

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Sunday 14 January, 2024

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

Nitish Kumar declines post of opposition bloc convener

● The second reason for Nitish's refusal is that as Kharge was named as the alliance chairman



PATNA: Top Congress politicians, including Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, failed on Saturday to convince Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar to accept the post of INDIA bloc convener after the JD(U) chief refused to accept the offer during a virtual meeting of opposition leaders. INDIA bloc sources said soon after the virtual meeting began, CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury proposed that Nitish should be appointed INDIA bloc convener. Many leaders, including Sonia, Rahul, CPI general secretary D Raja, NCP's Sharad Pawar and RJD boss

Lalu Prasad, supported the move. But the JD(U) leader declined and asked alliance partners to give the post of convener to another leader. "Sonia and Rahul made repeated requests to the Bihar CM to accept the post of convener 'in the larger interest of the bloc'. However, he refused to accept. As Congress leaders kept insisting, Nitish said the post of convener can be given to Lalu," a senior opposition politician who

attended the virtual meeting told TOI on Saturday. "Yes, there was a proposal to name Nitish-ji as INDIA bloc convener. Discussions were held on the proposal," JD(U) national general secretary and Bihar minister Sanjay Kumar Jha confirmed to the media. JD(U) insiders said that Nitish was reluctant to accept the post for two reasons. First, the bloc leadership took too much time to offer the post. They came up with the

offer after a delay of six to seven months. "If they were so serious about making Nitish the alliance's convener, they should have offered this post to him at least six months ago," a senior JD(U) leader said. The second reason for Nitish's refusal is that as Kharge was named as the alliance chairman, the convener would have to work under the chairman, another senior leader of the Bihar Grand Alliance said.

India, US discuss easier visa access for traders, investors

NEW DELHI: India and the US are discussing easier visa access for traders and investors through the E1 and E2 categories, a regime that can be accessed by "treaty" countries, and also looking at a proposal to allow H1B visas holders and their family members to renew their visa in America, without having to come back. The proposals, along with India's demand for faster processing of business and tourist visas, was discussed during a meeting of the India-US Trade Policy Forum on



Friday. "The (Indian) commerce department and the ministry of external affairs have been working together on several issues and we had a very good year in 2023 in our relationship with the US," said commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal,

who co-chairs the Trade Policy Forum with US Trade Representative Katherine Tai. India has also previously demanded that the US allow its domestic companies to participate in the American government procurement as it would help in boosting

exports, an official said. To participate, India has asked the US to designate it as a Trade Agreement Act-compliant country. The official said the big takeaways for India in the TPF meet were good progress on the proposed resumption of export benefits to certain Indian goods under the USA's GSP (generalised system of preferences) programme; initiation of formal discussions on designating India a TAA-compliant nation; and treaty status for visas.

Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra to start from Manipur on Sunday

NEW DELHI: Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, led by Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, will commence on Sunday from Manipur's Thoubal district. The yatra aims to unite the nation and promote justice. Congress leader Jairam Ramesh

informed the press that the yatra will begin in Thoubal, Manipur, with Rahul Gandhi's arrival in Imphal at 11 am. The first stop will be the Khongjom War Memorial, a site of great significance not only for Manipur but for the

entire country. The Bharat Jodo Yatra will primarily be conducted via bus, with approximately 60 to 70 participants. It is scheduled to traverse the northeastern states over the course of the next 11 days. Ramesh criticized

the central government, urging them to address the injustices of the past decade instead of focusing solely on future promises. He emphasized that this is the reason behind the initiation of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

Uddhav Thackeray invites President Murmu for prayers at Kalaram temple

MUMBAI: In a bid to take on the PM Narendra Modi-led BJP, Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray on Saturday invited President Droupadi Murmu to offer prayers at Nashik's Kalaram temple on January 22. Uddhav will be performing aarti at the Kalaram temple on the day of the Ram Temple inauguration in Ayodhya.

In a dig at PM Modi, who will be present for the Ram temple opening, Uddhav said Murmu "will not be treated as one among the crowd." Uddhav wrote a letter in Hindi extend the invite to President Murmu.

Speaking at Matoshree, his Bandra residence, Uddhav also hit out at PM Modi over his comment that the country had suffered due to dynastic politics, saying in a reference to CM Eknath Shinde's son and MP Shrikant Shinde, "PM Modi did not speak on dynasties of traitors in Kalyan-Dombivli. So this dynasty works for you? Traitors are popular and their dynasties are dear... It's all bogus. It's better if a householder speaks on nepotism."

On Saturday, Thackeray also visited the Kalyan Lok Sabha constituency for the first time after Shinde's exit from the Thackeray camp. Shrikant Shinde is the Kalyan MP. During the visit, Uddhav said if PM Modi is against dynasties, "he will cut the tickets of traitor father and son." Later in Kalwa, Thackeray criticized Shinde and asked "how they will take citizens away from me despite taking away the party." He added, "These are the last days of the traitors and I, with the help of citizens, am going to teach them a lesson in the elections." With no invitation for the opening of the Ram temple, Uddhav has announced he will perform a 'maha aarti' on the banks of the Godavari in Nashik and visit the Kalaram temple at Panchavati, where Lord Ram is said to have lived during his exile. "Babri Masjid was built on top of Lord Ram's temple in Ayodhya."

Amid rising terror attacks in J&K, Army launches Operation Sarvashakti

NEW DELHI: In a bid to combat increasing terrorist activities in Jammu and Kashmir, the Army has initiated Operation Sarvashakti, under which terrorists operating on both sides of the Pir Panjal mountain ranges in the Union Territory will be neutralised. Recent attempts by Pakistani proxy terrorist groups to revive terrorism in the Rajouri Poonch sector, particularly in



the south of Pir Panjal ranges, have resulted in the loss of around 20 troops in attacks by terrorists. The most recent attack occurred on December 21, claiming the lives of four soldiers in the

Dera ki Gali area. Sources within the security forces have revealed that Operation Sarvashakti will involve coordinated counter-terrorist operations by the formations of the

Srinagar-based Chinar Corps and the Nagrota-headquartered White Knight Corps from both sides of the Pir Panjal ranges. The Jammu and Kashmir Police, Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Special Operations Group, and intelligence agencies will work closely together to prevent Pakistani designs to revive terrorist activities in the Union Territory.

They have to send a message': How Houthi 'hornet's nest' may sting US

NEW DELHI: The United States on Friday executed an additional operation against Yemen's Houthi forces, following commitments by President Joe Biden's administration to safeguard navigation in the Red Sea.

This recent operation, described by the US as targeting a radar facility,



occurred subsequent to a series of attacks executed by American and British forces on the Iran-

supported group's bases on the preceding day. Utilizing Tomahawk missiles, the guided

missile destroyer Carney conducted the subsequent strike in the early hours of Saturday local time. This action aimed "to degrade the Houthis' ability to attack maritime vessels, including commercial vessels," the US Central Command said in a declaration on X, previously known as Twitter.

Man's body with bullet wounds found in Manipur

IMPHAL: The bullet-riddled body of a man missing along with three others since January 10 in Manipur was found on Saturday in Bishnupur district, reports N Benson Singh. Dara Singh of Akaso in Bishnupur and the others had gone to collect firewood from a hill in nearby Churachandpur district.

The bodies of the other three were recovered with similar gunshot wounds from Haotak Phailen in Churachandpur district on Thursday. They were identified as Ibomcha Singh (51), his son Anand Singh (20) and Roman Singh (38). Ahanthem's body was located by a team of the army and state police a few metres from the site where the other three were found. His body bore headshots and marks of assault on the

STEM-OPT students can be hired by eligible start-ups, explains USCIS



MUMBAI: The US Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) has consolidated its existing policy relating to international students in F and M status. USCIS expects that this will provide welcome clarity to international students and US educational institutions on a wealth of topics, including eligibility requirements, school transfers, practical training, and on- and off-campus employment. The F visa is held by international students who are full-time

students at academic institutions or are enrolled in a language training program. M visa is held by those attending vocational training programs. According to a release by Jackson Lewis P.C. a US based law firm, there are two clarifications to the policy manual that are particularly helpful for students and the companies that employ them in Optional Practical Training (OPT). The law firm elucidates: 1. Students in the Science, Technology,

Appear between Jan 16 and 20: Hemant Soren gets ED's 8th summons

RANCHI: Enforcement directorate (ED) has once again summoned Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren, marking the eighth instance, to appear before its office between January 16 and January 20, reports Sanjay Sahay.

The summons pertain to the Ranchi land scam case, an issue that has seen politi-



cal sparring between Soren and BJP MP Nishikant Dubey. "CM is spending the cold nights under warm blankets despite getting eight summons. He should at least respect JMM supremo, Shibu Soren, by resigning from the post and facing ED's questions," Dubey tweeted on Saturday.

Rs 14,342 crore borrowed, Rs 5,600 crore assets sold: Punjab's 32-year emigration journey

CHANDIGARH: Punjab villagers have borrowed Rs 14,342 crore and disposed of assets worth Rs 5,639 crore between 1990 and September 2022 to fulfil their dream of emigrating to another country. In this 32-year-period, 74% of migration occurred in six years - 2016 to September 2022.

These eye-popping figures have come up following a recent study conducted by Punjab Agricultural University (PAU), Punjab, which also found that around 56% of the emigrants borrowed money to fulfill their foreign dream. However, what is startling is the finding that it is not the loss of their assets that pinches the family members left behind, but loneliness and neglect of elderly.

19.38% sold land, house, gold or car to settle abroad: Study Simply put, out of 100 Punjabis, who have moved abroad out of villages of Punjab from 1990 to 2022, around



74 have landed on foreign shores only after 2016. This shows there was a spurt in emigration from Punjab in the last 6-7 years. And what is most important is that this wave of new immigrants is comprised of those who are leaving country by availing student visas," said Prof Shalini Sharma, who, along with Prof Manjeet Kaur and assistant professor Amit Guleria, department of economics and sociology, PAU, conducted the study. The study is based on the primary data covering 44 villages of 22 districts (Malerkotla was not

carved out as a separate district when the scientists were conducting the study). The researchers first conducted a census survey of 9,492 households. A total of 640 migrant and 660 non-migrant households were interviewed. According to the study, Punjab has seen a rise in emigration with approximately 13.34% of rural households having at least one member migrated. The study observed that around 19.38% migrants had sold their assets like agricultural/residential land, house, gold, car, and tractor.

Divya Pahuja murder case: Haryana police recover ex-model's body from canal

NEW DELHI: In a major breakthrough in Divya Pahuja murder case, Haryana police have recovered the body of the ex-model from a canal in Tohana. Divya was shot dead allegedly by hotel owner Abhijeet Singh in Gurugram. He, along with two others, allegedly dragged the body into a car and dumped it in Patiala. According to police, Pahuja, 27, was killed because she had allegedly been extorting money from the hotel owner by blackmailing him with his 'obscene pictures'. Five

individuals have been apprehended by the police in the murder case so far: Abhijeet Singh, Hemraj, Om Prakash, and Megha Phogat - who is accused of assisting in concealing the murder weapon and Pahuja's belongings, along with Balraj Gill, who is alleged to have disposed of the body. Another accused, Ravi Banga, is still reported to be on the run.

Gurugram police on Thursday arrested Balraj Gill from Kolkata airport. He fled from Patiala after dumping

his car near the bus stand.

On January 5, Gurugram Police said it had recovered the car that was allegedly used to dispose of the body of the former model. "The car was captured in a security camera as being parked near the toll plaza. We learnt that the vehicle was being driven towards Patiala. We were trying to trace the vehicle that was used in the crime," Karan Singh, constable, Crime Branch of Gurugram Police, said earlier. With agency inputs

ASI shoots self to death during night duty in Delhi, probe on

NEW DELHI: An Assistant assistant sub inspector (ASI) of Delhi Police allegedly succumbed to a self-inflicted gunshot wound with his service revolver in the BP Marg area during the night between Friday and Saturday, according to an official statement. Officials stat-

ed that ASI Ramavtar and SI Prem Singh were assigned night picket duty at BP Marg in New Delhi. Around 3am, ASI Ramavtar reportedly advised SI Prem Singh to take a 10-minute break and proceeded to sit in his car, parked near the barricade. Upon checking on him later, SI Prem

discovered that ASI Ramavtar had shot himself with his service pistol, resulting in his death, according to officials. He originally hailed from VPO Chithroli in District Mahendergarh, Haryana, and had joined the Delhi Police in 1993, according to the officials.

At 3.6 degrees Celsius, Delhi records coldest morning this winter

● "At 9am, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 365, as per data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).



NEW DELHI: Delhi experienced its coldest minimum temperature of the season, dropping to 3.6 degrees Celsius on Saturday, as per the India Meteorological Department (IMD). Thick fog covered various areas of the city. The previous day, Delhi had marked a minimum temperature of 3.9 degrees Celsius, the lowest in the past five years. Saturday's maximum temperature is expected to reach

approximately 19 degrees Celsius, according to the IMD. At 5:30am, the visibility at Safdarjung Observatory, Delhi's primary weather station, was recorded at 200 meters. The Railways reported delays of one to six hours for 18 trains bound for Delhi due to fog. As per the IMD, visibility between 0 and 50 meters is categorized as very dense fog, between 51 and 200 meters as dense, between 201 and 500

meters as moderate, and between 501 and 1,000 meters as shallow.

At 9am, Delhi's Air Quality Index (AQI) was recorded at 365, as per data from the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB). An AQI between zero and 50 is considered 'good', 51 and 100 'satisfactory', 101 and 200 'moderate', 201 and 300 'poor', 301 and 400 'very poor', and 401 and 500 'severe'.

Revenue crunch: Pay hike unlikely as Karnataka govt may put 7th Pay Commission

BENGALURU: State government employees are likely to go without a pay hike this year as the proposal to increase salaries is shrouded in uncertainty with the government mulling delaying implementation of the 7th Pay Commission.

Officials cite a revenue crunch as the primary cause for the delay, emphasizing that the focus of next month's state budget will be on mobilising resources to fund the government's five guarantee schemes. Representatives of Karnataka State Government Employees



Association (KSGA) are concerned over this potential delay and are hopeful that chief minister Siddaramaiah will accept the pay commission's report and allocate funds. A meeting between KSGA and the CM scheduled for Fri-

day was postponed since Siddaramaiah was occupied with the launch of the Yuva Nidhi scheme. Sadanand Nelagudri, KSGA secretary, said the demand for a salary increase is a longpending one and emphasised the government's commit-

ment to meeting it. KSGA also said the pay hike need not be announced in the budget and that Siddaramaiah could address it outside the budget presentation. In 2018, Siddaramaiah had accepted recommendations of the 5th Pay Commission and announced a 30% pay hike for employees just before presenting the budget for 2018-19 in February. It increased government expenditure by Rs 10,508 crore. But a senior finance department official said the government may be constrained this time.

Man flees with ATM cash van carrying Rs 2 crore in Gujarat

RAJKOT: In a scene straight out of a Bollywood potboiler, an unknown man drove away with an ATM cash refilling van containing Rs 2 crore in the port town Gandhidham on Friday. The driver, security guard, and three other people stopped for a tea break at around 11am near the busy Banking Circle area. Barely had they started sipping their cuppa, a man unlocked the van with a duplicate key and sped away. Seeing him, a couple of staffers borrowed a bike from someone near the tea kiosk and started chasing the van and alerted the police too. While following the van, they saw a car constantly driving behind it. Going ahead, the staff even requested a car driver for help, and he obliged by giving them his four-wheeler.



When they reached Mithi Rohar, some 15 km from Gandhidham town, the accused abandoned the van on the road, sat in the car following the van, and fled. "Probably, he noticed that along with van staff, a police vehicle was also following them. So, he abandoned the vehicle and fled. We will nab them soon" said Sagar Bagmar, superintendent of police (Kutch east). Police said the cash inside the van was intact and it was brought to the Gandhidham police station for further investigation. Police strongly suspect that someone who was

well acquainted with the regular movement of the van had hatched a plan to steal the cash. The police will register an offence after the primary investigation. The cops are scanning footage of the CCTVs installed in the Banking Circle area and the road going to Mithi Rohar to gather more clues about the car in which the thieves fled. Gandhidham, home to one of India's biggest government ports Kandla, witnesses a large amount of cash deliveries in the banks and ATMs. The cash was used to be refilled in the ATM of a nationalized bank in the town.

Downloading, watching child porn not a Pocco offence: Madras high court

CHENNAI: Mere downloading and watching of child pornography is not an offence under the Pocco Act and Information Technology Act, said Madras high court on Thursday.

To make out an offence under Pocco Act, a child or children should have been used for pornography purposes. And to constitute an offence under IT Act the accused must have published, transmitted and created the material, Justice N Anand Venkatesh said. Citing a Kerala high court judgment, which took a similar stand, the judge said, "...in view of the fact that this act is done by the person in privacy without affecting or influencing anyone else. The moment the accused person tries to circulate or distribute or publicly exhibits obscene photos or videos, then the ingredients of the offence starts kicking in." Like smoking and drinking, watching porn videos has become an addiction for the current generation and punishment cannot be a solution, he added. "Generation Z children are grappling with this serious problem and instead of damn-



ing and punishing them, society must be mature enough to properly advise and educate them and try to counsel them to get rid of that addiction," Justice Anand Venkatesh said. "Rise in porn addiction among youngsters' Porn addiction is becoming a growing concern due to accessibility of sexually explicit material on the internet. With the click of a button, youngsters can be exposed to endless pages of adult content, the judge added. "The teenagers in today's world are facing a new challenge from gadgets, which bombard them with all kinds of information without any censor, at the touch of a button. There is adult material, which also draws the attention of the children whose mental faculty is at a

growing stage," the judge said. This is in view of the fact that it is easily available in electronic gadgets and by repeatedly watching the same, it becomes a habit and, ultimately, the person gets addicted, he added. The court then quashed the prosecution initiated against a 28-year-old man who was booked under Pocco and IT Acts for downloading and watching child porn. "This court advised the petitioner, who was present in person, to attend counselling, if he is still afflicted with this addiction," the judge said. Quashing of the criminal proceedings by itself will not help the petitioner and the petitioner has to help himself by getting rid of the addiction, he added.

t'll be a joyous moment if Advani visits Ayodhya: Temple chief priest

Ayodhya

The people of Ayodhya welcomed the announcement that BJP veteran Lal Krishna Advani would be present at the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple on January 22. After much controversy and confusion, Vishwa Hindu Parishad working president Alok Kumar said Advani would attend the ceremony.

Ram Janmabhoomi temple chief priest Acharya Satyendra Das said, "It will be a joyous moment for Ayodhya if Advani visits the temple town to have a darshan of Ram Lalla. All the credit for creating awareness among Hindus regarding Ram Janmabhoomi goes to Advani." "Ayodhya will be fortunate to see Advani-ji after such a long time. He will definitely bring good luck to the residents of the temple town," said local priest Pran Nath Tripathi. The former deputy PM had last visited Ayodhya in 2005.

Boeing 777-9 to make India debut at Wings 2024 in Hyderabad

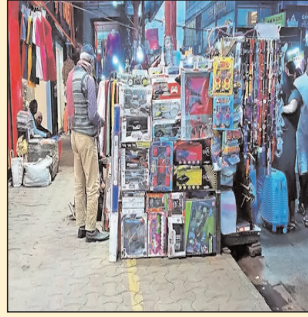


Hyderabad: American aerospace giant Boeing's new widebody 777-9 aircraft will be landing in India for the first time for the Wings India 2024, the civil aviation air show that is scheduled to be held at the city's Begumpet airport from January 18 to 21, 2024. This year, the biennial civil aviation show is being held a couple of months earlier. The theme for the show will be 'Advanced Air Mobility - India'. The 777-9 flight test airplane is expected to arrive in Hyderabad on January 16 and will be on static display for visitors at Wings

2024 from January 18-19. Touted as the world's largest and most efficient twin-engine jet, the 777-9 is based on the 777 twin-aisle aircraft with advanced technologies from the 787 Dreamliner family. "We welcome the opportunity to introduce the state-of-the-art 777-9 to India and look forward to its induction in our customers' fleets over the coming years. The 777-9 will become the flagship of many airlines around the world," said Ryan Weir, vice-president, commercial sales and marketing for India at Boeing. Boeing has already booked over 450 orders for its 777X family of aircraft, including the 777-8 and 777-9 passenger aircraft as well as a 777-8 freighter. Air India will also be receiving 10 777-9s as part of the substantial order it placed in 2023, Boeing said. The American aerospace biggie will also showcase the interiors of the 777X passenger aircraft in an immersive display at the show. Apart from these, Air India Express will be hosting static and flying displays of its 737-8, with the 'Kalamkari' inspired tail design, a unique weaving pattern of Telangana.

Hawkers' resistance continues in New Mkt

Kolkata: Several hawkers in the New Market area on Friday came out against the pushback plan adopted by the Town Vending Committee (TVC) for those who are still occupying carriageways and lion's share of pavements. A TVC meeting held at the Kolkata Municipal Corporation headquarters on Thursday adopted a resolution to give a 72-hour ultimatum to the hawkers in the New Market area, asking them to fall in line and remove their wares from the carriageways and leave 2/3 space on pavement free for the pedestrians. Accordingly, the KMC brass on asked cops to start a campaign in the area, asking the



hawkers to make the carriageways and pavements encroachment-free. witnessed cops issuing warning against encroachment of roads and pavements in areas like Humayun Place, Bertram Street and Lindsay Street. An officer of the New Market PS, who was sent to carry the message of the TVC to the hawkers, said that while a section of the hawkers agreed to remove their

dallas from carriageways by the next two days, some simply said they would not be able to do that as they had no space to shift. We were instructed to convey the decisions of the TVC to the hawkers who are rigid. But if any hawker refuses to shift from carriageways or illegally occupy a greater portion of a pavement, we will be compelled to take action against the hawker from Monday," said the officer. Sheikh Sikandar, a hawker who sells soft toys on Humayun Place, expressed his concern over the TVC decision that will lead to shifting of more than 60% hawkers from the New Market area.

MTC to get 100 A/C e-buses this year

CHENNAI: The city is set to finally join the list of metros having electric buses. Metropolitan Transport Corporation (MTC) will get 100 e-buses which will not only be supplied but also be operated and maintained by a private entity to be selected through a tender that was floated. These low-floor A/C buses with a carrying capacity of 70 people with 35 seats

(2+1 pattern) will be operated from the Adyar and Central (Pallavan Salai) depots along 27 different routes including 29C (Thiruvanimiyur-Perambur), 570 (Kelambakkam-Koyambedu) and 40A (Anna Square-Pattabiram) connecting such transit hubs as Tambaram, Broadway, Thiruporur and Chennai

Central railway station. Each of the buses, estimated to cost around 1.2 crore, will have batteries with an 8-hour capacity and that can be charged in 30 minutes during day breaks. Charging stations will also be created at the two depots by the selected private firm and the setup will allow 4-hour overnight charging too.



Stalin denies rumours his son will be deputy CM

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu CM M K Stalin dismissed Saturday rumours about state sports minister Udhayanidhi Stalin being elevated to deputy CM. In a letter to the people on Pongal, Stalin said, "At a time when there is so much enthusiasm about the DMK youth wing conference (to be held on January 21), a section tried to spread rumours about my health. At the Tamil Diaspora Day function, I said when people were happy why should I be worried. I am happy and healthy. I am working, working and working. As one rumour failed, the next sprang up, about the elevation (of Udhayanidhi) as deputy CM. Udhayanidhi himself rubbished the rumours by saying all ministers are standing by the CM's side. Party cadres should be careful to not give space to those deliberately trying to divert attention from the conference," Stalin said.

'Poll guarantee': Karnataka govt gives Rs 3,000 stipend to unemployed graduates

SHIVAMOGGA: Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Friday launched Yuva Nidhi, Congress's fifth guarantee, at a well-attended function here and said his government has "walked the talk" on the promises the party made in the run-up to assembly elections in May last year. He said the government decided to launch Yuva Nidhi, which promises a monthly stipend of Rs 3,000 for graduates and Rs 1,500 for diploma holders, as "unemployment is increasing by the day" in the country. "It was 5.5% in 2014-15 and now it has gone up to 10.5%."

Cop stop Pune-Goa flight nab fraudster who tried to fly to Goa with his girlfriend

● "The case was registered against the accused on October 31, 2023, based on a written application filed on September 9, 2023"



MUMBAI: A college dropout wanted in a case of online cheating was arrested minutes before he could fly to Goa from Pune with his girlfriend on Saturday. Mulund police with the help of the Central Industrial Security Force (CSIF) at the Pune International Airport nabbed the accused, Ganesh Bhalerao (29), after he was made to deboard from Jet Airways, of making it halt from flying, on the pretext of checking his baggage on

suspicious grounds. Bhalerao was tracked almost four months after he duped a 25-year-old student residing in Mulund (West). Bhalerao, a college dropout from Pune, booked the flight to Goa along with his girlfriend on receiving information that the police were going to arrest him for duping a 25-year-old student from Mulund (West) after collecting Rs84,000 online for the latest ver-

sion of iPhone 14 for which he had placed an advertisement on OLX. The case was registered against the accused on October 31, 2023, based on a written application filed on September 9, 2023. "Bhalerao was tracked through technical assistance. This was the first attempt that he claimed to have made to dupe a person online," said a police officer of the Mulund police station.

BJP using agencies in bid to empty political field: TMC

KOLKATA: Criticising central agency actions, Trinamool spokesperson Kunal Ghosh on Friday said ED and CBI were "mere actors playing out an old pre-poll script of political conspiracy penned by BJP." "Rejected by people, they (BJP) are morally and politically bankrupt. They are trying to restrain, harass and disturb TMC leaders, hoping to empty the political field. They believe the only way they can fight this political battle (in Bengal) is by playing on an empty



field. But people know what 'Khela Hobe' means, they are with CM Mamata Banerjee and Trinamool," Ghosh said. The TMC spokesperson added: "The entire issue is a political vendetta... a conspiracy. BJP is

publicly said 'see what happens in the district'. They are predicting where ED and CBI will go and the agencies are treading the same path. It is very evident that these (raids) are happening on BJP's instructions, to help them politically." "CM has taken some decisions on North 24 Parganas. She has formed a core committee and Sujit (Bose) has been tasked to look after Dum Dum and Basirhat. Because of this, Sujit is BJP's target.

Tamil Nadu floods: Shah has assured release of funds by Jan 27, T R Baalu says

CHENNAI: DMK parliamentary party leader T R Baalu on Saturday said that Union Home minister Amit Shah had assured a delegation of all party MPs that the Centre would release 'as much funds as possible' under National Disaster Response Fund (NDRF) to Tamil Nadu by January 27. A delegation of MPs, including K Jayakumar (Congress), Vaiko (MDMK), K Subbarayan (CPI), S Venkatesan (CPM) and D Ravikumar (VCK), met the Union minister and urged him to take immediate action on the memoranda submitted by the state government seeking Rs 37,907 crore towards interim and permanent restoration in the flood-affected districts of Tamil Nadu. "The minister said he



fully realized the gravity of the disasters that struck the state. An inter-ministerial team from the Union government touring the southern districts will submit a report after January 21. He said the Centre was duty-bound to support the people and would certainly release the funds by January 27," Baalu told reporters in Delhi. The DMK leader said that

Tamil Nadu was not 'neglected' as the Centre deputed three inter-ministerial teams so far for assessment of damage. Union ministers Rajnath Singh and Nirmala Sitharaman to review the situation. "We believe the Centre is considerate to Tamil Nadu. Whether they are biased or not will be known when the funds are released," Baalu said.

Hyderabad Skyline To Billow As 30+ High-Rises Get Nod

Hyderabad Authorities approve more high-rise plans, doubling the number of tall buildings in the city by 2023. Most will be between 30 and 40 floors, with some exceeding 40. The trend of vertical growth in Hyderabad continues, with the western corridor being a hotspot for high-rise development. Hyderabad Skyline To Billow As 30+ High-Rises Get Nod Hyderabad's realty market is witnessing a rapid growth in vertical homes, with at least half a dozen high-rise plans approved by GHMC in 2023. The city's skyline is set to get taller with authorities approving at least half a dozen high-rise plans in 2023, which is almost double the pre-pandemic times. Most of these vertical homes are expected to crop by 2027-28 and are expect-



ed to be between 30 and 40 floors high, if not more, officials said. Since the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) was formed in 2007, permissions were given to as many as 1,248 high-rises of which 634 were sanctioned between 2021 and 2023. Till date, approvals have been given to nine high-rises that are above 30 floors and among them six got green-lit in 2023 alone. This also includes four high-rises beyond 40

floors. As per official records, the city's tallest skyscraper is set to be a 50-floor building in Kanchi Gachibowli to be developed by Aparna Infra Housing Pvt Ltd. **Boom in western corridor** "Majority of the high-rises are concentrated along the western corridor of the city. A lot of high rises are coming up in areas like Raidurgam, Serilingampally, Gachibowli, Gopanpally and Hi-Tec City. Since there is no cap on floor space index

(FSI), a lot of developers are coming forward to get approvals for high-rises," said a senior official from the town planning of GHMC. Realtors said that capitalising on this FSI factor, Hyderabad has been eyeing vertical growth for the past few years as developers and stakeholders are actively pursuing such growth with the IT belt becoming a hub for high-rise clusters. Bounces back after covid lull "After Covid-19, there is a positive sentiment among developers to take up high-rises. Majority of them are coming up in areas where the land value has gone up as developers are building more floors to make their projects economically viable," said Rajashekar Reddy, president, CREDAI Hyderabad. He added.

New butterfly species discovered in Western Ghats

MADURAI: A new species of Silverline butterfly has been discovered in the Megamalai division of Srivilliputhur Megamalai Tiger Reserve in Tamil Nadu, marking the first discovery of a new butterfly species in the Western Ghats in 33 years. The species is named 'Cigaritis megamalaiensis'. In a statement, Supriya Sahu, additional chief secretary of environment, climate change and forests department, said the new species has been named after the region, Megamalai, which translates to 'cloud mountain' in English. Researchers from Vanam, an NGO based in Theni, led by Kalesh Sadasivam, S Ramasamy Kamaya and CP Rajkumar made the discovery. "This has been published in the current issue of peer reviewed journal, 'Entomon'. With this discovery, the total number of butterflies in the Western Ghats has risen to 337 species, including 40 Western Ghats endemics."

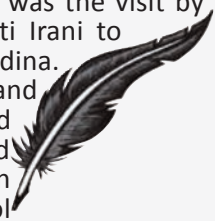
Editorial

Gaza to Smriti: Islam at war with itself as Arabs reform, neo-covert Muslims regress

Samuel Huntington's prophecy of a clash of civilisations is playing out in strange ways. In the Islamic world, we now have a clash within a civilisation. The Arab world, where the source code of Islam was written, is in the crosscurrents of change, brought about by technology and shifting economic realities. Saudi Arabia under Mohammed bin Salman (MBS) and the United Arab Emirates led by Mohammed bin Zayed (MBZ) — aged 38 and 62 respectively — are leading the transformation. The Persian world led by Iran, which is also the main seat of Shia Islam, has seen bloody convulsions of a revolution against orthodoxy led by its brave and angry scarf-flinging women. It all started there with the killing of 22-year-old Mahsa Amini by the Ayatollah regime's morality police for not wearing hijab. Increasingly, several regressive and violent tenets and practices of Islam have been unable to withstand the sharp light of technology, especially the internet. Millions of Muslim youth have been disillusioned the world over by the incompatibility of the teachings of the Quran or the Hadiths with modern concepts like gender equality, sexual choice, accepting differences of opinion, reforms in punishment, food without cruelty and environmentalism. Their faith has failed to offer them any new ideas, innovations, or solutions which do not involve violence. Coupled with it looms the inevitability of the 'end of oil' on the global economic horizon. Big Arab states like Saudi, UAE, Kuwait and Oman have been smart to preempt it and open up culturally, start freeing its societies from orthodoxy, and invite the world to come and do business. MBS dreams of making the Arab world the new Europe in a couple of decades. But these startling and overdue reforms in the Islamic world have ironically started facing a bitter challenge from the places where Arabs and Persians had spread the faith chiefly by the sword. These are Islam's poorer catchment areas like the Indian subcontinent or sub-Saharan Africa and their diaspora, where the faithful are keen to prove they are more Muslim than the Arabs.

First is the Gaza war. While the rest of the Muslim world promptly sported the Palestinian flag on their Twitter or Instagram profiles and got on to fierce keyboard activism against Israel and trying to whitewash Hamas's barbaric crimes, the entire Arab world including Egypt and Jordan refused to accept even a single Palestinian refugee trying to flee the conflict. The Arabs are pragmatic. They realise that the Palestinians who voted in a terror organisation like Hamas in Gaza could be bad news if allowed inside their homes. They have even secretly or tacitly approved Israel's pounding of Hamas targets in Gaza and the West Bank.

While making perfunctory noises in the UN or the International Court of Justice, Saudi wants to sign the Abraham Accords with Israel, a treaty which promises lasting peace and prosperity in the Middle East. This pragmatism of the Arabs has been met with intransigence and rage from their country cousins in Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and elsewhere. Pro-Palestinian Muslim social media handles have seethed over the aloofness of the Gulf states. The second instance was the visit by Indian Union minister Smriti Irani to the Islamic holy city of Medina. She met the local priests and politicians modestly dressed in an Indian sari, but refused to cover her head or wear an abaya. The Saudis were cool about it.



The mother of all crimes: Analysing the psyche of a woman who kills her child

"A mother's love liberates," said Maya Angelou famously. Suchana Seth seemed to have interpreted this meaningful iteration on a whole different level when she allegedly smothered her 4-year-old son to death in a hotel room in Goa a few days ago, an incident that has left the country appalled and horrified to bits. In a society where the ideology of the mother permeates the process of nation-building and where mothers are spiritually glorified as the Matr Shakti, and in a culture that is famous for their men being mama's boys, this incident has shaken the country's emotional core, which is solidly comforted by a high-principled value system. It has caused a scandal that is unprecedented except perhaps a decade ago when Indrani Mukerjea was accused of murdering her daughter Sheena Bora. This time however, the crime seems even more outrageous with the victim being a four year old toddler, seemingly on vacation with his mother.

How a note by Bengaluru CEO who 'murdered' son could serve as a vital piece of evidence

The mother, Suchana Seth herself is no outcast or misfit in high society, being the CEO of the Mindful AI lab. She is also on the list of "100



Brilliant Women in AI", a Mozilla Fellow at Data & Society, a Fellow at Harvard University and a Research Fellow at Raman Research Institute. One can now add maternal filicide to this impressive resume. There are many theories behind the motive of this killing floating around, the primary one being that her estranged husband had recently been granted visitation rights to the child. A feeble motive, if not ridiculous in nature to common folks. What would drive a woman to kill a human being that she has carried inside her body for nine months and at great personal physical pain and discomfort, released to the world and nourished while they progress through stages

in life? It is a question that seems unfathomable, but these incidents do take place. Filicidal references are present in cultural and literary traditions. There are Biblical references to Abraham conspiring to sacrifice son Isaac to please a God who was only impressed by extreme tests of dedication.

In Greek mythology there is the story of Medea who killed the children she had with her husband to punish him for leaving her for another woman. In the physical world, examining a more Darwinian concept, historically, Eskimos living in their harsh environments have been known to birth twins and send one baby away on an ice flat to perish because

the mother may not have enough milk for two babies to survive. Under any of these circumstances, to choose death over life, of any individual, as a logical conclusion, whatever be the reason is not pardonable nor can it be rationalised or condoned.

Philipp Resnick, psychiatry professor at Case Western Reserve University, proposed filicide types where the motivations might be altruistic (where the parent believes they're killing the child for their own good — the most commonly found motive), unwanted child, spouse revenge, or in the throes of a psychotic episode. Disturbingly, these crimes happen more often than we think. A National Institute of Health (NIH) study in the US found that over a 32 year period, 15 per cent of homicide cases were of filicidal nature. Male children were more likely to be killed (58.3 per cent) than female ones. Fathers were more likely to kill sons, with the mothers being more likely to kill daughters. Researchers found that the most frequent methods of killing were "personal weapons", such as choking, strangling, beating or drowning of victims.

Just last year in Bengaluru, three cases of maternal filicide were

reported in August, where two of the mothers were dentists. One had thrown her four year old daughter with developmental disorders, from her fourth floor apartment, while another had killed her daughter before committing suicide in their home. Jurors mostly view mothers who have killed their children as mentally ill. Not always, there are those rare cases where the motives have turned out to be financial gain or revenge, or where the women concerned are homicidal in nature.

However, more commonly, mental illness turns out to be the reason. Postpartum depression is also a very common phenomenon where the mother is often battling depression after giving birth due to hormonal changes, coupled with the intense pressure on a mother to take care of a new human being who is completely dependent on her and the loneliness it can sometimes bring. "The burden of childcare often falls on the mother. The expectations from her are huge and from her own family and society without looking or addressing her own physical or mental health," as said by Prof Prabha S Chandra of the National Institute of Mental Health & Neurosciences (NIMHANS).

What SRK's stunning comeback tells us about the 'Indian for all ages'

"When the going gets tough, the tough get going," is so easy to say but so hard to actually do, which is why comebacks are special. Let us go through some headlines. They are all from the last decade: "Shah Rukh Khan's career is now officially over"

"Is King Khan's reign nearing its end?"

"Is Shah Rukh Khan losing the battle of Khans?" "End of an era: SRK movies losing their charm" Now, if we cut to 2024, it turns out that Shah Rukh Khan's reign isn't over. He has made a comeback for the ages. Three massive hits, which have grossed some 2,500 crore rupees at the box office, and to underline it, a very special award: Khan is CNN News18's Indian of the Year. He was honoured in New Delhi on

Thursday. Shah Rukh Khan's 2 blockbusters Jawan and Pathaan are among the 10 most searched movies on Google in 2023. Khan's acceptance speech was classic Shah Rukh Khan. He called himself "Indian for all ages." And very few would dispute that Shah Rukh Khan made his Bollywood debut in 1992. It's been more than 30 years. Staying relevant for three decades is a big deal. Staying on top of your game is a whole different matter. That's what Shah Rukh Khan has done. His fans cut across ages, genders, religions, and regions. Enough has been said about his art. His awards and box office numbers attest that he is a good actor. But let's look beyond that. It has been a tough four or five years for

Shah Rukh Khan, both personally and professionally. His last movie before 2023 was 'Zero', released back in 2018, and soon criticism poured in. People wrote off his career. They said SRK had lost his charm. Then came 2021, when Shah Rukh Khan's son was arrested in a drug case. He spent close to 30 days in jail. It wasn't just the arrest. It was the way some people reacted and commented on it. His son was just 24 years old. No court had found him guilty. Yet, the questions would not stop — questions on Shah Rukh Khan's parenting. On his family life. On his son's personal life. Things that had no relevance in court, despite that, he never spoke out. No emotional outbursts. No angry responses

India and the opaque credit rating metrics

In December 2023, the office of the CEA (Chief Economic Advisor) brought out a collection of essays titled 'Re-Examining Narratives'. This has five heads or chapters — credit ratings, the inequality debate, India's export basket, financing climate action and India's G20 presidency. Narratives about India are often negative, unnecessarily so, and not based on facts. An instance is disbelief, among some vocal critics, that India can break out of a 5-5.5 per cent real growth trajectory. The point about biased narratives has often been made, typically in piece-meal and ad hoc fashion. This is the first time anyone within the government has articulated it systematically. The essays have been reported in the media. I find it surprising that beyond the mechanical reportage, no one has commented on the issues.

Take the case of credit rating agencies (CRAs) and their sovereign ratings. The market is dominated and controlled by the big three — Fitch, Moody's and Standard and Poor's (S&P). It's not that CRAs only do sovereign ratings. For the others (corporate ratings), they haven't always covered themselves with glory (Enron, sub-prime mortgage crisis). There have been allegations of deliberate malfeasance and non-transparency (Greece, Portugal, Ireland), not to speak of biases against developing economies. India versus China: How two key emerging markets



performed in 2023. Sovereign ratings matter, though access to funds is determined by other factors too. For a developing economy, an unnecessarily unfavourable sovereign credit rating makes access to long-term finance and also increases the costs of such finance. Given the importance of CRAs and the big three, the methodology should be transparent and not arbitrary and subjective. That's the objective hallmark of any rating. But this is not what happens. While I could have rephrased and stated it in my own words, it is best to quote from the CEA paper. "Our review of the credit rating methodologies reveals that there is considerable reliance on qualitative variables to capture 'willingness to pay'. The enormous degree of opaqueness in the methodology makes it challenging to quantify the impact of qualitative factors on credit ratings. The significant presence of qualitative factors in credit rating methodologies also gives rise to bandwagon effects and cognitive biases amply reflected in various studies, generating concerns about the credibility of credit ratings," it said.

"From our quantitative

analysis, we find that over half the credit rating is determined by the qualitative component. Institutional Quality, proxied mostly by the World Bank's Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs), emerges as the foremost determinant of a developing economy's credit rating, which presents a problem since these metrics tend to be non-transparent, perception-based, and derived from a small group of experts, and cannot represent the 'willingness to pay' of the sovereign. Their effect on the ratings is non-trivial since it implies that to earn a credit rating upgrade, developing economies must demonstrate progress along arbitrary indicators while simultaneously contending with the discriminations the ratings tend to carry," it stated. These are strong words, but they are not without justification. Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGIs) have often been bandied around as the last word on measuring governance, an expression that is, at best, difficult to pin down. WGI is based on six aggregate governance indicators: (1) voice and accountability; (2) political stability and absence of violence/terrorism;

After l'affaire Lakshadweep, can Chinese embrace help Muizzu wade through domestic waters?

Even as l'affaire Lakshadweep continues to bother Maldives' relations with India, President Mohamed Muizzu will be faced with a host of domestic problems on return from a 'successful' State visit to China. It begins with the Male city mayor elections due on Saturday, 13 January, followed by the parliamentary elections, fixed for 17 March, with an Opposition MDP's threat to impeach him when he was away in China. Unless there are more defections from the Opposition beyond the recent crop of 13, a tactical alliance between the erstwhile ruling MDP with 43

MPs and the breakaway Democrats with 13 can prove risky for the incumbent, as they will only be short of two votes for the mandatory two-thirds majority in the 87-member Majlis. Admitting the 13 MPs in a public rally last month, Muizzu declared that even if their fingers were cut, there were MDP parliamentarians who would not vote against him. Whether he will have the need to prove his claim is a question now. However, events will have to wait as the results of the Male mayoralty poll in the midst of the continuing conundrum over the disparaging remarks of

three of his ministers, since suspended, will have multiple messages. Male is the quintessential Maldives, and the way Male votes now, the whole nation may do so in the parliamentary elections. Or, that is the belief. The mayoralty fell vacant after he quit on election as President. So Muizzu's leadership cannot be seen as losing the position, which had brought him some name and fame more than his work as Works Minister under an estranged mentor, jailed former President, Abdulla Yameen. It is here that the current controversies viz India and the overlapping China visit of

Muizzu come into the picture. Before the Indian social media launched a Maldives-bashing campaign, the street opinion in Male and possibly elsewhere in the country was one of utter condemnation of the three errant ministers. But the Indian social media campaign, accompanied by what is being seen as uninformed anti-Maldives TV talk-shows in multiple Indian languages, especially Hindi, and of course English, may have done some harm. Yet, the Maldivian public opinion is yet to come to grips with the multiple outcomes of Muizzu's China visit.

IIP growth slowest in 8 months, retail inflation at 4-month high



New Delhi: Factory output grew 2.4% in November, the slowest pace of expansion in last eight months, while retail inflation rose to a four-month high of 5.7% in December 2023 on the back of a spurt in food prices, according to a set of government data released on Friday. The retail inflation, based on Consumer Price Index (CPI), rose on account of spurt in prices of vegetables, pulses and spices. The inflation was 5.6% in November 2023 and 5.7% in December 2022. The rate of price rise in the food basket, which constitutes

We expect CPI inflation to come down to 5% by March 2023," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economic adviser, SBI

nearly half of the CPI, increased to 9.5% in December against 8.7% in the preceding month and 4.2% in December 2022, according to the data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO). CPI inflation rose to a four month high... due to increase in food price inflation.

Inflation in all the other components increased at a lower rate when compared to the previous month. The pick-up in inflation was driven by an unfavourable base effect of around 10 bps. The good thing is that CPI and core CPI remain in equilibrium long run relationship with CPI adjusting towards the core CPI, which has continued its downtrend from the last 12 months to reach 3.8% in December 2023. ...We expect CPI inflation to come down to 5% by March 2023," said Soumya Kanti Ghosh, chief economic adviser, SBI.

India-US trade set to top \$200 billion

NEW DELHI:

With India-US trade set to cross \$200 billion in 2023, commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal and US Trade Representative Katherine Tai on Friday sought to ensure that technical regulations do not impact shipments and vowed to work together on critical minerals, pharma and medical devices. A joint statement issued after a meeting of the Trade Policy Forum said the two ministers noted that the movement of professionals and skilled workers, students, investors,

and business visitors between the countries contributes immensely to enhancing the bilateral economic and technological partnership. Goyal highlighted challenges being faced by business visitors from India due to visa processing time periods and requested US to augment processing. Enhanced engagement is likely in several areas. "They (ministers) identified certain areas, including critical minerals, customs and trade facilitation, supply chains, and trade in high-tech products, in which the

US and India will develop an ambitious and forward looking roadmap for enhanced cooperation in order to achieve economically meaningful outcomes," the statement said. During the meeting, Goyal sought the restoration benefits for India under the US Generalised System of Preferences (GSP) programme. "Ambassador Tai noted that this could be considered, as warranted, in relation to the eligibility criteria determined by the US Congress," it said.

Patra reappointed RBI deputy governor for 1 year

MUMBAI: Michael Patra has been reappointed as RBI governor for one year. He was initially appointed in January 2020 for a three-year tenure, which concludes on January 14. Patra was appointed deputy governor in place of Viral Acharya who quit in July 2019, six months

ahead of his tenure. Prior to being appointed deputy governor, Patra was the executive director in charge of the monetary policy and was a member of the monetary policy committee. He played a key role in developing the inflation-targeting and liquidity frameworks of

the RBI. A PhD in economics from the Indian Institute of Technology, Mumbai, Patra, served in various capacities in the RBI, which he joined in 1985. He is also a fellow of Harvard University, where he undertook post-doctoral research in financial stability.



HC: Banks or NBFCs are not obliged to adopt the restructuring process on its own without there being any application by the MSMEs

MUMBAI: Bombay high court on Thursday dismissed a bunch of petitions filed by small scale enterprises on a limited challenge to the decisions of banks and non banking financial companies (NBFCs) declaring them as Non-Performing Assets (NPAs) without following provisions of a 2015 notification. A division bench of Justices BP Colabawalla and MM Sathaye found that the Banks or NBFCs are not obliged to adopt the restructuring process on its own without there being any application by the MSMEs (Micro, small, medium enterprises) The HC said hence it is not necessary to deal with the arguments of the Banks NBFCs about the effects of the subsequent Notifications and Circulars. The HC said "the limited argument of the Petitioners" on ground bases on the notification, fails. "There is no merit in these petitions and the same are dismissed," it said but added, "we however grant leave to the Petitioners to agitate the other issues in their petitions, which may vary on facts, on a case-to case basis by adopting alternate remedies, as available under law." The HC, on a request by advocate Mathews Nedumpara, counsel for the petitioners, who said issues involved in the petitions are important and he would like to text them before the Supreme Court, extended stay granted earlier against any action for two weeks. After two weeks they shall be automatically vacated, unless extended by the SC, said the HC.

Vedanta launches 3rd phase 'Project Panchhi'; empowers young Odisha girls

A 'transformative initiative' by Vedanta aimed at empowering 1000 young girls across India Jharsuguda (Odisha) January 12, 2024: Vedanta Aluminium, India's largest producer of aluminium, launched its ambitious third phase of 'Project Panchhi' in Jharsuguda, Odisha. Vedanta Project Panchhi As part of the third phase of this significant project in Jharsuguda, 45 young girls have been identified for recruitment.

The young women were handed over job offer letters and felicitated by Ms. Sunita Kisan, District Labour Officer and Ms. Sangeeta Meher, District Employment Exchange Officer, while Ms Dipali Das, MLA, Jharsuguda

"I extend my appreciation to Vedanta Aluminium for this wonderful initiative, which is helping young girls realize their dreams"

and Ms. Aboli Sunil Naravane, Collector and District Magistrate, Jharsuguda joined the august occasion virtually.

Joining virtually, Ms. Dipali Das, MLA, Jharsuguda, said, "Women are capable of reaching great heights, but most of them are not fortunate enough to pursue higher education. I commend Vedanta

for bringing programs like Project Panchhi and urge them to introduce more such initiatives in the future. Jharsuguda is fortunate to have key industries operating in its vicinity and Vedanta has always been active in their CSR initiatives."

Vedanta launches third phase

In her address, Ms. Aboli Sunil Naravane, Collector and District Magistrate, Jharsuguda said, "I extend my appreciation to Vedanta Aluminium for this wonderful initiative, which is helping young girls realize their dreams. Jharsuguda District Administration will always lend their support for such transformative initiatives."

Come July, you can freeze trading account on your own

MUMBAI: Come July, you will be able to freeze your trading account online, like in the case of debit and credit cards, over suspicious access. Markets regulator Sebi on Friday asked brokerages to set up a mechanism allowing investors to voluntarily freeze or block their trading accounts. At present, investors have the option to freeze or block transactions in their demat account, but not in trading a/cs. Market players said

though the demat option is available it's hardly used by investors due to lack of information. The move by Sebi is under its 'ease of doing investments by investors' initiative. Screenshot 2024-01-13 042442 When suspicious activities are noticed by investors, the facility of freezing/blocking of accounts is currently not available with majority of the brokers. This was the main trigger for Sebi to put in place a

mechanism for freezing/blocking of trading accounts. By April 1, the framework for freezing and blocking of trading accounts should be made public by the Brokers' Industry Standards Forum (ISF), an industry trade body that sets processes that brokers should follow. The framework should be operational by July 1, Sebi said. Sebi said that there should be detailed guidelines on how brokers should act

once they receive an intimation about the freezing and blocking of accounts. Sebi wants each broker to inform their clients about this facility. "Many times, investors raise issues of suspicious activities in their trading accounts and thus, there is an urgent need to address the situation of having a facility for blocking of trading accounts as it is available for blocking of ATM cards and credit cards," Sebi said in its release.

Citigroup to cut 20,000 jobs amid restructuring, posts \$1.8 billion

Citigroup announces restructuring plan under CEO Jane Fraser to save \$2.5 billion. Q4 performance disappoints with revenue drop; Fraser aims to reduce bureaucratic layers. Citigroup plans to boost return on equity, reduce headcount, and spin off Mexican consumer unit for long-term growth. Despite a \$1.8 billion loss in the fourth quarter, analysts see resilience in Citigroup's underlying business. The loss included significant one-time charges related to the restructuring and other factors.

Citigroup's sweeping job cuts and restructuring reflect a decisive shift towards streamlined operations and improved profitability. Citigroup



to cut 20,000 jobs amid restructuring, posts \$1.8 billion. The restructuring is set to be New York-based Citigroup's biggest in two decades. Citigroup Inc has announced a major restructuring plan under CEO Jane Fraser's leadership, aiming to eliminate 20,000 roles. This move, integral to Fraser's strategy, is expected to save the company as much as \$2.5 billion, positioning it for stronger returns in the coming years.

Challenging times Despite the planned savings, Citigroup braces for immediate costs. "In the meantime, though, the firm expects to incur as much as \$1 billion in expenses tied to severance payments and Fraser's restructuring of the bank this year," the company said in a statement. Fourth quarter woes Citigroup's fourth-quarter performance fell short of expectations. "The fourth quarter was very disappointing," Fraser admitted.

Binance loses India traders to WazirX, CoinDCX after crackdown

Binance's split with WazirX in 2022 had initially favored Binance, but a government crackdown on offshore exchanges in India has shifted the dynamics. Traders are now flocking to domestic rivals like WazirX, CoinDCX, and CoinSwitch Kuber. The removal of Binance's app from Apple's App Store further boosted the inflows to these local platforms. WazirX said volumes haven't budged much, while CoinDCX said the slight uptick it's noticed in the past two weeks may be more due to overall bullish crypto sentiment. Binance loses India traders to WazirX, CoinDCX after crackdown Since Indian authorities in late December began



restricting access to Binance and other foreign crypto exchanges operating there without local registrations, traders have flocked to local exchanges. When Binance Holdings Ltd acrimoniously split with its Indian affiliate WazirX in 2022, the world's largest cryptocurrency exchange looked near-invincible in the local market while WazirX was flailing. A government crackdown on offshore platforms has abruptly reversed the competi-

tive dynamics. Since Indian authorities began restricting access to Binance and other foreign crypto exchanges operating there without local registrations, traders have flocked to domestic rivals like WazirX. Many of them are moving deposits across from Binance, according to the local venues. It's a welcome reprieve for WazirX and competitors like CoinDCX and CoinSwitch Kuber,

which were pummeled by a 2022 taxation regime that drove traders to offshore exchanges. They appear poised for further gains after Apple Inc.'s App Store this week took down the apps of Binance and seven other foreign exchanges after a request from India's government. Deposit inflows at WazirX jumped about 250% in the four days following India's December 28 compliance show-cause notice to nine offshore platforms, compared with the four days leading up to it, according to the company. CoinDCX reopened for deposits right after the event and they immediately began pouring in, CEO Sumit Gupta said.

Alliance Air adds 2 flights a week to Lakshdweep

NEW DELHI: Aerial connectivity to Lakshdweep will get a boost from next week. Alliance Air will operate an additional Kochi-Agatti-Kochi flight on Wednesdays and Sundays from January 21 to March 27, 2024. Alliance is the only airline with flights to the archipelago with a daily on this route. Following PM Modi's recent trip to Lakshadweep, there is heightened interest and demand for travel there. To meet the same, Alliance has as of now added two flights a week. The only fixed wing public sector airline, which is yet to be divested, operates a 70-seater turboprop ATR-72 to Agatti. Airline officials say they are looking at having a double daily between Kochi and Agatti.

UN's relevance dwindling, world is coming to us, says Jaishankar

NAGPUR: External affairs minister S Jaishankar, who will touch down in Tehran on Sunday, just 48 hours after the US-UK joint strike on Iran-backed Houthi militias, told a gathering in Nagpur about India's dramatic rise in geopolitics in the last decade amidst the United Nation's dwindling relevance due to the stranglehold of five countries, some of whom were no longer top global economies. Covid-19 diplomacy and a successful hosting of the G-20 summit amid the Russia-Ukraine war dramatically raised India's global stature, Jaishankar said, adding "New Delhi is now consulted in every major international issue. The world has come to us". Talking about Sino-India relations, he said, "A strife-torn border and good business can't go together. I have unequivocally told my Chinese counterpart that relations can't improve if mutual



agreements are violated. You don't want to fight and do trade at the same time. Diplomacy with Beijing is continuing and sometimes solutions to difficult situations do not come in haste." He also spoke about India's diplomatic challenge during the Ukraine conflict. "We were told by European nations not to buy fuel from Russia. And we had to explain to the West that their experiences with Russia may not be similar to that of India. Our experience has been positive and we bought oil from Russia to manage fuel prices at home."

Jaishankar also highlighted how India's 5,000-year-old culture was turned into global branding. "When the Prime Minister took yoga to the United Nations in 2014, not many could fathom that yoga would one day become mainstream worldwide," he said. The opening of the Swaminarayan temple in Abu Dhabi and the UAE president's visit to the Vibrant Gujarat summit were other big diplomatic achievements, he added. India's relations with the US have never been so strong as they are now, he said.

Supreme Court: Consider hiking hit-&-run payouts in 8 weeks

NEW DELHI: Expressing serious concern about the wide gap between the number of hit-and-run accidents in the past five years and the minuscule number of victims' kin getting a paltry compensation of Rs 2 lakh each, the Supreme Court on Friday mandated the police to inform the kin of such accident victims about availability of compensation scheme under the Motor Vehicle Act. A bench of Justices Abhay S Oka and Pankaj Mithal said the ministry of transport and highways has published reports which indicate on

an average 65,000 hit-and-run accidents in India, but the concerned minister's statement in Parliament indicated that in the last five years "there were 660 deaths in hit and run cases, and there were 113 injury cases for which compensation of Rs 184.60 lakh was disbursed". Writing the judgment and asking the Centre to consider within eight weeks an enhancement in compensation, Justice Oka said, "If we compare the number of hit and run road accidents reported and the number of cases registered for seeking

compensation, what stares at the face is that a negligible number of victims have taken advantage of the said scheme." The bench asked the SC-appointed standing committee on road safety to look into the causes of non-implementation of the scheme under the MV Act and direct corrective measures to be taken to ensure that every claimant who is entitled to benefit of the scheme is encouraged to take benefit thereof. It also directed the police in all states that once they conclude an accident to be a hit-and-run case.

Airline 'locked' passengers in aerobridge for hours, says actor

MUMBAI: Actor Radhika Apte on Saturday claimed she and other passengers at an airport were locked in the aerobridge for hours after her flight was delayed. " ...Today morning I had a flight at 8:30. It's 10:50 now and the flight has still not board-

ed. But the flight said we were boarding and put all the passengers in the aerobridge and locked it," Apte said on Instagram. An IndiGo spokesperson said the airline's Bhubaneswar-bound flight from Mumbai was delayed due to "operational reasons".

"I managed to escaped briefly to speak to the very stupid staff woman outside who kept saying there is no issue and no delay. Now I'm locked inside and they just told us that we will be here till minimum 12pm, all locked in. No water, no loo. Thanks for the fun ride," Apte said.

CAPSULES

Supreme Court shields Chittorgarh Fort from mine blasting

NEW DELHI: Chittorgarh Fort, one of the last bastions of Rajput resistance against Mughal emperor Akbar constructed nearly 500 years ago, is now fighting a battle for survival as much against the withering effect of time as also the booming blasts at limestone mines in its vicinity. Unlike Rana Pratap Singh who bravely waged a lonely battle against the mighty Mughal army, Chittorgarh Fort is fortunately backed by the mighty Supreme Court, which on Friday ordered no blasting in limestone mines within a 5km radius of the Unesco heritage monument, which brings to a history student's mind the stories weaved around its grit, valour and devotion that is etched in the Fort's structures including the Vijay Stambh, Kirti Stambh, Padmini Palace, Kumbha Palace and Meera Mandir. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and S V N Bhatti ordered: "We declare and hold that notwithstanding any liberal recommendation on undertaking blasting operations nearer to the Chittorgarh Fort, keeping in perspective the continuous exposure of ancient monuments to peak particle velocity (PPV) arising from blasting, a radius of 5km from the compound wall of the fort shall not be subjected to mining by blasting or use of explosives for mining of any minerals. In other words, the manual/mechanical mining operations permitted within a radius of 5km are allowed to be continued, subject to the lessees possessing a valid lease in accordance with law." It said exploitation of limestone mineral in the surrounding area by the mining lease holders, particularly in an unscientific manner or disproportionate exploitation of minerals in hard and rude mining activities.

Karnataka ex-CM Yediyurappa praises Siddaramaiah government's 'poll guarantees'



SHIVAMOGGA: The 'poll guarantees' initiative introduced by Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in Karnataka has come under attack by BJP leaders and even PM Modi, but former B S Yediyurappa Saturday refused to criticise the pro-

gramme, saying positive contributions needed to be acknowledged regardless of party affiliations. He also dismissed claims, as made by Pejawar seer Vishwaprasanna Tirtha, that the existence of Ram temple depended on Hindus

● "He said it was unfortunate that Congress leaders had expressed displeasure over the consecration ceremony"

remaining a majority in the country. The BJP veteran emphasised that the temple enjoyed popular support, asserting that Lord Ram symbolised unity across religious lines. He said it was unfortunate that Congress leaders had expressed displeasure over the consecration ceremony, speculating that BJP would claim sole credit for Ram Mandir.

3 sadhus from UP assaulted in WB; BJP & TMC trade barbs

PURULIA: Three sadhus hailing from Bareilly in UP, who had come to Purulia on their way to Gangasagar, were assaulted Thursday over suspicions that they were "child-lifters", reports Tanuja Singh Deo.



On Friday, 12 locals were arrested in connection with the assault. Residents also lodged a complaint against the three sadhus, alleging stalking and kidnapping of local girls. BJP leaders targeted West Bengal government over the attack,

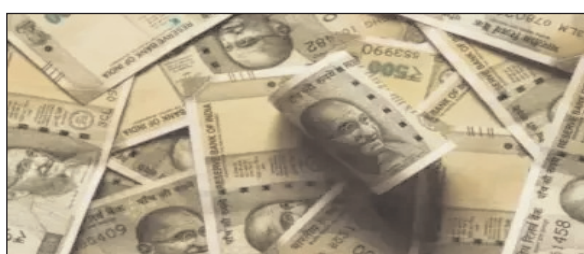
comparing the incident with the lynching of two sadhus in Palghar in April 2020. Purulia police and Trinamool Congress, however, said a language barrier sparked the rumours of abduction which led to the attack, adding

"facts are being misrepresented". The three sadhus, accompanied by two others, were travelling in a car, and had stopped at Gourangdih More in Kashipur police station area, where they asked three minor girls about

the way to a local brick kiln, as they wanted to meet its owner for alms. The girls, who were going to a temple, got scared as they saw strangers approach them, and suspecting them to be child-lifters, fled from the place. Soon, men and women gathered there with lathis, vandalised the car, dragged the men out, took them to a local temple and bashed them up. BJP MP from Purulia took the sadhus to Kashipur town Friday, where party supporters felicitated them.

100 million Indians to be affluent by 2027: Report

NEW DELHI: 'Affluent' Indians may number 100 million in four years. To put this in perspective: There are only 14 countries in the world with a population of 100 million-plus. And these Indians, already responsible for a consumer and wealth creation paradigm shift, will have an even bigger impact on everything from luxury goods to stock market, from SUVs to jewellery. A Goldman Sachs report released on Friday - 'The Rise of Affluent India' - defines affluence as income of over \$10,000 per annum, Rs 8.3 lakh in current exchange rates. Goldman analysts say this class numbers 60 million currently but will grow by a huge 67% to 100 million by 2027. Currently just around 4% of the working population earns over \$10,000 annually (a figure almost five times the per capita



income of \$2,100, around Rs 1,75,000), the report says. This class has expanded fast - 12% compounded annual growth between 2019 and 2023, compared with 1% increase in population in the same period. The faster growth in affluence has also meant a significant increase in financial and physical assets, including equities, gold and property, during the last three years. "The increase has been the largest for equities and gold, while property prices have seen a higher rate of appreciation in the last three-four years," it said. Goldman analysts point to a 2.8 times jump in

demat accounts to 114 million in 2023, and the rise in stock ownership (BSE 200 stocks) and mutual fund investment. Value of gold held by Indians soared 63% to \$1.8 trillion between 2019 and 2023. Other results: A sharper increase in demand for premium products across industries including FMCG, footwear, fashion, passenger vehicles and two-wheelers, better performance by companies focused on top income consumption. Sectors hitting the jackpot are jewellery, travel, premium retail and pricey healthcare. Even company product portfolios are feeling the change.

Consensus on Mallikarjun Kharge's name as INDIA chairman

NEW DELHI: INDIA bloc leaders on Saturday arrived at a consensus on the appointment of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as chairperson of the opposition grouping, a move that may not have gone down too well with JD(U).

A proposal to appoint JD(U) chief Nitish Kumar as convener was also mooted and unanimously backed by those present, but the Bihar CM is learned to have favoured setting up a team of party chiefs for closer coordination rather than appointing a convener for the group. Sources said following insistence by some on having a convener, Nitish favoured RJD's Lalu Prasad to take up the role. With JD(U) functionaries emphasising that Kumar was not keen on taking up a formal position within the opposition grouping, Kharge intervened and said the matter should be put off until after he reaches out to the absentees. Of 28 parties that are part of INDIA, only 10 - Congress, DMK, JD(U), RJD, AAP, CPM, CPI, NCP, JMM and NC - attended the coordination committee meeting. TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, Shiv Sena



(UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav were absent. Sena's Sanjay Raut, however, spoke to the Congress chief later. Nitish's name as convener was doing the rounds at a time when there was no plan to have a chairperson of the alliance. But during the December 19 meeting of the bloc in Delhi, Mamata Banerjee and Arvind Kejriwal stumped everyone by suddenly proposing Kharge's name as chairperson. As proceedings unspooled on Saturday with Sitaram Yechury proposing Nitish's name as convener and Lalu seconding it, the Bihar CM was not amused. In fact, Nitish's suggestion of Lalu as convener

was seen as an expression of discontent over the developments. Credited for bringing together disparate parties, some of which had even proposed a third front earlier, Nitish expected due recognition to him for the role he played. Appointment of a chairperson is seen as sapping the post of convener of much importance. Convened to discuss seat-sharing and joint programmes, the meeting on Saturday saw Rahul Gandhi emphasise the need for all alliance partners to work together. He is learned to have said that Kharge, as chairperson, will ensure closer coordination among the constituents. **Kharge to ensure closer coordination, says Rahul** TMC chief Mamata Banerjee, Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Uddhav Thackeray and Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav were absent. Sena's Sanjay Raut, however, spoke to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge later. Nitish's name as convener was doing the rounds at a time when there was no plan to have a chairperson of the alliance. But during the December 19 meeting of the bloc.

Deora dismisses speculation about quitting Congress to join Shiv Sena led by Shinde

MUMBAI: Senior Congress leader Milind Deora has dismissed rumors that he is leaving the party to join the Shiv Sena led by Maharashtra chief minister Eknath Shinde. While he acknowledged that he is holding discussions with his supporters, Deora stated that he has not made a decision yet. Responding to reports in the media, Deora called them mere rumors and clarified his stance. The Shiv Sena (UBT) recently claimed the Mumbai South Lok Sabha constituency, which Deora had previously represented. This move did not sit well with the Congress leader, who expressed his displeasure in a video statement last Sunday. Deora emphasized that if such statements by an alliance partner persist, his party too can announce candidates for seats. It is important to note that formal talks on seat.

India eye series win over Afghanistan as fringe players look to impress



NEW DELHI:

A series victory over Afghanistan may not be categorised as a monumental cricketing achievement, but for a group of players, the upcoming second T20I in Indore on Sunday presents an opportunity to elevate themselves from supporting roles to serious contenders. Having secured a 1-0 lead with a six-wicket win in the first game at Mohali, India look to further solidify their position. For individuals like Jitesh Sharma, Washington Sundar

and Axar Patel, delivering a standout performance against Afghanistan is crucial. This will not only contribute to the team's success but also keep them in the selectors' consideration, especially as the quest for constructing the ideal squad for the T20 World Cup gains momentum. The significance of their performance is heightened by the fact that India won't engage in another T20I series before the prestigious event in June, adding weight to each player's chance to make a lasting impres-

sion. Jitesh has ample reasons to position himself as a frontrunner, given that the wicketkeeper-batsman has surpassed Ishan Kishan in the selection hierarchy since stepping in for the latter during the fourth T20I against Australia in Raipur last year. Despite contributing with a couple of handy 30s lower down the order, the cricketer from Maharashtra is likely aware of the necessity for a more substantial innings to solidify his case for a permanent spot in the playing XI.

Novak Djokovic opens up about his bond with Virat Kohli

NEW DELHI: Novak Djokovic, the 24-time Grand Slam champion, disclosed that he maintains regular communication with Virat Kohli while expressing admiration for the star Indian cricketer, revealing that they have known each other for a few years. Despite not having the chance to meet Kohli in person, Djokovic highlighted the fortunate opportunity to communicate with the Indian cricketer. Djokovic emphasised the positive and friendly nature of their relationship, acknowledging Kohli's stellar cricketing career and expressing gratitude for the kind words shared between them.



Djokovic said, "Virat Kohli and I have been texting a little bit for a few years and we never got the chance to meet in person. But it was really a privilege and honour to listen to him speak nicely about me and I obviously admire his career and achievement and everything he has done." Djokovic, with a potential 25th Grand Slam title within reach, shared his admiration for India and discussed the motivations that

drive him to achieve greatness each day. Djokovic reflected on his previous visit to India, which occurred ten years ago, and expressed his intention to visit the country again soon. Djokovic expressed a desire to experience India's beauty, history, culture, and spirituality. This acknowledgment of India's diverse and rich aspects suggests a deeper appreciation for the country beyond the tennis court.

FC Goa secure Yasir on loan from Hyderabad

PANAJI: FC Goa have completed a loan move for Hyderabad FC winger Mohammad Yasir. Goa have been in talks with the club and player for a while and after agreeing terms, completed the paperwork late on Friday. At least two other clubs were jostling for his signature but reuniting with

coach Manolo Marquez proved to be decisive in the end. "It's a done deal. Hyderabad have already signed the documents," a source told TOI late on Friday. Yasir's late night signing allows Goa to register the midfielder for the Super Cup, just before the deadline of January 13.

According to sources, Yasir will start training with Goa on Saturday. The talented 25-year-old midfielder reunites with coach Manolo, who spent three years at Hyderabad FC where he spotted Yasir's talent and groomed him as a winger and attacking midfielder. After an impressive season with Hyderabad.

CAPSULES

Mohammad Kaif lifts Bengal against Uttar Pradesh in Ranji Trophy

KOLKATA: A 52-run ninth-wicket stand between Mohammad Kaif and Suraj Sindhu Jaswal saw Bengal put up a healthy total of 188 runs on Day II of their Elite Group 'B' Ranji Trophy match against Uttar Pradesh in Kanpur on Saturday. The hosts, who were dismissed for 60 in the first innings, however, began their reply in a strong way getting to 46 without loss at stumps with openers Samarth Singh and Aryan Juyal staying unbeaten on 21 and 20, respectively as the hosts still trailed by 82 runs. Kaif came good with the bat after claiming 4 for 14 a day earlier, to remain unbeaten on 45. Veteran India seamer Bhuvneshwar Kumar maintained his rhythm to pick up three more wickets on Saturday and end with his career-best excellent figures of 8 for 41 in 22 overs. Beginning the day at 95 for five after another delayed start due to bad light, Bengal suffered early setbacks losing the wickets of overnight unbeaten batters Shreyansh Ghosh (41) and Karan Lal (12) along with Pradipta Pramanik (1) for 15 runs only. But Kaif stood tall, emerging as the top-scorer hitting four boundaries and two sixes playing 79 balls. Debutant Jaiswal (20) gave him good support as the duo managed to keep the UP attack at bay. The Bengal tail continued to wage even after Jaswal's dismissal, as Kaif partnered with Ishan Porel (10) and added another vital 26 runs for the last wicket to take the hosts to a respectable total.

'Modern-day batters aren't patient anymore if there's...': Jacques Kallis

NEW DELHI: Jacques Kallis, a modern-day legend with 45 Test centuries, has expressed his observation that modern-day batters tend to lack patience, often opting to hit their way out of challenging situations on pitches that are not easy to bat on. Kallis, who stands second to Sachin Tendulkar in terms of Test centuries, questioned whether the approach of aggressive batting on challenging tracks is the right strategy. The recent Test match between India and South Africa in Cape



Town ended in just over two days, raising discussions about the nature of pitches and the balance between batting and bowling. Kallis' comments suggest a concern about the growing trend of batsmen favoring aggressive strokes over patient shot selection, especially on surfaces that offer assistance to bowlers. The debate on the

ideal approach for batting on decisive tracks continues in the cricketing world. Has the philosophy of Test matches changed with batters becoming tact too aggressive? "I think it has changed. The guys aren't as patient anymore if there's a bit of movement," Kallis said, referring to Newlands track, in an exclusive interview

with PTI. "Earlier, guys used to ride it out to get through that period. Now guys are trying to hit out and it's a completely different way of playing it. Is it good or bad? Time will tell," he said, giving an open-ended answer. Regarding the playing surface in the second Test where South Africa were bowled out for 55 in their first innings and India lost their last six wickets without adding a run, Kallis, who hails from Cape Town, emphasised that the pace of the wicket at Newlands wasn't the primary concern.

'We won't complain if pitches in India...': England vice-captain Ollie Pope

NEW DELHI: England's vice-captain, Ollie Pope, expressed a pragmatic stance regarding the nature of pitches in the upcoming five-match Test tour against India starting on January 25. Pope stated that England wouldn't lodge complaints if India opted for pitches that favored spin right from the outset. He emphasised that the responsibility for pitch preparation rested with the host country, and it was their prerogative to create surfaces that suited their players. Pope, a 26-year-old



right-handed middle-order batter, acknowledged that the nature of pitches was likely to be a prominent topic of discussion during the series. This statement reflects a willingness on England's part to adapt to different playing conditions and challenges, showcasing a sports-

manlike approach as they prepare for the Test series against India. "There will be a lot of outside noise. And pitches can be a massive talking point. But you have to remember the two teams are playing on the exact same wicket, so we just need to be as

well-equipped as we can," Pope was quoted as saying by 'The Guardian'. "In England, we might leave more grass on the pitch to suit our amazing seamers, so it's no surprise if India do the same to suit their spinners," he said before England flew out to Abu Dhabi for a training camp ahead of the Test series. The recent headlines surrounding the nature of pitches gained attention, particularly after India secured a Test victory against South Africa in Cape Town within two days.

'IPL will be equally important for all': Shivam Dube on T20 World Cup preparations

NEW DELHI: All-rounder Shivam Dube emphasised the importance of the Indian Premier League (IPL) in preparing the Indian team for the upcoming T20 World Cup, scheduled to be held in June in the West Indies and the USA. With limited T20I fixtures played by India after the ODI World Cup last year, the IPL serves as a crucial platform for players to fine-tune their skills and form ahead of the global T20 event. The IPL, known for its competitive and high-pressure environment, provides Indian players with an opportunity to showcase their T20 prowess and gain valuable match practice against top-quality opposition. As the T20 World Cup approaches, the IPL is



likely to be a significant factor in shaping the Indian team's readiness and strategy for the tournament. "It (IPL) would be equally important for all of us, as there are only two T20Is remaining. IPL is a big platform, and if you fare well in it, you get the chance to make it to the (national) team," Dube told reporters ahead of the second T20I against Afghanistan in Indore. "There is a team planning and combination in place. The more we

play T20s, the more we get to understand it better." "I am aiming to play tomorrow's game" Dube expressed his focus on the present task rather than looking too far ahead in terms of making it to the Indian side for the T20 World Cup. Despite being in contention for a spot in the T20 World Cup squad, Dube emphasised the importance of concentrating on the immediate challenges and responsibilities at hand.

Yuvraj sees nothing wrong in Kohli, Rohit returning to T20I fold

NEW DELHI: World Cup-winning India all-rounder Yuvraj Singh has expressed his view that there is nothing wrong with Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli making a return to T20 cricket after a 14-month hiatus, especially with an eye on the upcoming World Cup. Both Rohit and Kohli were included in the squad for the ongoing three-match T20 series against Afghanistan, which serves as India's final international assignment before the T20 World Cup in the USA and the Caribbean. The inclusion of the experienced duo sparked a debate about the decision being a progressive step. However, Yuvraj seems to endorse the move, suggesting that the return of Rohit and Kohli to the T20 fold is a strategic decision in preparation for



the upcoming World Cup. Their experience and skill in the shortest format of the game could potentially add significant value to the Indian team as they aim for success in the global tournament. Yuvraj was not impressed with the hullabaloo around the move and dismissed it by uttering the lyrics of famous Kishore Kumar-song: "Kuch toh log kahenge, logon ka kaam hai kehna." His response thus underscored the importance of disregarding critics and staying focused on the task at hand. "It's because they play all the three formats, they are back after 14

months. You have to manage your workload if you play the three formats. It's a question for the selectors." 'Rohit is a great captain' Yuvraj hailed Rohit as the leader of the Indian team. "I can say Rohit has been a great captain, he's got five IPL trophies, he took us to the (World Cup) final. He has been one of our great captains of IPL and India. We have to manage his workload." Asked whether Rohit or Hardik Pandya should be named as the captain in the T20 World Cup, he said: "I don't know what's the situation with Hardik's fitness at the moment. That is

the selectors' call." Pandya is all set to captain the five-time IPL winning captain Rohit at Mumbai Indians in the upcoming season. On any potential ego clash, Yuvraj said: "When players play together these things happen. If they have an issue they should definitely sit and talk about it." "Rohit has always been very instrumental in getting the best out of Hardik whenever he has played for Mumbai Indians, especially in terms of his bowling to manage his workload." Hardik has always been always good with the bat at death. Batting at 4 for Gujarat, he batted like a batter. "They should definitely talk about it. I don't see an issue there," he said about the situation when Rohit is back leading Team India.

Australia cruise past India 2-0 in Asian Cup group opener

NEW DELHI: Australia secured a comfortable 2-0 victory in their AFC Asian Cup opener against India in Doha. Jackson Irvine and Jordan Bos scored from close range to launch their title bid. Despite a challenging first half, where Australia missed several opportunities and India defended resolutely, Irvine broke the deadlock just after the restart. The midfielder capitalised on a loose ball in the box after India's goalkeeper Gurpreet Singh Sandhu failed to deal with a cross, driving home from 10 yards. With the 2015 Asian Cup champions in control, Bos doubled Australia's lead shortly after the 70th minute. The 21-year-old, who came off the bench, slotted home from close range after a precise delivery from Riley McGree. The match, witnessed by a pro-Indian crowd at the Ahmad Bin Ali Stadium.

CAPSULES

Indians have an amazing skill of preserving their heritage: CM Yogi



Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Saturday that while civilizations worldwide have faded, India continues to safeguard its thousands of years-old civilization and culture. Addressing the closing ceremony of the three-day Gorakhpur Festival 2024, Yogi said, "Indians have the talent to preserve their heritage even in the midst of all the conflicts. Shri Ram was incarnated thousands of years ago but every Indian is still connected to the tradition started by him. It is the result of the tradition of preserving the heritage and the struggle for it at every level that Lord Shri Ram is once again going to be seated in his grand temple in Ayodhya on 22 January." Yogi emphasized that through defeating those who targeted Ayodhya and attacked culture and faith, Indians have reclaimed their identity. He highlighted the forthcoming Consecration ceremony of Lord Shri Ram as a symbol of this victory. Yogi praised festivals like Diwali, Holi, Ramnavami, Mahashivratri, and Rakshabandhan, stating that they effectively communicate Indian culture, bridging the gap for those who, for various reasons, were previously unaware. He stressed the special messages embedded in these festivals, advocating for festivals to serve as vehicles for conveying broader cultural messages. He stated that 35 lakh people visited Ayodhya in the year 2023 on Ram Navami. "At that time, there was neither good railway service nor airport in Ayodhya. Roads were also under construction. Today Ayodhya has four lane and six lane connectivity, double line of railway and is connected to the airport. Eight planes can land simultaneously at the new airport", he added. CM Yogi said that today Dharamshala and good hotels are also available there. "Like Kumbh, a tent city is also being set up. Similarly, Shri Krishna's Janmotsav is also organized. Even after five thousand years, we celebrate our tradition with the same enthusiasm", Yogi added. The Chief Minister said that Gorakhpur and Eastern Uttar Pradesh have been extremely rich from cultural and spiritual point of view. Baba Gorakhnath had chosen Gorakhpur as the place of his meditation. Lumbini, the birthplace of Lord Buddha, is at a distance of 90 km from here. His final resting place is in Kushinagar, 60 km away from Gorakhpur. Sant Kabir was born in Kashi but eventually came to Maghar. The distance from Gorakhpur to Ayodhya and Kashi is only a few hours, he said. CM Yogi said that it is a moment of pleasure for him that Gorakhpur Mahotsav is so successful. "Many artists performed in the festival. The idea behind the festival is to encourage folk traditions and folk art and provide a platform to new artists and inspire them to move forward", he said. CM Yogi remarked that it is a new Gorakhpur today. All the citizens have also contributed with positive spirit in the development of Gorakhpur. Negativity has not been allowed at any level. The result is that today, anyone who comes to Gorakhpur after 5 years is surprised by the development here, he pointed out. The Chief Minister highlighted Gorakhpur's transformation, stating it was once associated with both mafia and mosquitoes.

Today, with their eradication, encephalitis has also been eliminated. CM Yogi emphasized that development is a joint effort of the government and society. Congratulating everyone on Makar Sankranti, he urged active participation in a cleanliness campaign until January 22, aiming to make Gorakhpur clean and plastic-free. Additionally, CM Yogi honored two individuals with Gorakhpur Ratna at the Gorakhpur Mahotsav.

CM urges statewide cleanliness campaign to make every village and street shine before Ram Lalla's arrival

Gorakhpur

To beautify the entire state of Uttar Pradesh before the consecration of Shri Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has emphasized the significance of cleanliness. While addressing the village heads and panchayat representatives via video conferencing on Saturday, he referred to cleanliness as a divine endeavour. He stressed the importance of sending a positive message nationwide by actively participating in the special cleanliness campaign. CM Yogi declared January 22 as



a national festival, marking the celebration of Lord Shri Ram taking his seat in the new, grand and divine temple after a 500-year wait. Emphasizing that this celebration extends beyond Ayodhya, he urged every village, house, and individual to join the unprecedented festivities. CM Yogi also urged people to cele-

brating to the grand occasion. To kickstart the Shri Ram Lalla festival with enthusiasm, CM Yogi has announced a special cleanliness campaign on January 14. Encouraging the participation of every town, village, family, and individual, he stressed the importance of cleaning and beautifully decorating Dev temples. Referring to the tragic impact of diseases like encephalitis, he highlighted the government's commitment to cleanliness and awareness as crucial measures in disease control.

Yogi govt to install floating screen to give a divine view of 'Navya Ayodhya'

Ayodhya

As the consecration ceremony is around the corner, preparations have gained momentum under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath to deck up Ayodhya as the new, grand and divine (Navya, Bhavya and Divya) Ayodhya. As part of the preparations, the Yogi government is building the country's largest floating screen at Chaudhary Charan Singh Ghat, which will later be



installed at Aarti Ghat, and show the consecration ceremony and related programmes as well as the development journey of Ayodhya. It is worth mentioning here that the Ayodhya Municipal Corporation signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Century Hospitality-Megaverse Associate in this regard in August. The floating screen will enable visitors and local residents to watch the Pran-

Pratishtha in Shri Ram Temple on January 22 and other cultural programmes thereafter closely. The government's objective behind the installation of floating screen is to make visitors, both from within the country and abroad, aware of Ayodhya's rich cultural legacy. Akshay Anand, Managing Director of Century Hospitality-Megaverse Associate, which is constructing the floating screen.

Security, self-reliance & respect of women is the govt's priority: Chief Minister



Gorakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday underscored the government's commitment to prioritising security, self-reliance, and respect for half the population, following the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Addressing a function organised by Maharana Pratap Education Council at Maharana Pratap Inter College grounds, he added that notable initiatives have been taken at the central and state levels to foster a secure environment for women, promoting their self-reliance and garnering respect for them, which have yielded positive outcomes. "As part of empowering women, the Prime Minister has ensured 33 per cent reservation for women in both Parliament and the Assembly by passing the Nari Vandan Act", he asserted. The event saw the distribution of sewing machines to 1150 women and girls aimed at fostering self-reliance. Additionally, blankets were provided to all participants. CM Yogi personally handed out sewing machines and blankets to 12 girls. This unique initiative, conducted under the Mission Shakti of Unnat Bharat Gram Abhiyan in collaboration with JK Group Kanpur, was orchestrated by the Maharana Pratap Shiksha Parishad. During the event, CM emphasised empowering half the population to make India stronger and more capable. He also highlighted the necessity of creating a secure environment to pave the way for women's self-reliance, asserting that respect would naturally follow.

CM Yogi commended the dedicated efforts of both the central and state governments in addressing these critical aspects. Government took many steps to empower women. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath highlighted Prime Minister Modi's commitment to empowering half the population through initiatives like the 'Beti Bachao Beti Padhao' campaign.

Unacceptable': India protests visit of British envoy to POK

NEW DELHI: India has strongly protested the visit of the British high commissioner in Islamabad to Pakistan Occupied Kashmir (POK), calling it highly objectionable and asserting that such infringement of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unacceptable. Government had in the past lodged similar protests with envoys of other countries, including twice with the US in recent times, for allowing their envoys to visit POK

which, as India maintains, is under illegal occupation of Pakistan. Government said in a statement that it had summoned the British high commissioner in India and lodged a strong protest. Envoy Jane Marriott visited POK, along with a UK foreign official, on January 10. British envoy to Pak visited Mirpur in POK on January 10. In a statement, the Indian government said it had taken serious note of the "highly objectionable" visit of the UK commissioner, along with a UK foreign office official, to POK on January 10 this year. "Such infringement of India's sovereignty and territorial integrity is unacceptable," the government said. "The UTs of Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh are, have been and shall always remain an integral part of India," it added. British high commissioner to Pakistan Jane Marriott had visited Mirpur city.

Special Guests attending the 'Pran Pratishtha' to receive sacred 'Ram Raj' as a gift

Ayodhya

With the consecration ceremony of Shri Ram Lala at the newly constructed Ram temple in Ayodhya approaching, preparations are in full swing for the mega event. Thousands of VIP guests have received invitations from Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust for the ceremony scheduled for January 22. The Trust has made elaborate arrangements to welcome and honor all attendees, presenting them with gifts that include 'Ram Raj.' As part of the celebration,

Teerth Kshetra Trust will also distribute special 'Motichoor laddus' made from desi ghee as 'Prasad' to the guests. Picture of Ram temple will be given to PM Modi. Guests attending the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on January 22 will receive a unique gift - soil extracted during the foundation excavation of the temple, referred to as 'Ram Raj.' The sacred soil from Ram Janmabhoomi will be carefully packed in boxes and presented to attendees during the ceremony. A member of the Ram

HC relief for bank employee transferred due to RSS ties

SHIMLA: The Himachal Pradesh high court has stayed the transfer orders of a bank employee, who was allegedly shifted for being a member of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS). A division bench comprising Chief Justice M S Ramachandra Rao and Justice Jyotsna Rewal Dua, during the preliminary hearing of the case, observed that the applicant was transferred only because he was a member of the RSS. The court held that prima-facie the transfer order appeared to be patently arbitrary, illegal



and violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India. Petitioner Suresh Kumar Jaswal was working as senior manager at the district office of HP State Co-operative Bank in Bilaspur, where he was posted on July 2, 2021. His grievance was against the office order dated August 31, 2023 through which he had been transferred to district office

Rohru of the respondent bank. The orders were challenged by the applicant before the high court. However, the single bench of the HC had rejected his petition on merits. Jaswal had submitted before the court that he was transferred purely on the basis of a request made by one Sushil Kumar Sharma, a government nominee.

Yogi govt completes renovation works worth Rs 105.65 cr to give Ram Ki Paidi a new look

Ayodhya

The Yogi government has completed various restoration and development projects worth Rs. 105.65 crores, to enhance the beauty of Ram Ki Paidi and give it a new and grand form. The Ram Ki Paidi not only has great historical and mythological significance for being connected to ancient Ayodhya, but also plays a crucial role in the glory of 'Navya Ayodhya'. Notably, Ram Ki Paidi, despite its historical significance, faced neglect for years and

struggled for existence during previous governments. However, its development and beautification carried out by the double-engine government marked a new chapter in the glory of Ayodhya.

Lord Ram himself had told Lakshman about the glory of Paidi. It is believed that Lord Ram used to go through this Paidi to take bath in Sarayu river. Once, when Lakshmana expressed his desire to visit all the pilgrimage sites, Lord Ram stood on the

banks of the Sarayu River in Ayodhya and said that anyone who took bath at that place in the river before sunrise would receive the same merit as visiting all the pilgrimage sites. It is said that the place on the banks of the Sarayu River where Lord Ram made this statement is known as Ram Ki Paidi. This is why taking a bath here on the full moon day is considered of special significance, and those who bathe here receive the merit of visiting all the pilgrimage sites.