes leaving Rohit stranded on 0. "Viru thigh pad diya kya pehla ball, itna bada bat laga hai bhai, already mera 2 zero ho gaya hai" (Viru, did you give the 1st ball as thigh pad, it clearly touched the bat. I already have two zeroes in the series). Later, he led the team's fightback from

the front with a record fifth T20I century off 64 balls. He bailed India out from a precarious 22/4 with his superb knock. Having made his return to T20Is after a hiatus of 14 months, Rohit went on to score his highest score (121 not out off 69 balls) in the shortest format. In India's final T20I before the T20 World Cup, Rohit made a strong statement with a career-best knock, helping India to a score past 200 despite the early collapse.

From 22/4 to 212/4': Rohit Sharma slams his highest score in T20Is as India post massive total vs Afghanistan

NEW DELHI: In a spectacular turnaround, captain Rohit Sharma showcased his mastery with a remarkable hundred, his fifth in T20Is, as India recovered from a precarious 22 for four to post a formidable 212 for 4 against Afghanistan in the third T20I in Bengaluru. Opting to bat first, India faced an early top-order collapse, but Rohit's unbeaten 121 (69 balls, 11x4, 8x6) and a stellar partnership of 190 runs with Rinku Singh (69 not out, 39 balls, 2x4, 6x6) revived the innings.

Rohit's innings, his highest score in T20Is, showcased both restraint and aggression, with the duo steering India to a commanding total. Rohit's previous best in T20Is was 118 against Sri Lanka at Indore in 2017. Rohit Sharma's century was not characterized by his usual aggressive style. Instead, he exhibited a controlled and strategic approach, having to restrain himself due to the challenging situation India found themselves in after a top-order collapse. Rinku, Rohit's part-

ner in the remarkable 190-run unbeaten fifth-wicket stand, also demonstrated a well-measured approach, using his destructive instincts judiciously. The partnership unfolded like a gradually-building crescendo, becoming the hallmark of their alliance. Rohit's innings featured a rare shot from his repertoire - the reverse sweep - strategically employed to unsettle the Afghan spinners. Notably, a reverse sweep off leg-spinner Qais Ahmad helped him achieve a T20

fifty, marking his first since October 2022. While there were the expected and iconic pulls that define a Rohit innings, one particular shot stood out - an on-one-leg pull off pacer Mohammed Saleem that soared into the second tier, leaving spectators in awe of its brilliance. Soon, the fifty blossomed into a hundred off 63 balls, Rohit's first in T20I since his 111 against the West Indies at Lucknow in 2018, which came through a sliced boundary behind point off.

'Will be back very soon': Suryakumar undergoes successful surgery



Suryakumar is expected to stage a comeback during the Indian Premier League (IPL), which precedes the T20 World Cup in the

Americas. **NEW DELHI:** Indian batsman Suryakumar Yadav on Wednesday revealed that he underwent surgery after experiencing a sports hernia. The top T20 batter in the world sustained the injury during last month's tour of South Africa. The surgery took place in Germany and he anticipates a full recovery, which is expected to take at least a month. "Surgery done. I want to thank everyone for

their concerns and well wishes for my health, and I am happy to tell you all that I will be back very soon," Surya posted on X (formerly Twitter). Suryakumar is expected to stage a comeback during the Indian Premier League (IPL), which precedes the T20 World Cup in the Americas. His role holds significance in India's plans as the team aims to break the ICC title drought in the upcoming mega event scheduled for June.

New Zealand opener Finn Allen equals world record with 16 sixes against Pakistan

NEW DELHI: New Zealand opener Finn Allen etched his name into the record books, smashing a record-breaking 137 off just 62 deliveries in the third Twenty20 international against Pakistan in Dunedin on Wednesday. Allen's extraordinary innings not only surpassed the previous highest score by a New Zealander in a T20 international - Brendon McCullum's 123 - but also equaled the world record for the most sixes in an innings, a feat held by Afghanistan's Hazratullah Zazai with 16 maximums.

Scorecard: NZ vs PAK, 3rd T20I Haris Rauf bore the brunt of Allen's onslaught, as the Kiwi batsman took 27 runs off a single over, showcasing his dominance with three sixes, two fours, and a single. The whirlwind knock positioned New Zealand strongly, setting Pakistan an imposing target of 225 runs to win the



third T20 international and potentially clinch the five-match series with two games in hand. After the early dismissal of Devon Conway for seven, Allen partnered with Tim Seifert, amassing a formidable 125-run partnership for the second wicket. Seifert played a pivotal sup-

porting role, focusing on rotating the strike to keep the aggressive Allen on strike. The umpires found themselves replacing the ball three times during Allen's innings, a testament to the sheer force of his shots that sent missiles out of the ground.

How Sumit Nagal overcame fund crunch, injury and Covid

NEW DELHI: Last year when Sumit Nagal spoke about the "hardships" and "lonely battles" he faces on the ATP Tour, India's best men's singles player also pointed out the consequent "funds-related issues" he encounters to sustain his tennis career. Sumit, in a fervent appeal, had said that he had just 900 euros (approximately Rs 80,000) left in his bank account and needed a "big sponsor" to prolong his tennis career. After his confession, Gatorade, renowned for its history of supporting athletes globally, entered into a partnership with Sumit. "At one point last year, he (Sumit) faced acute financial problems due to lack of sponsors. He had a steady sponsor early in his career. It was a big corporate, but they too pulled out when Covid started.

CAPSULES

'Ram Jyoti' will be illuminated with lamps made from the sacred soil of Saryu

Ayodhya
The sacred soil of this land will once again light up the 'Ram Jyoti,' not only in Ayodhya but also across the nation and the world. Devotees visiting the shrines of Shri Ram Lalla and Hanuman Garhi are buying lamps from local potters here. After the consecration ceremony, they will celebrate Diwali by lighting the 'Ram Jyoti' at their homes in the evening. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's visionary idea has opened up a significant market for local potters here, distancing people from using Chinese products. Now, with the economic and self-reliant focus on empowering potters, the state government is providing them the opportunity to celebrate Diwali twice a year. In line with CM Yogi's vision, the Tourism Department is also gearing up to decorate Ayodhya with 10 lakh lamps made by local potters on the big day. There are only five days left until January 22. In Jaisingpur, potters are now shaping their sweat into the form of lamps. They are eager for the 'Ram Jyoti' to illuminate every home with the lamps they create. Despite adverse weather conditions, they are working day and night to produce more lamps. Potter Ashok Prajapati explains that they are sourcing clay from villages like Darshan Nagar, Kishundaspur, Baisin, and Kusamaha because the weather is challenging, and time is limited. Currently, they are making smaller lamps. People from Ayodhya are coming directly here to buy lamps to light up their homes. Currently, they have obtained four to five tractor loads of clay and are using it to make lamps. Many others are also actively involved in the work. Since coming into power in 2017, Yogi Adityanath has consistently organized the Deepotsav festival. Year after year, this event has been becoming more divine. Starting with 1.71 lakh lamps in 2017, the Deepotsav has grown to an astounding 22.23 lakh lamps in just seven years, setting records and contributing to prosperity of the state and the nation. Potter Rajesh Prajapati expresses gratitude to the Yogi government, not only have people found more significant work opportunities, but there is also a stable livelihood. Initially, the work was only substantial during the Deepotsav, but now, with the celebration of the Ram Mandir Utsav every year, people believe that such opportunities will be available annually. Notably, January 22 holds significant inspiration for followers of Sanatan Dharma, as on this day, Lord Rama will be consecrated in his divine and grand temple. Therefore, every Indian on this day will illuminate 'Ram Jyoti' in their homes. Devotees visiting Ayodhya are purchasing lamps made from the local clay. To ensure the lamps reach without any damage, they are being carefully packed. Ved Prakash from Bijnor and Dheeraj Chaudhary from Nandgaon said that Diwali is celebrated in honour of Lord Ram's return to Ayodhya. Now that Lord Ram is coming to his divine temple, this Diwali will be the grandest. To celebrate this occasion, they are bringing 21 lamps from Ayodhya to light up their homes and will purchase additional lamps there to decorate their entire homes. The state government is employing potters, and they are getting fair prices for their products. Ramesh Prajapati and Rakesh Prajapati from Ashiqbagh, said that they are rapidly making clay lamps. People are also coming here to buy them. 100 lamps are being sold for 100 rupees. Although the weather is challenging, more and more family members are putting in effort to prepare them. Ram Kishor from Vidya Kund expresses enthusiasm, saying that along with temple construction, "CM Yogi Adityanath also focuses on our well-being. Thanks to the grace of Goddess Lakshmi, our Diwali has completely changed for the better over the past seven years. After Kartik, now every year, Diwali will also be celebrated in this month.



"The artisans making lamps are being visited by tourists, devotees, and local saints who are coming from outside to purchase lamps. Near Ram's Paidi's Temple, Pandit Kailash visited Vidya Kund to buy lamps, currently acquiring 500. Joyful Pandit mentioned that Ram ji is expected to arrive. Buying lamps is a gesture to welcome Lord Ram, and for this reason, he has come to purchase lamps. He extended blessings and good wishes to the government for this occasion.

Prepare the youth of Uttar Pradesh in advance for semiconductor manufacturing industry: Chief Minister

Lucknow
Chief Minister In a high-level meeting on Wednesday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reviewed the presentation based on the state's proposed Semiconductor Policy 2024 and issued necessary guidelines to the officials. The Chief Minister stated that semiconductor manufacturing is crucial for advancement in industries as well as efficiency expansion in devices like smartphones, computers, and medical equipment. It also promotes innovation in Artificial Intelligence, the Internet of Things, and



Quantum Computing. Emphasizing the need for a robust semiconductor manufacturing ecosystem in Uttar Pradesh, the Chief Minister said that it would not only contribute to the state's economic growth and innovation, but also create substantial employment opportunities, enhancing self-reliance in strategically important areas. Stressing the importance of training the youth in semiconductor manufacturing, the Chief Minister proposed incorporating such courses in technical institutes, including the two IITs in the state. At the same time, arrangements should be made for two years of training

for the youth under the CM Internship Program in semiconductor industries, he stated. The Chief Minister said that a supportive fabless ecosystem should be developed within the state with a focus on targeting chip design enterprises and startups. The Chief Minister emphasized the need to foster a strong collaboration between the industry and the education sector to cultivate a skilled workforce. The Chief Minister said that the semiconductor chip sector has announced plans to invest more than \$500 billion in the last two years.

Yogi govt starts work under 'Navya Ayodhya' Project Phase-2

Ayodhya
After the successful completion of all the works under Phase 1 of the 'Navya Ayodhya' project, work has been started under Phase 2 in line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision of 'Bhavya' (grand) Ayodhya. In this sequence, a detailed action plan has been prepared to brighten the entry points of Ayodhya through median horticulture beautification. Additionally, as per the instructions of the Yogi Government, Ayodhya Municipal Corporation will carry out the greening and beautification of the 24 km stretch along the banks of Saryu River between Sahadatganj and Lata Chowk under National Highway 28 in Ayodhya. At present, the process to hire a contractor for a period of 5 years for decorating and preserving the middle and embankment slopes of the National Highway by planting ornamental flowers and trees is going on. Appropriate manpower will be engaged to complete these tasks. Effective decoration of median lane will be ensured along with completing the ongoing work of horticultural beautification under the supervision of Ayodhya Municipal Corporation, the contractor is also responsible for maintaining it for the next 5 years. Additionally, the contractor must ensure various aspects, including planting decorative trees, flowers, and plants on national highways' medians and embankment slopes, studying the vegetation cover of local and indigenous plant species, removing litter and unwanted vegetation on roads and slopes, and deploying an appropriate number of employees, vehicles, and machinery to ensure effective coverage of the median lane. Cleanliness of median will be ensured 24x7 hours. The road will be kept clean at all times, with litter-free and dust-free central medians and embankment slopes. The contractor must provide continuous motor-operated borewell facilities at intervals for watering plants on the median and keeping the area dust-free. All these tasks should be completed according to the specific guidelines of the Indian Road Congress (IRC-SP-21-2009). Additionally, appropriate manpower must be allocated to complete the work, and all service personnel should be equipped with proper safety gear, clothing, and identification. Easy-to-understand signage boards in English and Hindi will be provided by the Ayodhya Municipal Corporation on these medians, emphasizing emergency contact numbers and other essential information for public awareness.

Women take out 'Jal Kalash Yatra' in Ayodhya

Ayodhya
Ahead of the consecration of Lord Shri Ramlala, a 'Jal Kalash Yatra' was taken by over 500 women. Notably, this occurred on the second day of the consecration ritual. On the call of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, the entire society actively participated in this event. The yatra started from the banks of the Saryu River in the morning. Carrying urns filled with sacred water



from River Saryu, the women joyfully danced

to the melodious songs on Lord Ram, expressing their deep devotion to him. Mayor Girish Pati Tripathi coordinated the yatra, and it was led by Ramalakshmi Tripathi, the mayor's wife. Over 500 women, including Namrata Pathak, the wife of Deputy Chief Minister Brajesh Pathak, and District Panchayat President Roli Singh, actively participated in this spiritually significant journey.

I am a monk because of Ram Mandir movement: CM Yogi

Lucknow
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, made a major revelation about himself, saying that he became a monk because of the Ram Mandir movement. "We have been associated with movement from the beginning. However, we are not taking credit for the consecration ceremony of Lord Ram. We are going there as servants", Yogi added. Addressing the conclave organized by a TV channel at Taj Hotel,

the Chief Minister said that invitations for the temple have been extended to Congress and Samajwadi Party. He said that no one has been stopped from coming to the Ram temple. Those who come as servants of Lord Ram are welcomed, he remarked. The Chief Minister stated further: "We are fortunate that our revered Gurudev was one of the frontline warriors in the Ram Mandir movement. Even during that period, he had the leadership of this movement in mind and the Gorakhnath Peeth was with him. This movement progressed under the leadership of my guru, RSS and Vishwa Hindu Parishad." "We consider ourselves fortunate to have participated in the Ram Temple cause. The work that several generations could not witness has come to fruition after 500 years. Over 3 lakh people have sacrificed their lives for the temple while conflicts took place more than 76 times.

Agra sends 56 varieties of petha to Ayodhya in the form of offering for Lord Ram

Ayodhya
Many priceless gifts are being received in Ayodhya for Lord Ram's who is going to be seated in his grand temple on January 22. In this sequence, 560 kg petha of 56 varieties in fifty-five different flavors has been delivered by the famous Panchi Petha of Agra as an offering to Lord Ram. On Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's appeal for public participation, every section of the society is contributing



for the Ram temple inauguration, in an expression of their devotion and happiness.

In addition to Petha, the temple trust has also received gem studded dress, silver plate, other puja material from various places. The 56 varieties of petha sent by Panchi Petha were brought by Agra Trade Board and was accepted at Karsevakpuram in the presence of All India Contact Head of Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh Ramlal ji and Rajendra Singh Pankaj of Vishwa Hindu Parishad.

Khalsa sect was the reason for the downfall of Mughal Empire: CM Yogi

Lucknow
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, extended heartfelt congratulations to the residents of the state on the auspicious occasion of Guru Gobind Singh's birth anniversary celebrated as 'Prakash Parv'. CM Yogi said that Guru Gobind Singh was an enlightened person, whose arrival on this earthly abode had a definite purpose. He added that the establishment of the 'Khalsa Panth' became the cause of the downfall of the Mughal Empire. "The entire country,



uniting with the celebrations of Guru Maharaj's Prakash Utsav, is paying homage to his memories and gaining new inspiration", he remarked. Addressing the Prakash Parv event organized at DAV Degree College, the Chief Minister said that Guru Teg Bahadur initiated a series of sacrifices for the establishment of truth and justice during his era, a tradition that was further continued by Guru Gobind Singh.

Yogi govt initiates helicopter services to Ayodhya Dham from six districts

Ayodhya
To facilitate the pilgrimage for Ram devotees and tourists visiting Ayodhya Dham by helicopter, the Yogi government is introducing helicopter services from six districts in the state. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will inaugurate the helicopter service from Lucknow. The government has also fixed the fare for helicopter service. Ram devotees and tourists will be offered helicopter services from Gorakhpur, Varanasi, Lucknow, Prayagraj, Mathura, and Agra. Plans are underway to expand this service to

additional districts in the state in the near future. In addition to this, the Yogi government is introducing an aerial darshan of Ayodhya city and the Ram temple for devotees. The Tourism Department has been assigned responsibility for this initiative. Devotees interested in having aerial darshan will need to make advance bookings to avail the facility. Experience the aerial darshan of Ram Temple for Rs 3,539 Principal Secretary Tourism Mukesh Meshram said that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath had given

instructions to provide helicopter facilities to Ram devotees. Under this, helicopter service is being started from 6 districts of the state. This facility will be made available to devotees and tourists on an operator model. In addition, Ram devotees will have the opportunity for an aerial darshan of the Ram temple. The helicopter rides will take off from the helipad near the Tourism Guest House along the banks of the Saryu River. Devotees will enjoy an aerial tour covering renowned tourist destinations, including Ram Mandir.