

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

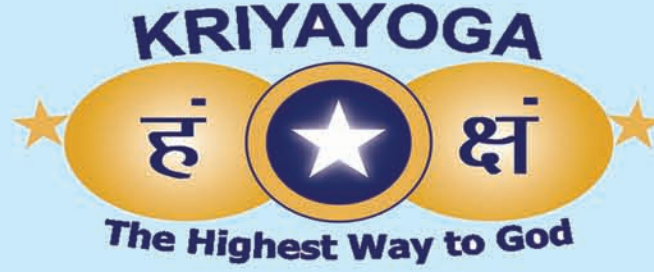
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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Monday 01 January, 2024

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



THE OMNIPOTENT ETERNAL GREETINGS FOR

324 ASCENDING DWAPAR YUGA - YEAR 2024 A.D.

Dear Divine Soul,

The present time - Ascending Dwapar Yuga, with all its power and knowledge, is seeking and counting all great souls who are following and planning to follow the path of Truth and Nonviolence, to supply them with all needed facilities to charge this planet with the Love of God, which means, ever-new joy and super active peace.

May all humanity ever be protected with the aura of True Spirituality - KRIYAYOGA.

With Infinite Love and Blessings,
Swami Shree Yogi Satyam



Attacks on merchant vessels: Navy enhances maritime surveillance efforts

NEW DELHI: The Indian Navy has enhanced maritime surveillance efforts in central as well as northern parts of Arabian Sea. This comes amid the rising incidents of attacks on merchant vessels transiting through international shipping lanes in the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and central/north Arabian Sea. Task Groups comprising destroyers and frigates have also been deployed to undertake maritime security operations and render assistance to merchant vessels in case of any incident. In addition, the Navy is working in close coordination with the Indian Coast Guard. "Aerial surveillance by long-range maritime patrol aircraft and



Remotely Piloted Aircraft (RPAs) has been enhanced to have complete maritime domain awareness. Towards effective surveillance of Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ), the Indian Navy is operating in close coordination with the Indian Coast Guard," it said on Sunday. Navy chief Admiral R Hari Kumar issued directions to take

all possible actions to enhance security in the Arabian Sea region, officials said on Sunday. Suspected drone strikes India-bound vessel, US reveals country behind attack As per officials, the Indian Navy chief has asked to keep a close lookout for any suspicious activity in the region, which saw incidents of attacks on merchant vessels

recently.

The Navy said that the piracy incident on MV Ruen (approximately 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast) and the recent drone attack on MV Chem Pluto (approximately 220 nautical miles south west of Porbandar) indicates a shift in maritime incidents closer to Indian EEZ. While the MV Chem Pluto was attacked on December 23, MV Ruen was hijacked in the Arabian Sea on December 14. Another commercial oil tanker -- MV Sai Baba, which was on the way to India -- came under a suspected drone strike in the southern Red Sea. In view of the spate of attacks on commercial vessels in the Arabian Sea, the

Navy has deployed the P-8I long-range patrol aircraft for surveillance, and warships INS Mormugao, INS Kochi and INS Kolkata in the region. "The overall situation is being closely monitored by the Indian Navy in coordination with national agencies. Indian Navy remains committed to ensuring the safety of merchant shipping in the region," it added. Washington accused Tehran of carrying out the drone attack on MV Chem Pluto, claims Iran's foreign ministry dubbed 'worthless'. It was the first time that Washington openly accused Iran of directly targeting ships since the start of Israel-Hamas war.

'Upto Rs 1.2cr paid to agents': Hunt on for masterminds in France 'donkey flight' case

NEW DELHI: The Gujarat Police on Friday said that they are making efforts to track down the masterminds behind a human smuggling network, which came to light when French authorities halted a planeload of passengers, mostly Indians, bound for Nicaragua.

The aircraft, an Airbus A340, carrying 303 Indian passengers was grounded in France, where it had stopped for refuelling. The chartered plane had arrived from the United Arab Emirates and was halted after an anonymous tip-off that it was carrying potential victims of human trafficking. The Police said most of the passengers on the plane were from Banaskantha, Patan, Mehsana and Anand districts in Gujarat. Most of the flight's other passengers were from Punjab where police said they



were also conducting a probe. Airbus A340 with 303 Indians held in Passengers had paid "four million to 12.5 million rupees" to agents to help them reach the southern border of the United States from South America, Gujarat state police superintendent Sanjay Kharat told AFP.

"We want to know how these people came in contact with the agents, or whether the agents contacted them, and

what their plan was after reaching Nicaragua," he said. The official said they will also try to find out how many people have been flown abroad this way, and who all are seeking to travel in this manner. The CID has so far received "raw information" regarding the agents involved in the incident and will be able to find out more only after questioning the passengers concerned, he said.

Government declares Tehreek-e-Hurriyat an unlawful association' under UA(P)A

NEW DELHI: The Ministry of Home Affairs has officially declared 'Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH)', a separatist political party in Jammu and Kashmir, an 'unlawful association' for the next five years under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. A notification issued by the MHA mentioned that it has declared TeH as an unlawful association for a five-year period, using the authority granted by section 3 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967



(37 of 1967). Following this announcement, Union Home Minister Amit Shah posted on 'X', "The 'Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, J&K (TeH) has been declared an 'Unlawful Association' under UAPA." As per the statement, the group is engaged in

activities aimed at separating Jammu & Kashmir from India and establishing Islamic rule. It has been accused of spreading anti-India messages and continuing terrorist actions to promote secessionism in J&K.

Fertile prospect: Impregnate childless women, rake in Rs 13 lakh



NAWADA

Cyber frauds often conceive innovative ideas to swindle people, but a gang in Bihar took their fertile imagination to another level. Believe it or not, they were running 'All India Pregnant Job Agency' in Nawada district. The job was to make women pregnant and the 'payment' offered was handsome - a proposition lucrative enough for many to fall for the trap.

On Friday, cops busted the gang and arrested eight persons, who lured gullible people to deposit a small amount of Rs 799 as registration fee and avail a chance to get handsome returns of Rs 13 lakh on successfully making pregnant such women who have been unable to bear a child. However, police said the kingpin of the rack-

et, Munna Kumar, managed to escape. The modus operandi, according to the DSP, was to contact gullible people on their WhatsApp numbers, seeking help in impregnating "unfortunate" women who were unable to conceive from their respective husbands or live-in partners. Those desirous to help such women in distress were asked to first register themselves by paying a fee Rs 799. Once registered, they were told that photos of several women would be sent to them to select which one they desired to impregnate. Once the choice was made, the person was asked to make a "security deposit", with the amount ranging between Rs 5,000 and Rs 20,000.

Under new law, 10-year jail in hit-and-run cases

NEW DELHI: The enactment of the new penal law, Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, which now remains only a formality, aims to curb the menace of hit and run accident cases, which annually claim around 50,000 lives. As per the new provision, if any accused causing a fatal crash flees from the site without reporting to authorities,

he/she will end up in jail for up to 10 years and pay a fine. However, experts feel the rules must bring clarity on how an accused or driver informs the authorities considering they may face the risk of people's anger at accident spots and also to ensure this provision is not misused. Union home minister Amit Shah told

both the Houses of Parliament this week that the government has introduced provision of stricter penalty for people who flee from the spot after causing a road crash and leave victims to die whereas there will be some leniency shown for those who voluntarily inform police and take the injured to hospital.

Rape FIR against pharma firm CMD after HC order

AHMEDABAD The Ahmedabad police on Sunday booked the CMD of a major pharmaceutical company in the state for rape following the Gujarat HC's order on allegations levelled by a Bulgarian woman. ACP H M Kansagra said, "Complying with the court order, we filed a complaint on Sunday against Cadila Pharmaceuticals CMD Rajiv Modi under IPC sections 376 (rape), 354 (molestation), and 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of peace)." The investigating officer, inspector R H Solanki of the Sola police station, said the

cops will take the statement of the complainant and the witnesses after which they will arrest the accused. "There is an alleged involvement of another company staffer, Johnson Mathew, who had abetted the crime according to the complainant," Solanki said. An email query sent by to Rajiv Modi went unanswered. Attempts to reach him on phone for comments on the matter did not elicit any response till the time of going to press. On December 22, the HC had ordered an investigation into the allegation of rape levelled against Modi.

Indian-origin couple who went bankrupt after edtech biz, daughter found dead at US

NEW YORK: A wealthy Indian-origin couple and their teenage daughter were found dead in their \$5 million mansion in the US state of Massachusetts in an apparent domestic violence incident, according to media reports. The bodies of Rakesh Kamal, 57, his wife, Teena, 54, and their 18-year-old daughter, Ariana, were found in their Dover mansion at about 7.30pm, Thursday, Norfolk District Attorney Michael Morrissey said. Dover is about 32km southwest of downtown Boston, the capital of Massachusetts. Teena and her husband,



who also went by Rick had previously run a now-defunct education systems company called EduNova. The district attorney, who described the "terrible tragedy" as a "domestic violence situation," said a gun was found near the husband's body. He declined to say whether all three family members were shot dead — and by whom, the New

York Post reported. Morrissey said he was waiting for the medical examiner's ruling, which was expected soon, before deciding whether to refer to the incident as a murder-suicide. The couple appeared to have faced financial problems in recent years, records show. The family's sprawling mansion — estimated to be worth

\$5.45 million — went into foreclosure a year ago and was sold to the Massachusetts-based Wilsondale Associates LLC for \$3 million, according to The Post. The Kamals had purchased the 19,000-square-foot estate — which boasts 11 bedrooms — for \$4 million in 2019, according to the records.

Their company was launched in 2016 but was dissolved in Dec 2021. Teena was listed on EduNova's website as the chief operating officer of the company, describing her as an alum of Harvard University and Delhi University.

2 UP teens rape minor, share video on social media

MUZAFFARNAGAR: Two teenagers -- both around 17 years old -- were arrested and sent to a juvenile home after they raped a 12-year-old girl and filmed the crime on their mobile and later uploaded it on the Internet, police in Hathras said. Sikandra Rao SHO, Ashish Kumar, said, "The girl's family registered an FIR after they found a video clip of the crime which took place at Purdilnagar in Hathras district on December 5. A case under IPC section 376-DB (gangrape of a woman under 12 years of age), IT and Pocsos acts were registered against two accused. Probe is on and action will be taken accordingly." (The victim's identity has not been revealed to protect her privacy as per Supreme court directives on cases related to sexual assault).



QR code fraud targets devotees ahead of Ram Temple consecration event

NEW DELHI: In the lead-up to the much-anticipated consecration ceremony for the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, a fraudulent scheme exploiting devotees on the pretext of seeking donations has emerged. The Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) has issued a grave warning, exposing a cyber-criminal network circulating social media messages soliciting donations under the pretext of contributing to the temple's construction. The incorporation of QR codes enables criminals to swindle money through a simple scan-and-pay process. The scam came to light after reports of social media messages and phone calls urging individuals to donate to the temple. One recipient of such a call shared the number with VHP workers, leading to a revelation of the fraudsters' tactics. VHP spokesperson Vinod Bansal sounded the alarm, underscoring that the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, the trust responsible for overseeing the temple's construction, has not authorized any individual or group to collect funds on its behalf. The matter has been officially reported to the home ministry, with notifications sent to police authorities in Delhi and Uttar Pradesh. In a statement, Bansal expressed concern about the "ugly" attempts to exploit the auspicious occasion for fraudulent gains. He emphasized, "Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Nyas has not authorized anyone to collect funds. I have written to the home ministry, Uttar Pradesh DGP, and Delhi's Commissioner of Police, seeking strict action so that people do not fall prey to such frauds. People need to be careful too." He categorically stated, "This is an occasion for joy, we are sending out invitations. We will not accept any donation."

Kolkata woman looks for missing son for 9 years, finally brings home his silicone statue

KOLKATA: After nine years of despair, Gita Bhattacharjee, 64, hopes to find some solace this January 1 when she brings home her son Abhishek, albeit in the form of a silicone statue. Abhishek, then 28, had gone missing from their residence at Tollygunge in 2014 and has not been traced ever since. "I plan to keep the statue on the first floor, the room that Abhishek loved the most," said Bhattacharjee, who lives alone. Abhishek's statue has been dressed in a striped shirt and light blue trousers, both of which were tailored-made and delivered a week after he went missing. Her mother also made the statue wear Abhishek's wrist watch, which is still operational, and black leather shoes. Abhishek went missing on August 8, 2014, after he went out to buy milk early in the morning. "As per cops' advice, I visited correctional homes.

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Government building strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem: Rajnath

● "The country's defence exports has gone up from Rs 1,521 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 15,920 crore in 2022-23, which is an almost tenfold increase"



GUWAHATI: Defence minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday said keeping in mind the aspirations and capabilities of a New India, the country needs strategic autonomy and the government is developing a strong base of domestic defence industrial ecosystem to achieve that. He was speaking at the 21st convocation of Tezpur University (TU), a central varsity located near the Assam-Arunachal Pradesh border in northern Assam. Tezpur is an important Army base and the headquarters of the 4 Corps, which is responsible for the security of India's northern boundary with China in the Tawang sector. The defence minister

asked TU to put forth before the Centre its request to set up a centre for defence studies, proposed to be named after Ahom general Lachit Borphukan, on its premises in Tezpur. The central university started teaching soldiers, deployed along the LAC, to read and write Mandarin, including military terminologies, from 2023. Stating that the country's domestic defence production has touched Rs 1.08 lakh crore for the first time, Singh said India's defence sector is scaling new heights after the present government under PM Narendra

Modi set a mammoth target to make India self-reliant or 'atma nirbhar' in the defence sector. "We are the first such government, which has put restrictions on ourselves so far as import of arms and weapons is concerned," Singh said, reminding the gathering of the fifth positive indigenisation list under which 509 defence equipment will be produced in India by the people of the country. "In addition, we have also issued the fourth positive indigenisation list of defence PSUs, in which 4,666 items have been identified, which will now be manufac-

tured in our country," he said. The defence minister further highlighted that the total value of the country's defence exports has gone up from Rs 1,521 crore in 2016-17 to Rs 15,920 crore in 2022-23, which is an almost tenfold increase. Singh said the present government's approach in tackling any situation that may emerge in the country has replaced the crisis of credibility with a culture of confidence. "India is no longer tolerant of the 'let-it-be' approach. Today, under PM Modi, New India believes in the 'let's-do-it' approach," he said.

Achieved 95% conviction rate, arrested 625 accused in '23: NIA

NEW DELHI: As many as 43 suspects were identified in cases related to vandalism on Indian high commissions in UK, US and Canada, thanks to the National Investigation Agency's (NIA) efforts at crowd-sourcing of information. Also, as part of its stepped up investigations into these cases in recent months, the agency carried out more than 50 raids and searches and examined 80 people in India for alleged links to the conspiracy behind the attacks. Sharing this update as



part of a year-end review, the NIA said it has scored an overall conviction rate of 94.7%, arrested 625 accused and ensured the attachment of 240 assets, including 156 bank accounts, all worth around Rs 56 crore, in 2023 as part of an intensified and focused fight

against terrorists, gangsters, drug smugglers, human traffickers and other criminals working against national interests. The NIA said its scaled-up operations across India in 2023 saw a 28% rise in arrests from 490 in 2022 to 625 this year. While 65 accused were

arrested this year in ISIS cases, 114 were arrested for jihadi terror cases, 45 in human trafficking cases, 28 for terroring and organised criminal activity and 76 in Left-wing Extremism-related (LWE) cases. The agency registered 68 cases in 2023, including 18 related to jihadi terror across multiple states, three related to J&K, 12 related to LWE, seven involving terrorism and organised crimes in Punjab, five cases concerning the north-east region and two related to fake Indian currency notes.

Unescorted 2-year-old adds to 'donkey flight' mystery

AHMEDABAD: Amidst the unfolding saga of the "donkey flight" grounded in France, one passenger stands out — a two-year-old boy from Gujarat who was onboard as an unaccompanied minor. However, he is now untraceable.

Gujarat police have launched an investigation to locate the child, identify his parents or guardians, and unravel whether he was part of a complex plan orchestrated by human smugglers, possibly facing a fate similar to the many children abandoned on

the US-Canada border. A Gujarat police CID officer said: "We have been trying to locate the child and his parents or guardians as many families have left their homes in north Gujarat." The flight to Nicaragua, carrying 303 passengers, including

96 from Gujarat, was grounded by French authorities in Vetry on December 21 over suspicions of human smuggling. A subsequent court order on December 24 released passengers, with only 276, including 72 from Gujarat.

Thane police busts rave party, detains two hosts, 100 young guests



THANE: The Thane police busted a rave party being held along an isolated stretch of the Kasarwadavli creekside in the wee hours of Sunday and detained nearly 100 young guests from across the metropolitan region including two local hosts, chief minister Eknath Shinde informed.

Shinde informed the media Sunday morning that the Thane police were tipped off about the party by informants following which they kept vigil at the spot and raided the spot.

"Our government has been taking continuous action on such activities. I have already ordered the authorities to demolish all units that indulge in the sale of drugs and take strict action on those selling these contraband," Shinde said. Meanwhile, Thane deputy commissioner of police, crime, Shivraj Patil said the hosts had posted an invite online on social media which instantly attracted the youngsters who are likely to be hailing from various parts of the metropolitan region including Mumbai, Navi Mumbai, Thane, Mira-Bhayender among others, police said.

"The police commissioner issued directions to keep vigil on possible rave parties New Year eve following which we were tipped off by a reliable source. We raided the rave party going along the isolated creekside in the Kasarwadavli area and detained 95 people, including five women, who had allegedly consumed drugs and intoxicants at the illegally organised party," he said.

India will develop only if we discharge our duties honestly: CM Yogi

Lucknow Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath emphasized that the development of India hinges on the honest fulfillment of one's duties. He also administered the pledge of 'Panch Pran' to the people and said that for a better India, "we will have to get rid of the mentality of slavery, develop India, be proud of the heritage, work with unity and



integrity, and have a sense of civic duty." CM Yogi participated in the Vikas Bharat Yatra along with BJP President JP Nadda on Sunday. In this yatra organized on Ring Road, Buddheshwar, he distributed certificates to the beneficiaries of various schemes of the Central and State

Government. CM Yogi remarked that over the past nine and a half years, under the leadership of Prime Minister Modi, we have observed the emergence of a new India, where comprehensive facilities are being offered to every citizen.

"Prime Minister Modi provided free housing facilities to 4 crore poor people in just nine and a half years.

Fast-shrinking Chor Bazaar fights to keep edge in e-age

MUMBAI: Almost everything that Haji Ebrahim Record Shop stocks has lost relevance. Or it is just worth a decorative piece in homes where "antiques" are still valued. Be it a gramophone, an old typewriter, rotary dial telephones or long-playing (LP) records, they all are past their prime. And



it is essentially vintage quality of the merchandise available at Chor Bazaar spanning a few dusty labyrinthine streets near Bhendi Bazaar

in South Mumbai that has earned the neighbourhood its fame.

However, some famous streets at Chor Bazaar are complete a misnomer.

Rahul ordinary MP, should not be highlighted much: Diggy bro

BHOPAL: Former Congress MP Lakshman Singh has said Rahul Gandhi is an ordinary party worker and parliamentarian.

Check B737 MAX for loose rudder nut, Boeing tells airlines

NEW DELHI: US aerospace major Boeing has asked operators of Boeing 737 MAX globally — which in India include Air India

Express, SpiceJet and Akasa — to carry out safety checks on this aircraft after finding a loose bolt in one of the planes.

BJP IT cell duo among 3 held for IIT-BHU girl's gang rape

VARANASI: Two members of BJP's IT cell in Varanasi were among three people arrested late Saturday and identified as the alleged perpetrators

of the November 2 gangrape of a 20-year-old B.Tech student of IIT-BHU on campus. The three young men have confessed to the crime.

आप सभी स्नेही जन को नव वर्ष 2024 की आत्मीय बधाई व शुभकामनाएं।

प्रभु श्रीराम की कृपा से यह वर्ष आप सभी के जीवन में अपार उमंग, आरोग्य और उन्नति लेकर आयें।
प्रभु श्रीराम जी का आशीर्वाद आप सभी पर सदैव बना रहे।

विनय कुमार
पूर्व क्षेत्र पंचायत सदस्य मेजा

योगेश शुक्ल

पूर्व राष्ट्रीय सह संयोजक भाजपा पंचायत एवं वैदिक प्रकोष्ठ
पूर्व सदस्य राष्ट्रीय युवा आयोग भारत सरकार

Editorial

BJP rolls out the Ayodhya welcome mat. Opposition walks into the boycott trap

The Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust's invitations to leaders of political parties for the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on 22 January have caught the Opposition in a severe bind. While parties, especially the Congress, struggle to craft a response, the BJP is having a field day, with leaders mocking the confusion among the Opposition ranks. The issue, which will likely occupy the centre stage of the BJP's 2024 campaign, is turning into a political quagmire. The Communist Party of India (Marxist) has already declined the invitation, asserting that "religion is a personal choice not to be converted into an instrument for political gain". Nripendra Mishra, the temple construction committee chief and former principal secretary to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, personally delivered the invitation to the CPI(M) general secretary Sitaram Yechury on 23 December. Three days later, the CPI(M) released a statement. "It is most unfortunate that the BJP and RSS have converted a religious ceremony into a State sponsored event directly involving the Prime Minister, the UP Chief Minister and other government functionaries," it said. It may have been easier for the CPI(M) to do so, for parties like the Congress, which has a significant presence in the heartland states where Ram Mandir is an intensely emotive issue, responding to the invitation is a tightrope walk. The trust, set up by the Centre to build and manage the temple, has invited Congress leaders, including president Mallikarjun Kharge, parliamentary party chairperson Sonia Gandhi, and the party's Lok Sabha leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury to the ceremony. That's why the politics over the Ram Mandir invitations is ThePrint's Newsmaker of the Week. Political researcher Asim Ali suggests that the Congress is essentially caught between "two axes"—balancing regional considerations and its evolving caste agenda vis-a-vis its traditional 'soft' Hindu nationalist moorings. "If the Congress takes a conciliatory stand, the CPI(M) might make a play for their Muslim votes in Kerala. The Congress needs to maximise its seats in Kerala again to hope to reach the three digit mark in Lok Sabha. At the same time, taking an opposing stand might hurt it in the Hindi belt. The fact that Muslim voters in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, according to Ali, moved away from the Congress in the late '80s and early '90s due to the party's "strategic ambiguity" on Hindutva must also be weighing on the mind of its leadership. As Prime Minister, Rajiv Gandhi had allowed the opening of the locks of the Ram Janmabhoomi-Babri Masjid site and had later permitted the laying of the temple's foundation stone as well. During the recent Madhya Pradesh assembly election, Congress' chief ministerial hopeful Kamal Nath also sought to claim ownership of the Ram temple movement, reminding people, in one of his campaign speeches, of Rajiv Gandhi's role in opening the locks placed by the Nehru government in 1949 after idols of Ram appeared overnight at the site. "So does the Congress opt for a clean break now or continue a policy of strategic ambiguity, drawing clear lines of opposition between a 'progressive' caste agenda and a 'regressive' Hindu nationalist agenda?"

It will be keenly watched," Ali said. On Friday, the Congress leadership's dilemma was reflected in Thiruvananthapuram MP Shashi Tharoor's decision not to attend the inauguration ceremony. He said that while the invitees should be "left free to make a personal choice", by turning it down they run the risk of being described as anti-Hindu. And in the event of them going, they will be blamed for "playing into the BJP's hands", Tharoor said.

After 2 yrs of Ukraine war, Putin is confident he will be president again

As twilight falls in 2023, the uncertainty of the global situation has never been more heightened. The world is grappling with two raging wars with heartrending casualties along with compounding crises amid a bleak global economic outlook. Russia's war in Ukraine has had the world divided and ushered in fundamental transformations in the global order. The question is: Where is the war going two years after its start? The leaders of the two countries, one fighting for influence and the other for survival, Russian President Vladimir

Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart Volodymyr Zelenskyy recently held pressers in quick succession. They unveiled the larger geostrategic logic that's driving the neighbours to bet their whole agency for this war. While Russia's rationale is rooted in irredentism, Ukraine's is rooted in international law. There is no denying that the West's resolve to support Ukraine for as "long as it takes" has now been diluted due to the shift in global attention to the Israel-Hamas war, looming elections in the United States, and the unmissable subtext of

declining public sympathy for the aggression against Kyiv. It is evident in the blockade of aid packages for Ukraine in the European Union (EU) and the US with oodles of realpolitik negotiations being played out every day behind closed doors. It will take a while, but aid is likely to be released from both the US and EU. Ukrainian armed forces chief General Valerii Zaluzhnyi himself acknowledged the counteroffensive to have reached a "positional form". To move forward from this point, Ukraine will need air superiority (F16s), anti-mining

capabilities, more drones, electronic warfare, and reserves — in time. The most stunning jolts to Russia in this war, a far superior adversary to Ukraine, has come from Kyiv's ability to launch repeated attacks on the Black Sea where Moscow was expected to have naval superiority. But Kyiv's attacks on the Russian navy penetrating layers of air defences were startling. From destroying the missile cruiser Moskva and landing ship Novocherkassk to damaging other submarines, Ukraine has wielded an asymmetric advantage.

Why is the Sports Ministry's action late on the wrestling association?



K P Malik

The suspension of Sanjay Singh, close to BJP MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, from the post of President of Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) is not being digested. He wants to talk to Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Sports Minister Anurag Thakur regarding his dismissal. On December 21 itself, in the results of the Indian Wrestling Federation elections, former president of the association Sanjay Singh was elected the president of the association. In the previous body of WFI, when Brij Bhushan was the President, Sanjay Singh was holding the post of Joint Secretary and in fact, on the statement of Sakshi Malik that the President is always a person like Brij Bhushan, who was at the behest of Brij Bhushan Singh to work for him. The allegations were in favor. After being elected President, Sanjay Singh, speaking exactly the language of Braj Bhushan,

said that those who want to wrestle, are wrestling and those who want to do politics, should do politics. But now that the post of President has been snatched away from his hands, his irritation is clearly visible. In fact, after the women wrestlers did not get justice, once there was anger among the wrestlers about harassing Sakshi Malik and then in protest against this, Deaf Olympics gold medalist wrestler Virendra Singh had announced to return the Padma Shri award, Bajrang Punia Had returned his Padmashree. Earlier, Sakshi Malik protested against being elected as the President of the Wrestling Federation and announced her retirement from wrestling, which heated up the politics and ultimately the Sports Ministry had to take action against the President of the Wrestling Federation in the matter of women wrestlers. Is an ally. Is his business partner. If he stays in this federation, I will give up my wrestling. After today, I will never see you there. People from all over the country started reacting to this and the government had to quickly give up its stubbornness and remove Brij Bhushan Singh's associate Sanjay Singh from the post of President of the Indian Wrestling Federation. Before announcing the return of Padmashree, wrestler

Virendra Singh had also posted an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on social media platform X, in which he had written that Brij Bhushan Singh has once again won the wrestling association elections. , while the Home Minister had assured that he would oust Brij Bhushan and his close ones. After the election results, Brij Bhushan Singh gave a statement that there is dominance and there will be dominance. Under pressure from this, Sakshi, the only Olympic winning female wrestler, retired. I will also return the Padmashree for my sister and the country's daughter. Honorable Prime Minister, I am proud of your daughter and my sister Sakshi Malik. However, the issue of physical abuse of the country's daughters and international female players came to the fore in front of the entire country and the world when on January 18, 2023, Vinesh Phogat, Sakshi Many big wrestlers including Malik and Bajrang Punia sat at Jantar Mantar in Delhi. But in this fight, our wrestler daughters lost and Brij Bhushan Singh, who was guilty of physical abuse, won, which not only broke the morale of the women wrestlers but also made Brij Bhushan Singh's heart bigger. The wrestling association also fully defended Brijbhushan Singh. After the order of the Supreme

Court, Delhi Police somehow registered a report against Brij Bhushan Singh, but started making noise in the investigation. After this, when the Supreme Court ordered the police to submit the investigation report, Brij Bhushan Singh was found guilty and a case was registered against him under POCSO. Although POCSO is such a section under which the culprit is directly arrested, the big question still remains that why has the police not arrested Brij Bhushan Singh till date? Even during the election process and results of the wrestling association, the Sports Ministry of the Modi government was sleeping like Kumbhakarni. However, now the Sports Ministry has woken up a bit, obviously the compulsion of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections is clearly visible behind it. BJP sees this issue increasing. Sensing the urgency of the occasion, Priyanka Gandhi reached Sakshi Malik's house with Congress MP Deepender Hooda and she met female wrestlers Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia and encouraged them. Secondly, BJP does not want to anger its large number of Jat community voters in the Hindi belt in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections and also wants to keep its MP Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and his community in the thrall.

In fact, BJP is in a dilemma due to the coming together of all the opposition parties and in such a situation, it cannot commit the mistake of being negligent, hence it is considering every vote as necessary. Under that, she is preparing her political strategy. Obviously, after the attempt to save Lakhimpur Kheri accused Ajay Mishra and his convicted son Ashish Mishra in the farmers' movement, this is the second big case in which all the leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party, especially the Center itself, are trying to protect one of their leaders. The Modi government remained engaged. In this dispute that has been going on for the last 11 months, now a small action has been taken by the government. However, for the first time, happiness has been seen on the face of Sakshi Malik's mother Krishna Malik due to this decision of the Sports Ministry, but she is still hopeful of justice in the injustice done to her daughter and other wrestler daughters. But the thing to be seen is that in the previous body of WFI, when Brij Bhushan was the President, Sanjay Singh was holding the post of Joint Secretary and he was accused of working in favor of Brij Bhushan Singh at his behest. And the surprising thing is how I stay out of the wrestling federation.

How IUML is threatening Congress to toe Islamist line while hailing Communists for their stand

Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections next year, both Congress and the communists seem to be competing to woo the Islamic extremist outfit, the Indian Union Muslim League (IUML), in Kerala. IUML, an off-shoot of Jinnah's Muslim League, has significant influence in several seats in Kerala and both CPI(M) and Congress are competing with each other to ensure that IUML supports them in 2024. The IUML, on its part, is now using its position to ensure that both parties take more hardline Islamist positions in exchange for their support in elections. With the Ram Mandir consecration ceremony scheduled for 22nd January, IUML is now threatening Congress to toe its line entirely in exchange for

their support. Muslim outfit Samastha, closely associated with IUML, has now slammed Congress for its 'non-committal' stand on attending the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya. In an editorial in its mouthpiece Suprabhaatham, the Samastha Kerala Jamiyyathul Ulama (SAMASTHA) said: "The Congress stand that the party can attend the ceremony is only meant to prevent depletion of Hindu votes in North India. It is the soft Hindutva approach of the Congress that has taken the party, which ruled the country for 36 years, to the present situation."

Asking Congress to review its stand, Samastha threatened Congress saying that if

they remain non-committed, BJP would win Lok Sabha in 2024 — essentially saying that if Congress does not explicitly state that they will not attend the Pran Pratishtha like CPI(M), they would alienate their Muslim vote bank in Kerala. Samastha, it is to be noted, is seen as the backbone of IUML and is an influential Muslim body in Kerala with several prominent clerics and Imams being a part of it. While Samastha has threatened Congress, IUML has come out against the party as well. IUML state general secretary P M A Salam said: "Before every election, it has been the practice of BJP to whip up communal sentiments. In the past, there has been communal violence.

Rush of FIRs reveal tip of immigration racket iceberg

When Indravadan Patel first heard of a plane full of Indians being detained at an airport in France over human trafficking fears, he called a travel agency he had been in touch with to take his son to the US. The travel agents had charted a similar plan for his son's entry into the country — Dubai first, then a brief stop in Europe, before the US — and they had taken ₹25 lakh as advance. Now, the phone went unanswered, and the Ahmedabad office Patel had visited was shut. Patel is one of hundreds of people who have been contacted by a syndicate that helped Indians enter the US and Canada illegally and on forged documentation, Gujarat police officers told HT, confirming at least 17 FIRs had been filed across the state since the December 22 grounding of an Airbus A340 in Vatry, France blew the lid off such operations. The ring charged each person between ₹70 lakh and ₹80 lakh, investigators said, sharing the first details of what is yet another "donkey route" immigration racket. Two people, who were among a web of at least 50 travel agents and touts based in India, were arrested by the Crime Investigation Department (CID) of the state police. The two men arrested were part of a vast operation involving people across multiple cities, towns and villages," a CID offi-

cial said on condition of anonymity, identifying the suspects as Kunal Vriya and Sahil. "They used to forge bank statements and other documents to help people secure visas and obtain passports," this person added. Last week, the Airbus jet operated by Legend Airways was allowed to return with the Indian passengers after French authorities questioned them for four days. Among the 303 originally on board, 276 returned, with the rest having sought asylum in France and a handful of others being detained over what French police say is a human trafficking investigation. While Patel's son was not on the plane, he was in the batch that was due to leave by the end of the month, he told police in his complaint, which is the basis of one of 17 FIRs filed across Ahmedabad, Anand, Mehsana, Gandhinagar, and Patan. When Patel heard about the illegal immigration network and the plane's grounding in France, he tried to contact his agent but his number was switched off.

He went to the travel agent's office and found them absconding," this person added. To be sure, the FIRs did not directly reference the Nicaragua-bound flight that was stopped in France but officials aware of the matter said they pertained to the same syndicate. One of the 17 FIRs names 47-

year-old Dineshbhai Baldaniya, owner of Lakshmi Overseas Consultancy in Ahmedabad, accusing him of forging documents like SSC mark-sheets, appointment letter, promotion letter and work experience certificate in the name of Gordhara Infotech to get visas. The FIR is based on a complaint by an officer of the CID, who stated that the department received information about the illegal operations and raided Baldaniya's offices, from where it found a file titled 'Recent Canada Visa 2023', seven laptops, three mobile phones, five hard drives, two computers and essential documents, including the passports of eight people.

The police showed the documents to Gordhara Infotech, which said it did not know of the people referred to in them, the complaint added. The FIR also states the accused has a network, naming the others as Bindesh Rameshbhai Sharma, Ganesh Kumar Pravinbhai, Leena Ramanbhai Arya, and Manojbhai Karan Giri Goswami. During police questioning, the two suspects shared details of how the network worked — it penetrated deep into villages, where touts would seek out people interested in sending family members to the US and Canada.

Lalan of JD(U) steps down as party president, and Nitish Kumar assumes the role

According to JD(U) state president Umesh Kushwaha, Kumar was asked to assume the party's leadership by the national executive for the benefit of both the party and the country as a whole



Delhi: Following the resignation of Member of Parliament Rajiv Ranjan Singh, also known as Lalan, amid allegations of a rift, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was designated the Janata Dal (United), or JD(U), national president. This put an end to days of speculation over Singh's continued posi-

tion. In his inaugural address, Singh made the announcement at the party's national executive gathering in New Delhi. Prior to stepping down from the position in 2020, Kumar succeeded Sharad Yadav as the party chief in 2016. In 2020, RCP Singh, a former Union minister who left the party last year,

was elected national president of JD(U). According to JD(U) state president Umesh Kushwaha, Kumar was asked to assume the party's leadership by the national executive for the benefit of both the party and the country as a whole. It was a consensus request, he continued. Minister for

Bihar Vijay Kumar Chowdhary claimed that Singh had requested to be removed from office and that the chief minister should take over, citing his candidacy in the 2024 national elections. "Between the two, there was no resentment. Following weeks of rumors that Kumar

was not pleased with Singh for not "coordinating effectively" with the opposition Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) to secure a larger role for the chief minister at the national level prior to the 2024 elections, Singh announced his resignation. Reports that Kumar was dissatisfied with Mallikarjun Kharge, the head of the Congress, being projected as the opposition group's nominee for prime minister fueled the rumors. Singh insisted he would not resign and denied rumors of a split. "Our party's leader is Nitish Kumar. JD(U) is unified and will not change. I refuse to step

Shah has one billion Instagram followers—second only to Modi.

"Shah's popularity has increased since he was credited with orchestrating Modi's win in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, but it experienced a significant surge following the BJP's even more significant victory in 2019"



Delhi: The number of followers on Home Minister Amit Shah's Instagram account has surpassed 10 million, or one crore. Shah experienced a sharp increase in support after many historic bills, including three that completely rewrote the criminal justice system, were passed by Parliament. According to social media pundits, the recent talk about his skill in guiding seven historic laws through both Houses during an intense fracas caused

by the opposition was largely responsible for his rising popularity on social media. The minister has 34.1 million X, 10.7 million Instagram, and 15 million Facebook followers, according to the most recent data. For a while now, Shah has been the second most followed political figure in India, right after Prime Minister Narendra Modi. With 10.7 million Instagram followers, the minister is second only to Modi, who has 82.7 million followers. Modi has 48 million Facebook fol-

lowers, compared to 15 million for Shah. Shah's social media following is significantly smaller than that of opposition heavyweights like Rahul Gandhi, Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, and Congress man Mallikarjun Kharge. Kharge is far behind, with 1.3 lakh Facebook fans and 5.6 lakh X followers. Kejriwal has 9.2 million Facebook fans, 1.7 million Instagram followers, and 27.3 million X followers. Rahul has 5.1 million Instagram followers, 6.8 million Facebook fans, and 24.7 million X followers. Shah's popularity has increased since he was credited with orchestrating Modi's win in the 2014 Lok Sabha elections, but it experienced a significant surge following the BJP's even more significant victory in 2019 when he was president.

Rs 85,000 crore renovation is planned for Ayodhya over a ten-year period.

"The vision encompasses the identification of infrastructure and tourism development within the 875 sq km Ayodhya Development Authority Area"



redevelopment in accordance with Master Plan 2031, requiring an expenditure of more than Rs 85,000 crore. This will improve the holy city to accommodate the requisite 3 lakh daily foot traffic. A distinct new township covering 1,200 acres is part of the proposal; it would

be created over the course of the next five years at a cost of over Rs 2,200 crore. The greenfield township will have its foundation stone laid by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. According to sources, the plan was created with the understanding that, following the dedication of the Ram Temple, the city is expected to grow into a popular tourist destination with an emphasis on spirituality, cultural heritage, and events.

Jharkhand reduces the retirement age of Dalits and Tribals to 50 years



Delhi: Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren declared that the state's old-age pension eligibility threshold for SCS, STs, and OBCS will soon be lowered from 60 to 50 years old by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha-led government. "Older citizens in neighboring states like Bihar, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, and Bengal receive pensions ranging from Rs 250 to Rs 300 per month. But we are awarding one thousand rupees. The JMM leader stated, "At an event in Ranchi to mark four years of the Grand Alliance government, we are going a step further and reducing the age limit to 50 years for Adivasi and Dalit beneficiaries." Approximately 36 lakh people are currently covered under the state's universal monthly pension system for senior citizens, people with dis-

abilities, single women, widows, and abandoned women. In addition to launching infrastructure projects worth Rs 4,500 crore, Soren also gave letters to trained graduate teachers, lab technicians, and more than 300 workers from the health department on this special occasion. The chief minister declared, "We are giving government jobs to nearly 7,000 beneficiaries today." Soren also disclosed plans to hire cooks at universities and colleges in the rural areas of the state. "Our kids who live in remote places have to prepare their own food and transport it to universities. They forfeit important study time. In order to relieve them of the burden of preparing meals at their institutions, we will now be employing cooks, the CM stated.

The airport in Ayodhya will have Valmiki's name

New Delhi: The recently constructed Ayodhya airport, to be known as Maharishi Valmiki International Airport, Ayodhyadham, is prepared for its commercial opening. Officials from the government attested to the airport at the holy town being named after the epic writer Valmiki, who wrote "Ramayan." Prior to the January 22 consecration ceremony at the Ram Temple, Prime Minister Narendra Modi will reveal the airport. The decision has been made by the administration to rename the train station as Ayodhya Dham. During his all-day visit to the holy town, which is being prepared for the consecration event, the PM will also open the renovated station.

The BJP releases the song "Modi ki guarantee," which goes viral online

New Delhi: A theme song highlighting the historic achievements of the Modi government over the last year was released by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), while the Congress sounded the poll bugle for the Lok Sabha elections of 2024 with its "Hai Taiyar Hum" rally in Nagpur. The song that BJP's official X (previously Twitter) published has

gone viral online. The song has received about one lakh views in just a few hours after its release and is stirring up a lot of discussion. The song, which revolves around Prime Minister Narendra Modi's catchphrase "Modi Ki guarantee," not only expresses the public's love for their cherished leader but also captures several historic moments like Chandrayaan and PM

Modi's Tejas sortie. PM Modi initially used the phrase "Modi ki guarantee" while he was running for state assembly in five different states. The saffron party captured Chhattisgarh from the Congress and won massive victories in Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan by capitalizing on PM Modi's popularity. Music director Anand Raj Anand wrote, recorded.

Sena (UBT) and Congress argue over Maharashtra Lok Sabha seats

Delhi: Shiv Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that Sena (UBT) was the top party in the state, sparking a dispute between the Congress and Sena (UBT) even as the seat-sharing arrangement for the Lok Sabha elections in the MVA remains unclear. According to Raut, the public fully supports NCP leader Sharad Pawar and the Shiv Sena. According to Raut, there is no dispute among MVA on seat sharing, but Sena (UBT) has always fought over 23 seats. According to Raut, Sena (UBT) and Congress leaders were holding fruitful discussions about seat-sharing in New Delhi. Sanjay



Nirupam, a former Congress MP, had contested the UBT's claim to 23 seats. "Twenty-three seats are allegedly theirs. Where will we go if they (Sena UBT) occupy every seat? Nobody is aware of Sena's (UBT) current vote total, according to Nirupam, who also stated that Sena won't even be able to win a single seat

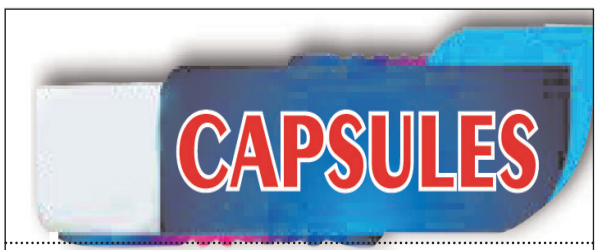
I'm Hindu, and Hindutva Is Hindutva," Siddaramaiah Responds to the BJP

Delhi: When Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah asserted that there was a distinction between the Hindu religion and the Hindutva ideology, he incited controversy. He said, "Soft' Hindutva?" while speaking at a Congress gathering in Bengaluru. "Soft Hindutva" is perceived as a political tactic to win over moderate Hindu voters without alienating members of minority populations. "What does soft' and 'hard' Hindutva mean? Hinduism is what it is. I follow Hinduism. Hinduism is distinct, as is Hindutva. We worship Ram, don't we? Are they the only ones, the BJP? Have we not constructed Ram Mandirs? Don't we perform Ram Bhajans? Bhajans are performed throughout the final week of December. It's a tradition in our village that I used to follow. This is also a common practice in other villages. Are



they the only ones, the BJP? "Aren't we Hindus?" Ashwath Narayan, the CN of the BJP, retaliated quickly, claiming that Siddaramaiah and the Congress "never had any clarity of issues with regard to Bharat or Hindutva" and "charge[ing] them with playbook politics." Congress has always engaged in polarizing politics and disregards the rule of law. Why delve into these matters of religion? He insisted, "They

have no moral right to discuss Hindutva. The remarks were similar to what the Chief Minister of Karnataka said in February while serving as the Leader of the Opposition. "Hindutva is against the Constitution," he declared at the time. Hindu dharma is distinct from Hindutva. I'm a Hindu, therefore I'm not against the faith, but I disagree with Manuvad and Hindutva." "No religion supports murder... but Hindutva supports murder and discrimination." He said that he is a Hindu but is against Hindutva in January as well. He added that although he had never been against the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, he was against its being used for political advantage. It is noteworthy that Mr. Siddaramaiah made similar remarks this week as well because the Ram Temple in Ayodhya will be dedicated on January 22,



Centre to sell subsidised essentials under the Bharat brand ahead of the Lok Sabha elections



Delhi: In an effort to increase supplies, the government is also thinking about subsidizing rice and limiting the quantity of grain dealers can keep on hand. According to a person familiar with the development, the Union government intends to increase the production and sales of staple foods for the general public in the run-up to the general elections next year, including its subsidised brands of wheat flour and lentils, Bharat Atta and Bharat Dal. It also intends to increase the amount of state-owned cereals that are put on the open market in an effort to lower food prices. The government's Bharat Atta brand, which is sold in cooperative stores all throughout the nation, would receive nearly 400,000 tonnes of extra wheat thanks to the approval of an inter ministerial body for managing inflation. According to the aforementioned source, the interministerial group has also approved the release of an extra 2.5 million tonnes of wheat for its open-market sales auctions in an effort to lower prices. In order to increase supplies, the government may limit how much grain dealers may have on hand at any given moment or offer a subsidy to all customers via cooperative stores for rice, the third staple. The guy stated that both approaches are being thought about. According to official figures, consumer prices surged by 5.55% in November, primarily due to increases in food products, ending a three-month downward trend. While prices for pulses, a major source of protein for most Indians, increased by 20.23%, cereal prices remained in the double digits at 10.27%. Because impoverished households often spend a bigger portion of their monthly income on food, they are impacted more by higher food inflation than wealthy households. All consumer classes can purchase the packaged wheat flour brand that the Union government introduced last month. In addition, the National Food Security Act provides over 800 million qualified beneficiaries with free 5 kg of cereal per month. Under the Bharat Atta plan, Kendriya Bhandar, a network of state-owned cooperative general stores, the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (NAFED), and the National Cooperative Consumers' Federation (NCCF).

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

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



accounts guy has to know...why should a woman's menstrual cycle be known to the employer. Imagine if it's a single woman...who chooses not to take those leaves that she is supposed to be granted. Can you imagine the harassment that women will have to

face...Imagine a floor with 20,000 women...we are creating new barriers for discriminating against women," Smriti Irani said. Irani, however, noted that such leaves are "part of the law, but it is only under the context of medical leaves". She said,

"Under the Occupational safety and health standard rules of 2020, a medical leave is already provided for". Irani went on to respond to the critics who said some women have to suffer severe pain during the menstrual cycle. She said, "If you look at

challenge with regard to severe pain, it's an indication of hormonal and chemical imbalance or (it has) a genetic inclination to it...which means you need a doctor immediately...you can't self-medicate, specially when you are above the age of 25. "The minister had said, "As a menstruating woman, menstruation and the menstruation cycle is not a handicap, it's a natural part of women's life journey...We should not propose issues where women are denied equal opportunities just because somebody who does not menstruate has a particular viewpoint towards menstruation".

Cash-strapped Himachal's debt rises to Rs 81,045 crore

Delhi : Cash-strapped the Congress government in Himachal Pradesh has raised a loan of Rs 12,912 crore to meet its development needs in 2022-23. The total debt burden on the state has been Rs 81,045 crore till March 31, 2023, the Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) said. The CAG report tabled by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on the last day of the Assembly session said that on April 1, 2022 -- the total debt was Rs



68,133.72 crore. It said that the state government has not constituted a sinking fund for loans raised by it in the open market. Loans out of the collection in the "small savings scheme" and "public provident fund" in the post offices are being shared between the Central

governments in the ratio of 3:1. A separate fund vis-a-vis national small savings fund was created in 1999-2000 for the purpose of releasing loans out of small savings collections.

During 2022-23, repayment of Rs 569.10 crore was made.

The balance outstanding at the end of the year was Rs 3,820.66 crore which was 6.83 percent of the total internal debt of the state as on March 31, 2023.

Gujarat Congress MP slams alcohol ban exemption order

Delhi : Congress MP from Gujarat, Shaktisinh Gohil has slammed the state government after it issued an order exempting employees, officials, and visitors in Gift City from the alcohol ban. In a video message posted on his official X account, Gohil said the order will have a negative impact on the state of Gujarat. "In Gandhinagar's Gift City,



the alcohol ban is being lifted, and it's been decided to remove the prohibition. Now people will consume it, and it will impact Gujarat in a negative way," the

Congress MP said. "No idea what kind of profit the Gujarat government is seeing in this," Gohil could be heard saying in the video. The Gujarat government allowed the consumption of alcohol at hotels, restaurants and clubs offering "wine and dine" service in Gujarat International Finance Tec-City (GIFT City) in the Gandhinagar district.

Delhi Congress launches crowdfunding drive



Delhi : The Delhi Pradesh Congress Committee inaugurated the Congress' crowdfunding initiative. It was marked by a contribution of Rs 1,38,000 from All-India Congress Committee (AICC) treasurer and former Union Minister Ajay Maken. The campaign has been launched to coincide with the 138th year of the Congress' formation.

The online initiative was deemed 'historic' by DPCC president Arvinder Singh Lovely who emphasised its dual purpose of fundraising and fostering direct connection between Congress workers and citizens at the grassroots level. Lovely stressed the transparent nature of the campaign, emphasising that contributions were voluntary and aimed at linking the party with the senti-

ments of the common man. He pledged Rs 1,38,000 as his personal contribution. In his address, Maken lauded Delhi's support for party programmes and expressed confidence that the crowd-funding initiative would set new records. Congress workers would embark on a door-to-door campaign across the capital to formally launch the initiative. Party leader Mukesh Sharma rallied Congress workers, asserting their collective responsibility to popularise the campaign. He said a formidable workforce of 1,37,600, comprising block presidents, former MLAs, district presidents and Congress leaders would successfully implement the campaign. Sharma emphasised the campaign's pivotal role in shaping the narrative for Mission 2024.

Prashant Kishor to TDP's aid, meets Chandrababu Naidu

Pawan Kalyan, who is part of the BJP-led NDA, is still hopeful that BJP will also join the alliance to take on YSRCP



Delhi : Top electoral strategist and founder of the Indian Political Action Committee (I-PAC) Prashant Kishor arrived and met Telugu Desam Party (TDP) supremo N. Chandrababu Naidu amid reports that he will be helping the party for the coming elections for Andhra Pradesh Assembly. PK, as the political strategist is popularly known, arrived at Gannavaram Airport, Vijayawada along with TDP General Secretary Nara Lokesh in the same flight from Hyderabad. The duo later drove to Naidu's residence at Undavalli in

Amaravati where Prashant Kishor held talks with Naidu. In 2019, PK worked with YSR Congress Party (YSRCP). The party led by Y.S. Jagan Mohan Reddy had wrested power from TDP with a landslide majority. YSRCP had bagged 151 seats in the 175-member Assembly and also won 22 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats. Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh are due to be held along with the Lok Sabha polls in April-May next year. There have been speculations for the last few months that PK will help devise a strategy for TDP this time. The I-PAC founder was reportedly persuaded by Trinamool Congress

(TMC) chief and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee to help Chandrababu Naidu. The talks reportedly started in June 2021, after TMC's massive win in the West Bengal Assembly elections. Naidu's meeting with PK comes a couple of days after the massive public meeting in Vizianagaram district, where he shared dais with Jana Sena Party (JSP) leader and actor Pawan Kalyan. TDP and JSP have announced that they will have an alliance for the coming elections. Pawan Kalyan, who is part of the BJP-led NDA, is still hopeful that BJP will also join the alliance to take on YSRCP.

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

Delhi : Nearly two years after the then BJP government issued an order barring students from deviating from the dress code prescribed by managements of schools and colleges, and effectively proscribed wearing of hijab on campuses, Karnataka CM Siddaramaiah on Friday said he has directed authorities to reverse that directive. Making this announcement while addressing a gathering at Muslim-dominated Kavalande in Mysuru, the CM said choice of dress and food is personal and no one should interfere with it. His statement comes less than six months before the crucial Lok Sabha elections.

When the audience specifically asked him about restrictions on hijab in educational institutions, Siddaramaiah said, "There are no restrictions on wearing hijab.



Himachal BJP MLAs drop plea against appointment of Dy CM days after party names 6 deputies in 3 states



Delhi: After appointing half a dozen deputy Chief Ministers in Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh and Madhya Pradesh, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has withdrawn its petition challenging the appointment of a deputy CM in Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu-led Congress government in Himachal Pradesh. The BJP had questioned the deputy CM's appointment on the grounds that his oath violated constitutional provisions. The petitioners had also challenged the appointment of chief parliamentary secretaries. BJP MLAs, however, informed the court that they would not want to press the application against the appointment of deputy CM Mukesh Agnihotri, a five-term MLA from Haroli in Una district. Later, the petitioners withdrew the application.

The petitioners include former BJP state president and Una MLA Satpal Singh Satti, former speaker HP Vidhan Sabha and Sulah MLA Vipin Singh Parmar, Shri Naina Devi MLA Randhir Sharma, Churah MLA and former deputy speaker Hansraj. The move comes over a week after BJP appointed two deputy CMs each in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. One of the petitioners' advocates, Virbahadur Verma, said, "Our clients instructed us not to press the matter against deputy CM forward. As far as CPS is concerned, we have recorded."

Development projects worth Rs 19,150 crore unveiled for Kashi's holistic infrastructure transformation

Delhi : Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for multiple development projects in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh, valued at over Rs 19,150 crores. Key initiatives include the launch of the New Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay Nagar-New Bhaupur Dedicated Freight Corridor Project, Varanasi-New Delhi Vande Bharat Express train, and various railway projects. The Prime Minister flagged off the 10,000th locomotive produced by Banaras Locomotive Works and inaugurated the Shivpur-Phulwaria-Lahartara road and two Railway Over Bridges (ROBs).

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

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

Darbhanga, the special run between Ayodhya and Darbhanga is significant considering that the train has been designed for people who travel long distance in search of work, amplifying the government's thrust to make the life of poor better. The railways will decide the route for operating the second such train soon. Sources said the PM is also scheduled to flag off five more Vande Bharat trains virtually across the country, including on Delhi-Amritsar, Delhi-Katra, Jalna-Mumbai routes. Considering high demand of passengers, Delhi-Katra is getting a second,

No mention of Ladli Behna scheme in Madhya Pradesh governor's address

Delhi : Madhya Pradesh governor Mangubhai Patel listed the government's welfare and development schemes in his address to the 16th assembly, but one scheme was glaring in its absence—the Ladli Behna Yojana. The women-oriented scheme, launched by former chief minister Shivraj Singh Chouhan, is believed to have played a crucial role in BJP's massive victory in the 2023 assembly polls, propelling a 2% surge in women voting. This makes its apparent exclusion from the governor's address quite surprising. The scheme not only gives

Rs 1,250 each to over 1.3 crore women every month but it was expanded close to the polls to include housing and LPG benefits too. Senior Congress MLAs Ram Niwas Rawat and Bala Bachchan interrupted the governor's speech more than once on Wednesday to point out that Ladli Behna Yojana was missing from his address. CM Mohan Yadav, however, clarified outside the House later in the day that "schemes for women empowerment will not be affected or stopped".

Chouhan, who was on his way to Amarkantak, said that the Ladli Behna

scheme would continue. "There's misinformation afoot that it will be stopped," he said at Bareilly in Raisen. In his first press meet after being sworn in, chief minister Mohan Yadav had not responded to repeated queries on Ladli Behna Yojana. The Ladli Behna scheme costs Rs 19,000 crore a year at Rs 1,250 per month per beneficiary—a burden on the cash-strapped government. In the run-up to the elections, the then CM Chouhan had promised to gradually increase it to Rs 3,000 a month. If it happens, it would cost upwards of Rs 45,000 crore.

Defeats disappointing, says Sonia Gandhi, but tries to rally Congress

Delhi : Congress leader Sonia Gandhi termed the defeat in the recent assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan beyond disappointing, reminding the organization that the party is faced with "enormous challenges" and its task cut out for the Lok Sabha elections. However, she sought to infuse optimism by saying that the party should never forget the "insurmountable odds" that Congress leaders overcame to win the freedom for the country. We must channel our disappointment into a positive drive for the coming general elections," she said.

IITs are teaching English so that lectures aren't lost in translation

Delhi : When many of the fresh batch of students at IIT-Jammu did not perform well in exams, the faculty decided to have a pep talk with them. That is when they realised that many of the students, especially those from rural areas, were not proficient in English and were unable to even follow the lectures. The institute decided to hold a language proficiency exam, identified students who were weak in English, and started holding classes for them. Based on their proficiency levels, classes are divided into beginners, intermediate and advanced groups. Around 60% of the students were in the beginners group. While they will be taught basic grammar and conversational English, those in the advanced category will have English literature. This is an initiative we have just launched, and hope to see results soon," said Kannan Iyer, dean, academics.

When the IIT-Jammu dean discussed the issue at an IIT directors' forum at a conference - Pan-IIT World of Technology - there was a con-



sensus among his counterparts. Many of the directors and deans said they were taking extra measures to ensure a smooth transition for students on their respective campuses. The academicians feel the problem lies in the way stu-

dents are coached to crack JEE. "Unlike a regular school where the children are made to learn languages, the coaching centres merely concentrate on the ability to crack Physics, Chemistry and Maths problems," said KN

Satyanarayana, IIT-Tirupati director. IIT-Tirupati holds a two-credit compulsory language course in the first semester. Students who are not proficient in English in a test will have to choose English.

University Grants Commission says get-from-India foreign degrees not valid



Delhi : Hundreds of students studying over the past few years at a business school in Karjat have UK university degrees. The 5,000-mile separation or the fact that not a single student has ever boarded a plane to spend even an hour on the Wales campus, or no UK faculty has taught them for even half-a-credit course will never be known to prospective employers, who will know only about the foreign degree. Similarly, a Bengaluru college offers academic path-

ways to students to pursue their dream of getting an international degree from home. Students aren't required to step out of their country or submit their projects to professors for evaluation. But no one knows that. The University Grants Commission has questioned such arrangements on the issue, and said in a notice that degrees issued by such institutes which are not recognized by it would not be deemed valid. "When I enrolled for the BABM (bachelor of arts in business man-

agement) course, my smartly-worded admission offer letter read that the college was approved by the AICTE. However, as a naive 18-year-old, I never questioned the authenticity of the programme. After three years of studying and after spending lakhs of rupees, I realized my degree is not valid when I applied to take the UPSC exam (for joining India's civil service)," said a student who studied at the Karjat college and has now moved court against the institute.

No 'cold day' as city logs warmest December in 6 years

NEW DELHI: In December this year, the mean maximum temperature was 24.1 degrees Celsius, significantly higher than the normal of 22.8 degrees C, while the mean minimum was 8.6 degrees C, a shade higher than the normal (8.4 degrees C). Not since 2017 have both the mean maximum and minimum temperatures been above normal in December.

On the last day of the year, however, the day temperature dipped to the season's lowest of 15.9 degrees Celsius at Safdarjung on Sunday, 4.5 degrees below normal. However, the met department said while the maximum temperature met conditions for a 'cold day' to the declared, the



minimum temperature did not. The day's minimum was 11.7 degrees C while for 'cold day' conditions to be met, it has to be below 10 degrees. In the city, SPS Mayur Vihar saw the lowest maximum temperature of 13.3 degrees C. Officials said cold day conditions are likely at isolated places on Monday with 'yellow' alert in place. December 2023

just 'trace' rainfall on one day and ended with a rain deficit of 100%. Kuldeep Srivastava, scientist and head, Regional Weather Forecasting Centre, IMD, said, "The western disturbances, which impacted the hills, were not strong enough to cause significant snowfall in western Himalayan region. Only light snowfall was recorded.

DU panel to monitor staff's social media use

Delhi : Delhi University has formed a committee to oversee the use of social media by all its employees. The committee will be headed by Sanjeev Singh, director of Delhi University Computer Centre. Ajay Jaiswal, principal of School of Open Learning; Kshitij Kumar Singh from Campus Law Centre, Manish Manocha, an advocate, Anup Lather, the public relations officer; and Dr Manisha from the department of history are the members. Maya John, an assistant professor in the department of history and a member of the academic council, said: "It seems like a troubling development in the direction of curbing use of social media platforms and freedom of expression.

Bringing such a policy is beyond my understanding. The displacements of ad-hoc teachers, with students posting write-ups and photographs, questioning the displacements, and the way students and teachers called out the plagiarism of the Strategic Plan of DU.... This is a publicly funded university, and I don't see the purpose of this social media policy," said Abha Devi, a physics professor at DU.

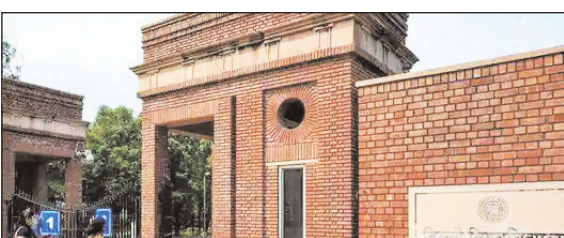


Assam govt converts 1281 Madrasas into general schools



Delhi : The Assam government has renamed at least 1281 Madrasas across 31 districts in the state and turned them into general schools, officials said. Taking to his X handle, state education minister Ranaj Pegu shared the information. He wrote, "Consequent to conversion of all Govt and Provincialised Madrasas into general schools under Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA). Department of School Education, Assam has changed the names of 1281 ME Madrasas into Middle English (ME) School by a notification today. The order shared by Pegu read as, "As per approval of the state government, the nomenclature of the 1281 Upper Primary Schools ME Madrasa under Directorate of Elementary Education, Assam shall be known as ME School with immediate effect. A legislation was passed by the Assam government in January 2021, opening the door for all government-run Madrasas in the state to become general schools. With the exception of private Madrasas, it had an impact on 731 Madrasas and Arabic colleges that were part of the State Madrasa Education Board, Assam Higher Secondary Education Council, and Board of Secondary Education, Assam (SEBA). At a rally in Karnataka in March this year, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma declared that his government had closed 600 Madrasas and that he intended to close all Madrasas because he preferred educational institutions over Islamic religious centers.

DU council forms panel to probe complaints on lapses at 12 colleges



Delhi : The Executive Council of Delhi University noted with "concern" the allegations raised by education minister Atishi about alleged irregularities and procedural lapses in the functioning of 12 colleges funded by Delhi government. Stating that there was no question of de-affiliation of the colleges, DU constituted a committee on Friday to investigate the issues raised by the minister. The EC also approved the dual degree programme at its meeting on Friday and cleared the granting of 12.7 acres to develop the Vallabhbhai Patel Chest Institute into a multi-specialty hospital. On December 1, Atishi wrote to Union education minister Dharmendra Pradhan

alleging serious lacunae in the functioning of 12 colleges funded by the state government. She demanded that the central government either hand over full control of the 12 colleges to the Delhi government or the Centre take over the funding. The minister's letter outlined a range of irregularities and procedural lapses, amounting to financial mismanagement running into hundreds of crores of public money. The EC observed that the 12 colleges were constituent colleges of DU, hence the question of de-affiliation did not arise. Further, the EC strongly objected to the diktat that the funds should not be released to these 12 colleges from the next financial year," said registrar Vikas Gupta.

CBSE To Adopt New System From Next Academic Year

Delhi : According to the New Education Policy (NEP) 2020's recommendations, the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) is getting ready for a transition to the 5+3+3+4 pedagogical system. The board will soon issue a directive requesting that all Indian schools associated with the CBSE board make preparations for a switch from the present 10+2 system to the suggested 5+3+3+4 one. Nidhi Chhibber, the chairperson of the CBSE, said the board will implement



the change in the next academic year. She added that CBSE will start the creation of a school registry, teacher registry, and student registry in order to track the growth of these resources throughout the various stages of

schooling. The board "will be issuing directions for the adoption of the new 5+3+3+4 system of education for all the schools instead of 10+2 as envisaged in NEP", she said. The official of CBSE stated that the NEP's distinguishing

characteristic is the participation of children from three to six in formal education. She also emphasised how many CBSE schools are already involved in the teaching of younger children through their preparatory and pre-nursery programmes.

The board will make an effort to officially include this in the CBSE system architecture. The NEP 2020 suggested a new pedagogical framework that separates education for children into four stages.

Teachers to get 10K for tablets, question such a scanty amount

Delhi : School education department has decided to provide Rs 10,000 to teachers of high and higher secondary schools for purchasing tablets. Even before the disbursement of the fund, teachers have raised questions over the kind of tablet which can be bought with such a meagre amount. Sources said that teachers would have to bear the remaining



cost themselves if they wish to buy the tablet which costs

"If they are providing the tablet for some purpose then there is a need to increase the amount. Even students get a higher amount and a better tablet than the teachers, he said"

more than Rs 10,000. Unhappy with the decision, a

teacher on condition of anonymity said that the money should be increased. "If they are providing the tablet for some purpose then there is a need to increase the amount. Even students get a higher amount and a better tablet than the teachers, he said. Another teacher said that there was a need to improve the infrastructure first. There

are schools, which require better infrastructure like furniture, building renovation and others. Department should improve it first," said the teacher. Sources said that if a tablet is damaged or lost within four year then the tablet of the prescribed specification would be purchased by the teacher at his own expense. Teachers will only have to buy a tablet.

India purchases crude oil from the UAE and pays for it in rupees



Delhi: As it looks for similar deals with other suppliers, India, the third-largest energy consumer in the world, is pushing for the adoption of the local currency internationally. Officials noted that internationalization is a process without any specific goals, and that India has made its first payment in rupees for crude oil purchased from the United Arab Emirates. India has been pursuing a three-pronged policy of purchasing from the cheapest accessible source, diversifying sources of supply, and avoiding breaking any

● **Dollars by increasing Russian oil imports—which some in the West shunned—it is now trying to settle trade in rupees rather than dollars in an effort to save transaction cost**

international obligations like the price cap in case of Russian oil, given that the country is more than 85% dependent on imports to meet its oil needs. Even though the policy saved bil-

ions of dollars by increasing Russian oil imports—which some in the West shunned—it is now trying to settle trade in rupees rather than dollars in an effort to save transaction costs by doing away with dollar translations. After India and the UAE struck a rupee settlement deal in July, Indian Oil Corporation (IOC) paid Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (Adnoc) in Indian rupees for the purchase of one million barrels of crude oil. There are also certain Russian oil imports that are paid for in rupees.

Red Sea attacks worry exporters of basmati rice

Delhi: After two cargo ships in the Red Sea were hit by drones, shippers of Indian basmati rice are worried about the crisis in the Middle East. This can compel suppliers to alter their routes, so raising expenses. India's maritime trade with the Middle East, Africa, and the European Union depends on the Red Sea route. Farmers' prices have increased as a result of the Middle East's increased demand driving a boom in basmati rice exports. Increasing exports of basmati rice could help close the agriculture trade deficit because India has prohibited imports of other types of



rice in an effort to lower domestic prices. The Middle East crisis has caused concern for shippers of India's main agricultural product, basmati rice, after two cargo ships with Indian crews were attacked by suspected Houthi rebel drones in the Red Sea. A few vendors stated that they might have to alter their path due to an increase in attacks. A group of basmati exporters was briefed

last week by officials from the ministry of commerce on the situation resulting from attacks on Yemeni ships in the Red Sea by Houthi rebels with an inclination toward Iran, which may have an impact on trade. The Houthis have promised to back Hamas in Gaza. The majority of India's maritime trade with Africa, the Middle East, and the European Union passes through the popular Red Sea route.

India is keeping an eye on the situation and will alert all parties involved if there are any increased threats. Due to increased demand from Middle Eastern purchasers this season.

Gujarat's three-year increase in liquor licenses due to health concerns is 58%.

Delhi Dry In just three years, Gujarat has seen a 58% increase in the number of people with liquor permits due to health concerns. According to data produced by the state prohibition department, Gujarat currently has 43,470 such permit holders, as opposed to 27,452 in November

2020. According to sources, the backlog of renewals has decreased and new applications are being handled quickly, which has increased sales for the state's liquor outlets. According to data, the greatest number of permit holders in Ahmedabad is 13,456, with Surat (9,238), Rajkot

(4,502), Vadodara (2,743), Jamnagar (2,039), and Gandhinagar (1,851) following closely behind. An increasing number of adults over 40 are requesting liquor health permits due to rising rates of anxiety, sleeplessness, and hypertension. Applications for liquor

CAPSULES

Flipkart records a 4,026 crore deficit for 2022-2023

Delhi: India's modern tech businesses are nevertheless operating at a significant loss. Flipkart, a Walmart company, reported a loss of more than Rs 4,000 crore in FY23. Flipkart Internet, the company that operates the Flipkart e-commerce platform, posted a consolidated loss of Rs 4,026 crore in FY23, according to data obtained from the market intelligence portal Tofler. The B2B division of Flipkart has previously disclosed a loss of Rs 4,897 crore. According to the company's regulatory filings, omni-channel retailer FirstCry, which is getting ready to list on stock exchanges next year, experienced a sharp loss in FY23. The deficit increased to Rs 486 crore from Rs 78 crore the previous year. The majority of India's e-commerce business is dominated by Flipkart and Amazon, who combined reported just a slight decrease in losses from the previous year in FY23. The company reported a Rs 4,419 crore loss in FY22. In FY23, FirstCry's year-over-year losses increased by more than 500%. Generally speaking, B2C businesses burn more cash than B2B organizations.

Fixed deposit rates are increased by up to 50% by SBI

Delhi: Interest rates on fixed deposits (FDs) have increased by the State Bank of India (SBI). FDs with less than ₹2 crore are subject to this interest rate. The revised rate will take effect on December 27, 2023, today. With the exception of one year to less than two years, two years to less than three years, and five years to ten years, the bank has raised the rates for all tenures. Rates for deposits maturing in 45 days to 7 days have been increased by 50 basis points (bps) by SBI.

Health premiums are rising faster than coverage

Delhi: The prevalence of health insurance in India has been increasing slowly, even if the number of premiums has increased by 22%. In March 2023, there were 528.9 lakh lives insured by individual policies, a 2.5% increase from March 2021. The insurance business collected Rs 89,492 crore in health premiums in March 2022, a 22% increase from Rs 73,052 crore. Insurance companies are expanding their business by collecting more payments from the same policyholders, as seen by the dramatic growth in health insurance rates that has occurred without a matching increase in the number of lives covered. There were 432 lakh lives covered by individual health insurance coverage. However, in March 2021, the fig-

● **The penetration of health insurance in India is very slow, despite rapid premium growth. In March 2023**

ure increased by 22% to 531 lakh. A number of people left the program when the pandemic subsided, bringing the total number of lives insured by individual plans down to 516 lakh in FY22. Enrollment in government programs has decreased as well, in part due to state decisions to handle their own insurance. The coverage of government schemes decreased from 36.2 crore in FY20 to 34.3 crore in FY21 and

then to 30.6 crore in FY22. There were 29.8 crore people covered by government programs overall in FY23. The affordability of health insurance has been a problem, and a large number of healthy older adults are quitting due to rising premiums. The claims-to-premium ratio has greatly increased from the pandemic levels, which is one encouraging trend. In FY23, 2.4 crore health insurance claims were resolved by general and health insurers, who also contributed Rs 70,930 crore to the settlement of these claims. The penetration of health insurance in India is very slow, despite rapid premium growth. In March 2023, the number of lives covered by individual plans increased by a meager 2.5 percent.

India's government plans to ban nine international cryptocurrency platforms

Delhi: Because Binance, Kucoin, and Huobi, among other international virtual asset service providers, failed to register under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA), the government plans to prohibit their access to India. The other organizations that are subject to similar action are Bitfinex, Global, Gate.io, Bittrex, Bitstamp, and Kraken. VDA service providers were



required to register with the Financial Intelligence Unit (FIU) and adhere to the reporting and record-keeping compliance requirements under PMLA, thereby bringing them under the purview of the anti-money laundering framework. The FIU

has written to the electronics and IT ministry requesting that the URLs of the nine offshore entities that are operating unlawfully and in violation of PMLA regulations be blocked, in addition to serving compliance notices to

them. Thirty-one VDA service providers are currently registered with the FIU. Nevertheless, although serving a sizable portion of Indian consumers, a number of offshore companies were failing to register and fall under the purview of the anti-money laundering and counter-terrorism financing frameworks, according to an official statement. In an effort to track investors and exchanges.

Paytm will eliminate positions in order to reduce expenses

Delhi: One 97 Communications, the parent company of the finance company Paytm, announced a "slight reduction" in staff as a cost-cutting move, however it did not state how many positions were lost. However, a representative for the business refuted recent media claims that said the non-bank lender may



eliminate over 1,000 positions. The spokesperson told Reuters, "We will be able to save 10-15% in employee costs as Artificial Intelligence (AI) has delivered more than we expected it to." With its first net profit since listing in November 2021, Paytm is trying to improve its business. In its various businesses, Paytm employed 32,798 direct employees and 1,589 contract workers globally as of the end of March 2023, its fiscal year. One 97 Communications, the parent company, confirmed a small staff decrease as a cost-cut-

ting move. The business refuted rumors that it had eliminated over a thousand positions. Through operational improvements, Paytm hopes to generate its first net profit since going public. On average, the corporation employed 32,798 people directly and 1,589 people under contract globally.

Paytm's parent company, One97 Communications, is said to have let go of around 1,000 workers across a number of divisions. The company is realigning its companies and is taking cost-cutting measures.

Infosys's leadership issue gets worse as CFO Nilanjan Roy leaves the company

● **The senior human resource officer of the Bengaluru-based corporation, departed in August after 23 years of service.**

Delhi: In an unexpected move that intensified the leadership issue at India's second-largest software exporter, Infosys, the business said that chief financial officer (CFO) Nilanjan Roy had quit to pursue "personal aspirations." The company's US-listed shares had dropped more than 3% in early trading. Match 31, 2024 is Roy's last day of employment, according to a regulatory filing from Infosys. Deputy CFO and executive vice president Jayesh Sanghrajka at the moment. The announcement stated that chief executive Salil Parekh, "he (Sanghrajka) has been leading multiple portfolios in the finance function for



several years as deputy CFO, and his depth of experience and knowledge will serve us well to take the function to greater heights." Additionally, I want to thank Nilanjan from the bottom of my heart for his capable leadership of the function for the past five years (since 2018). The news caught the market off guard, as Infosys' American Depository Receipts fell more than 3% to about \$17.41 per share in the first transaction. The information was released following India's market close, with shares closing almost unchanged at 1,488.60 on the BSE. With Nilanjan's departure, Infosys is starting to experience a serious leadership vacuum. In order to stabilize the

ship in 2024, (Chairman) Nandan (Nilekani) and Salil must put out their intentions, according to Phil Fersht, CEO of the US-based IT research and analysis firm HFS Research. Roy's future plans are unknown, but Infosys has lost at least eight senior managers in the past 12 months. With several of them going to competitors. Rivals Tech Mahindra and Cognizant hired Infosys presidents Mohit Joshi and Ravi Kumar S as their respective CEOs. Another executive vice president, Richard Lobo, the senior human resource officer of the Bengaluru-based corporation, departed in August after 23 years of service.

Degrees in Ayurveda: The newest trend for foreigners

Delhi: Driven by her desire to experience what she refers to as "new and exciting things," Ethel Nyoni, a Zambian, came to the capital of Rajasthan in 2021 to further her studies as an Ayurvedic practitioner. After two years, she is expected to graduate from the National Institute of Ayurveda in Jaipur and become the first registered practitioner of India's age-old healing technique in southern Africa. Ethel is only one of several foreigners who want to represent Ayurveda. Young people from the Jaipur Institute are hoping to ride the wave of interest in traditional Indian medicine, yoga, and the classical arts, which together go beyond the typical exotica. These countries include Trinidad and Tobago, Afghanistan, Iran, the Netherlands, Brazil, Ghana, and many more.