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Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy to be awarded Arjuna Award

The Sports ministry on Wednesday announced the National Sports Awards 2023 as a visually impaired cricketer and captain of Indian Men's Cricket Team Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy... **12**



Apple Watch ban may cost firm \$300 to \$400 mn in sales: Report

Apple's decision to stop selling two of the latest models of Apple Watches -- Series 9 and Ultra 2 -- in the US this week could cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars, media reports said. **07**



Congress Govt will safeguard communal harmony : Seethakka

Minister for Panchayt Raj and Rural Development Minister Dhanasari Anasuya, who is popularly known as Seethakka, said that the newly elected Congress government led by ... **02**

Telangana DGP calls for united efforts for drug-free state

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Telangana's Director General of Police (DGP), Ravi Gupta on Wednesday called for united efforts for a drug-free state. "Let's all unite to drive away the drugs from the territory of our State. All drug peddlers and consumers are hereby warned in this regard," the DGP posted on X. "Stringent legal action would be initiated against the violators. **Continued on pg 02**



BRS Govt borrowed loans worth Rs.97,499 crores for Kaleswaram project : CM Revanth

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said that the previous BRS government had set up a special Corporation for the Kaleswaram project and borrowed a loan of Rs.97,499 crores. Participating a short discussion on "Telangana State Finances-White Paper" in the Assembly on Wednesday, the Chief Minister found fault with former minister and BRS MLA Harish Rao for speaking lies about the Kaleswaram project in the full House of Assembly and disclosed the details of the debts incurred by the previous KCR government in the matter of irrigation projects. **Continued on pg 02**

President visits Pochampally, interacts with weavers

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : President Droupadi Murmu on Wednesday interacted with weavers at Pochampally in Yadadri Bhuvanagiri district of Telangana. She visited the handloom and spinning unit and interacted with Ikat handloom weavers of Pochampally.

She also visited the theme pavilion and also witnessed the art of weaving of Ikat sarees, for which Pochampally is famous. The President was all praise for the efforts of Pochampally weavers to pass on the art of weaving to the coming generations. She said the suggestions given by the weavers will be taken into con-

sideration. She assured that she will do her best for development of Pochampally. One of the weavers requested the President for establishment of a yarn depot in Pochampally, which is known for the exquisite sarees that are woven through a unique style called Ikat.



Konda Surekha slams Harish Rao

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : An argument took place between Minister Konda Surekha and former minister Harish Rao in the Assembly during a discussion on the white paper released by the State government on State finances. She alleged that new buildings had been constructed by the previous government for mak-

ing commissions. She said the double bedroom houses were not given to the poor people and added that they were given to the BRS party activists. She said Jagan Mohan Reddy and K Chandrasekhar Rao scold each other outside, but they meet inside and mingle each other well.



No discussion taking place on suspension of 150 MPs but on mimicry row: Rahul

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Former Congress President Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday broke his silence on the mimicry row, saying he shot the video of the 150 MPs thrown out of Parliament and there is no discussion on that, including some other important issues. Rahul Gandhi made the comments when he arrived at the party head-

quarters here for the meeting with the party's Odisha and West Bengal leaders to discuss poll preparedness. Speaking to the media over the mimicry row, Rahul Gandhi said, "Who insulted whom and how? The MPs were sitting there (at Parliament Makar Dwar), I shot their video. My video is on my phone.

Mahalaxmi free bus scheme receives unprecedented response : Sajjanar

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : The State government's ambitious 'Mahalaxmi - Free Bus Travel Facility for Women' scheme has received an overwhelming response from women commuters. Within 11 days of the launch of the scheme, a record number of three crore women travelled in TSRTC

buses. On an average, 30 lakh women travelled every day. The corporation is safely transporting 51 lakh people every day, including men, to their destinations and 62% of the passengers are women. As a result of the free travel scheme for women.



I will contest as MP of the party high command asks me to do so : Etala

Warangal, Dec 20 (IANS) : BJP leader Etala Rajender today said that he would contest in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections if the party high command asks him to do so. He said that The BJP had made people aware that they should vote against KCR. "It was the BJP that worked hard, but it was the Congress that benefited from our party's hard work," he said. He alleged that The Congress had spread venom against them by stating that the BJP and the BRS parties were one and the same. Rajender participated in a meeting of key functionaries of Kamalapur mandal in Hanumakonda district. Speaking on the occasion, he said that The people of the state were fed up with KCR's oppressive and dictatorial tendencies.



BRS govt laid strong foundation for fiscal strength of Telangana : Harish

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Former minister Harish Rao today said the previous BRS government had laid a strong foundation for the financial strength of Telangana State irrespective of the fact whether the Congress government would agree with his comments or not? He also said their party government had built vast paths of progress. He said the new government should move forward along those paths and work with the people by making as the centre of the development of the State. "In contrast to the tendency to revolve around political vendettas, it is good for them if they move around in the direction of development. It is good for democratic systems," he said. He made these remarks while taking part in a discussion on the

white paper released by the State government on the State's finances. Speaking on the occasion, Harish Rao said a look at the white paper, it was meant to attack political opponents with distortion of facts instead of the well-being of the people of the State. He said he had seen the CAG report on budget estimates and expenditure for the State of Karnataka on page 5 of the white paper. "Of this, the budget estimate was shown Rs 2,31,142 crore.

BRS Govt borrowed loans worth Rs.97,499 crores for Kaleswaram project : CM Revanth

Continued From pg 01
"At the time of approaching the banks for loans, the BRS government promised that water would be supplied to farmers, industries, residents and it would collect money from them after

the construction of the Kaleswaram project," the Chief Minister said. He alleged that the previous BRS government had brought loans in the name of Kaleswaram project, but it didn't utilities loans properly.

The Chief Minister said the main purpose of releasing a white paper on the State economy was to put the facts before the people and was to disclose the actual status of State's financial position.

TELANGANA CHAMBER OF CHEMISTS & DRUGGISTS
(Regd No. 443/1973/24-09-2022)
5-9-262/4, King Koti Road Hyderabad-500001, Phone: 6303181535, 040-23232348

NOTICE
43rd GENERAL BODY MEETING CANCELLED
Dear Members,
We regret to inform you that due to unforeseen circumstances, the Managing Committee in its Emergency Meeting held on 19-12-2023, decided to cancel the 43rd General Body Meeting scheduled for Sunday, December 24, 2023. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause. Further updates and rescheduling information, will be communicated to you in due course. Thank you,
Regards,
For Telangana Chamber of Chemists & Druggists
Sd/- Dr. Ghisulal Jain Sd/- Arvind Kumar Bhangadia
President Hon. Gen. Secretary
Date: 19-12-2023, Hyderabad.

BODUPPAL BRANCH: Plot No. 12 & 13, Anusha Reddy Mansion, Veera Reddy Nagar, Boduppal, Medchal, Medchal-Malkajgiri Dist.-500092, (TS),
Phone: 040-2720934; Email: Boduppal.Telangana@bankofindia.co.in

DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE UNDER SECTION 13(2) OF SARFAESI ACT, 2002
Whereas the notice is hereby given that the following Borrower/Guarantor as mentioned below have defaulted in the repayment of principal and interest of the loan facilities obtained by them from the bank and the loan has been classified as non performing asset (NPA). The notice was issued to them under section 13(2) of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 on their last known addresses, but they have been returned unopened and as such they are hereby informed by way of this public notice.
Name of the Borrower & Mortgagor: Mr. Srinivas Kunoji & Mrs. Rajeshwari Kunoji, Plot No.151 Part, Koushalaya Nagar, Behind Indian Oil Petrol Pump, Ghatkesar, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana-501301 (Borrower-Mortgagor).
Non Performing Asset (NPA) on: 29-10-2023
Amount Outstanding: Rs.9,50,204.39/- (Contractual dues upto 30-09-2023) with further interest thereon compounded with monthly rests, and all costs, charges and expenses incurred by the Bank. Demand Notice date: 01-11-2023
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY
All the Piece and Parcel of House on Plot No.151 Part, in survey No.174 admeasuring 250 Sq yds or 209 Sq Mtrs Situated at Ghatkesar Village & Gram Panchayat, Ghatkesar Mandal Telangana state in the name of Mr. Kunoji Srinivas & Mrs. K Rajeshwari Bounded by: North: Plot No 151 Part, South: Plot No 152, East: 30' Wide Road, West: Plot No 154. MOD Doc No.3578/2017 dt: 11-08-2017 registered at SRO Ghatkesar.
If you the above mentioned person/s fail to repay the above mentioned amount due by you with future interest and incidental expenses, costs as stated above in terms of this notice under section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act within 60 days from the date of this notice, the Bank will exercise all or any of the rights detailed under SARFAESI Act and other applicable provisions of the said Act. This notice is without prejudice to the Bank's right to initiate such other actions or legal proceedings, as it deem necessary under any other provisions of law.
Date: 21-12-2023, Place: Hyderabad Sd/- Authorised Officer, Bank of India

FORM NO. 14 [See Regulation 33(2)]
OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - I
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL
(DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL SERVICES,
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA)
31-31-21, Narayana Bhavanam, Saidabad Street, Daba Gardens, Visakhapatnam - 530 020

DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE UNDER SECTIONS 25 TO 28 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993 AND RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961.
RC/ 523/2017 30-11-2023
Bank of Maharashtra, Eluru Branch,
Versus
Sri. Srinivasa Rao Ganne & another
To
(CD 2) Sri. Srinivasa Rao Ganne, S/o. Sri Rama Mohan rao, H.No.S-3, Venkatarama Towers, LIC office Road, Jangareddygudem, West Godavari District.
1. In view of the Recovery Certificate dated 09-10-2017 issued in O.A.No. 391 of 2014 by the Hon'ble Presiding officer, Debts Recovery Tribunal, Visakhapatnam an amount of Rs.10,54,427/- (Rupees Ten Lakhs Fifty Four Thousand Four Hundred and Twenty Seven only) due against you together along with pendente-litelle and future interest @ 10.30% p.a. compounded with monthly rests on the above said amount from 12.06.2014 till realization/date of payment with costs of Rs.33,500/- (Rupees Thirty Three Thousand Five Hundred only)
2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipts of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.
3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing.
4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 28-12-2023 at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings.
5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:
(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate / execution proceedings.
(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and other processes that may be taken place for recovering the certificate amount
6. Attention is invited to Rule 16 of the Second Schedule to the Income Tax Act, 1961 which is reproduced below:
16(1) Where a notice has been served on a defaulter under Rule 2, the defaulter or his representative in interest shall not be competent to mortgage, charge, lease or otherwise deal with any property belonging to him except with the permission of the Recovery Officer, nor shall any Civil Court issue any process against such property in execution of a decree for the payment of money.
16(2) Where an attachment has been made under this Schedule, any private transfer or delivery of the property attached or of any interest therein and any payment to the defaulter of any debt, dividend or other moneys contrary to such attachment shall be void as against all claims enforceable under the attachment.
(Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this day 30th November, 2023)
Sd/-(Avasarala Anil) Recovery Officer
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, Visakhapatnam

UCOBANK 5-1-908, Pushpanjali Complex, Koti, Hyderabad -500095
Ph :040-24747016,24741274 e-mail:bo.hydera@ucobank.co.in

Res: Thirty Days Notice Under Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002 for sale of Immovable property.
We Wish to inform you that we are going to publish Sale/ Auction Notice for the property mortgaged to us in account:

e-AUCTION SALE NOTICE (Under SARFAESI Act 2002)
Auction Sale of Immovable Property mortgaged to the Bank under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 (SARFAESI ACT) read with rules 5,6,7,8 & 9 of the security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002). Possession of the following property has been taken over by the Authorized officer pursuant to the Notice Issued U/s 13(2) of the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 in the borrower accounts mentioned below with a right to sell the same "As is where is" basis for realization of Bank's Dues.

Name of the Borrower(s)	Amount Due (Rs.)	Description of the Property	Minimum Reserve Price (In Rs.)	Earnest Money Deposit 10% (EMD) (In Rs.)
Mrs.Pulimamidi Kavitha H.No.70/1/2/Plot No.115 East Gandhi Nagar, Rampally x Road Nagaram , Kesara Mandal K.V. Rangareddy-500083 Mobile:9949546613 Mr. P. Vijay Reddy H.No.70/1/2/Plot No.115 EastGandhi Nagar Rampally x Road Nagaram . Kesara Mandal K.V. Rangareddy -500083 Mobile :9701133916	Rs.56,67,231.69 as on 01-01-2022, as per our Demand Notice Dated: 30-01-2023 and possession notice dt. 15-05-2023 + Interest and charges from 01-01-2023	All that the subjected property (land & building) admeasuring 910 Sq.ft. situated at Plot no.13 (south part) in survey No. 575,576,578,579,582/ Block-C, Damaiguda H/O. Nagaram Village, Kesara Mandal, Medchal -Malkajgiri District, Telangana State and bounded as under: North: Plot No.C 13 (North part) South: 25' Wide Road East: Plot No.14 West: 30' Wide Road	Rs. 72,66,000	Rs. 7,26,000

Date and Time of E-Auction: 18-01-2024, 01.00 P.M. to 05.00 PM
(With extension of 05 minutes each, till the sale is concluded/ closed)
Bid Increment Rs.50000.00
Date: 20-12-2023, Place: Hyderabad Sd/- Authorised Officer, UCO Bank

Hyderabad Police Commissioner initiates proceedings under CrPC's Section 107
Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Hyderabad's new Police Commissioner K. Sreenni vasa Reddy on Wednesday held a court in the capacity of Additional District Magistrate (Executive) to execute proceedings under Section 107 of the CrPC.



Statue with 3 D Animated Petro Car, Blue Colt Constable installed at accident prone areas

Rajanna Sirsilla, Dec 20 (TIM Bureau) : As a part of visible policing, statues with 3D animated petro car, blue colt constable have been set up at Ragudu Chowrasta in Sircilla town. The statue was inaugurated by District SP Akhil Mahajan. On this occasion Sp sir told that In devel-

Visible policing is critical in preventing accidents

oped countries, we see more statues like this to prevent accidents. over speeding is the main cause of accidents so in our district too, such statues are being set up in the

district to prevent accidents and control over speeding. Many accidents have happened at Ragudu Square in Sircilla town this year. So Wednesday a statue with 3 D Animated Petro Car, Blue Colt Constable is installed at Ragudu Chowrasta in the sircilla rajanna Sirsilla district, so that those who come with over speed and those who consume alcohol will see this statue from a distance and pretend that the statue as a real police with a petro car and reduces the speed which helps in preventing accidents. Reducing speed and following road safety rules with the feeling that the police are present can reduce accidents. Radium stickers have been arranged so that they can be visible even at night. Everyone has been asked to follow the traffic rules and help police in the prevention of accidents. ASP Chandraiah, DSP k. Nagendrachari, town C.I Upender, Traffic S.I, S Raju have accompanied with SP Akhil Mahajan.



'Yes, proposed Kharge's name as INDIA bloc PM face', says Mamata

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday admitted that she proposed the name of Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge as the prime ministerial candidate of the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) bloc. While speaking to the media here, Banerjee, who also participated in the INDIA bloc fourth meeting on Tuesday said, "Yes, I have proposed Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge's name. Arvind Kejriwal also supported my proposal." She said that since everyone asks for the name of the prime ministerial face "thus we proposed the name of Kharge as our proposal". "We supported his name as we don't have any issue with the face of Kharge as the INDIA bloc prime ministerial face and Kejriwal supported it," the Trinamool Congress chief said.



Congress Govt will safeguard communal harmony : Seethakka

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Minister for Panchayat Raj and Rural Development Minister Dhanasari Anasuya, who is popularly known as Seethakka, said that the newly elected Congress government led by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy would safeguard communal harmony in the Telangana State. The Minister was the chief guest in the Christmas celebrations organised by Dr. B.R.Ambedkar Telangana Secretariat Christian Employees Association at the Secretariat here on Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, the Minister said the people would celebrate the Christmas festival on the birthday of Jesus Christ, who is the savior of the world, with full of joy and happiness all over the world.

She commended the Christian community for rendering exemplary services in the fields of education and medicine. The Minister appealed to people to live in peace and brotherhood and said that the State government would provide protection to the Christians. Edward Williams, who attended as main speaker in the meeting, cut the Christmas cake. Williams said that "Jesus came into the world to forgive sins". He explained the uniqueness of the Christmas festival and how to attain and share God's love. Williams exhorted all the people to practice the principles of peace taught by Lord Jesus. Protocol Director Arvinder Singh and retired IAS officer Vijayakumar extended their greetings.

New Managing Committee Elected for Masjid-e-Ibrahim

Hyderabad, Gachibowli, Dec 20 (TIM Bureau) : Masjid Committee elections are organized for Masjid Ibrahim, Central Government Quarters (GPRA), Gachibowli, Hyderabad. According to Secretary (Publicity), Mr. Syed Ghouse (MANUU) elected president of Masjid Committee. Mr. Naina Mohammed, Asst. Director, Central Water Commission, Vice President; Mohd. Shafiuddin Farooqui, Hindustan Petroleum, Secretary- Mohd. Iqbal (Postal), Asst. Secretary- Mohd. Abdul Saleem, Treasurer (P.I.B) are also elected. Mr. Ali Numan Khan (MANUU), Mr. Habeebuddin (MANUU) are elected as Executive members and Committee Members – Jakeer Hussain (Immigration), Imran Mohd. (Atomoc Energy), Mohd. Abdul Hakeem (Health), Mohsin Khan (MANUU) Members including Mr. Ahmed Shareef (Central Ground Water Board), Rahmatullah Ansari (GST), Shamshuddin (Engineering-MNC), Mohd. Rizwan Ansari (Income Tax).



Akbaruddin Owaisi demands action against officials for faulty figures

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : AIMIM MLA Akbaruddin Owaisi today lashed out at the officials of the state government for publishing wrong figures related to the state finances in the white paper released in assembly . He demanded action against the

officials , who committed such blunders and misled the house . He made these remarks while participating in a discussion on the white paper released by the state government on economic condition of the state . Speaking on the occasion , he referred to a statement of the state government that there

was no money in the public exchequer to run the day to day activities and warned the state government that such statements would give a wrong impression to the entire country that Telangana state had turned bankrupt. "Criticism is natural in politics.



Attempts being made to 'finish off' Lingayat leadership: Community seer

Hubballi (Karnataka), Dec 20 (IANS) : Lingayat seer Dingaleshwara Swamiji of Balehosur has said that attempts are being made to eliminate second-rung leaders and major religious pontiffs of the community in the state. The statement was made in the presence of

former chief minister Jagadish Shettar during a programme organised to celebrate Swamiji's 68th birthday. Addressing the gathering, the seer stated, "There is a systematic conspiracy to destroy the mutts and second-rung leadership in state politics. I don't know if I should be talking about

this on this occasion of birthday, but we must not tolerate one's destruction." "Religious seers and political leadership are strong pillars for society. We should ensure that the pillar of Lingayat leadership is stronger, and the time has come to be awakened in this regard," the seer said. Referring to Hindu purans, Dingaleshwara Swamiji said: "Leaders of the community and religious pontiffs must be given weapons to ensure their protection." He said, "The goddess did not have a weapon. After receiving weapons from others, she destroyed evil forces. I am referring to this because our leaders need to be given weapons. There is a conspiracy in Karnataka to weaken strong leaders, and religious seers are no exception. Even religious seers are targeted and defamed."

3 killed, 3 hurt as drunk driver crashes into 6 vehicles in Thane

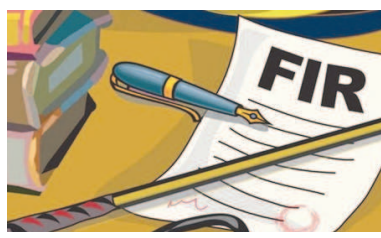
Thane, Dec 20 (IANS) : At least three persons were killed and three more injured when an inebriated driver rammed his speeding car into four other cars and two autorickshaws, here shortly before dawn on Wednesday, police said. The pile-up of the seven vehicles occurred on the Badlapur-Kalyan Road around 5.30 am near the Shantinagar locality. A heavily intoxicated car driver speeding on the road crashed into the other vehicles ahead leading to the death of three persons, two men and a woman instantly. Three others traveling in different vehicles sustained grievous injuries and have been admitted to nearby hospitals where the condition of one was described as serious. The local police have cleared the road of all the affected vehicles to clear a huge traffic snarl that built up there and launched a probe into the tragedy, said an official.



Won't allow PM Modi to form govt again in 2024: Lalu Prasad

Patna, Dec 20 (IANS) : RJD chief Lalu Prasad on Wednesday said that he will not allow Prime Minister Narendra Modi to form a government at the Centre again in 2024. The former Bihar Chief Minister made the remark ahead of the INDIA opposition alliance's fourth meeting scheduled to take place on Tuesday in New Delhi. "We are going for the meeting of the INDIA bloc and we will not allow Narendra Modi to form government at the Centre at any cost," the RJD chief told

reporters at the Patna airport before departing for the national capital with his younger son and incumbent Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav. When asked about Prime Minister Modi giving a guarantee of coming to power again in 2024, Lalu Prasad asked "who is Narendra Modi?" "We are going for the meeting in Delhi and we will contest elections on one seat, one candidate formula to minimise the distribution of votes. We will form the government at the Centre this time," he claimed.



FIR against six men for demanding Rs 20 lakh extortion in Bihar

Patna, Dec 20 (IANS) : Police have registered an FIR against six persons for demanding Rs 20 lakh extortion from a doctor in Bihar's Rohtas district. The FIR was registered on a written complaint by Manoj Kumar Pandit, a homeopathic doctor, who has a clinic in Masidiha village under Aayar Kotha police station in the district. As per the FIR, Pandit claimed that six persons in an SUV came to his clinic on Wednesday, entered into the staff room and demanded extortion of Rs 20 lakh. "The accused barged into the staff room and demanded extortion. Soon all staff members assembled in the room after which the miscreants fled the spot," Pandit said. "We have received a complaint and registered an FIR in this matter. We are also scanning the CCTV footage obtained from the clinic and trying to identify the accused. They will be put behind the bars soon," Prachi Kumari, SHO of Aayar Kotha police station, said.



Atiq's aide Nafees Biryani dies of heart attack

Prayagraj (UP), Dec 20 (IANS) : Nafees Biryani, wanted in the Umesh Pal murder case and a close associate of slain gangster Atiq Ahmad, died in a Prayagraj hospital on Wednesday. Nafees, 40, had suffered a massive heart attack in Naini jail on Sunday night and was taken to hospital. He died hours later. Nafees, wanted in the Umesh Pal murder case, was arrested on November 23 after gunfire with Uttar Pradesh Police near Prayagraj. Police had received a tip-off in Nawab Ganj's Aana Pur that Nafees, along with one of his associates, was coming to his

Khuldabad home in Prayagraj. When the police started checking near the border Pratapgarh-Prayagraj, Nafees and his associate opened fire. In the retaliatory firing, Nafees was shot in the leg and got injured. Cops arrested Nafees but another accused escaped in the bushes. Nafees was carrying bounty of Rs 50,000 on his head. It is noteworthy that in the murder case of BSP MLA Raju Pal in Prayagraj, the main witness Umesh Pal and his two security personnel were shot dead in broad daylight on February 24. In the year 2005, Raju Pal was murdered.



Around 6,000 people from Myanmar took shelter in Manipur: CM

Silchar (Assam), Dec 20 (IANS) : Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Wednesday said that due to ongoing civil war in Myanmar, around 6,000

people from that country have taken shelter in his state. Attending a function of the Manipuri community in southern Assam's Barak Valley, he said that due to the unrest in Myanmar,

around 6,000 people including women and children have so far come to Manipur. "We are providing the Myanmar food and shelter considering the humanitarian aspects. As the volatile situation continues, more people are likely to come to India," he told the media. Singh expressed his deep concern over the influx in Manipur from neighbouring Myanmar. Stressing proactive measures, he said that biometric data collection and profiling processes are going on in areas like Kamjong and Ukhrul, and announced adopting similar strategies in regions like Behiang, adjacent to Myanmar, considering reports of heightened conflicts there. "We can't treat them as refugees but are providing food and shelter to the Myanmar nation-

After SC directive for Mathura, green activists in Agra demand action to control Juli Flora's spread

Agra, Dec 20 (IANS) : Emboldened by the Supreme Court directive for Krishna Janmabhoomi (Braj Bhoomi) to control the spread of Juli Flora, a foreign invasive species, green activists in the Taj Trapezium Zone have demanded firm action to promote native vegetation after clearing uncontrolled growth of Vilayati Babool that was disturbing the eco-balance. Alarmed over the uncontrolled spread of Juli Flora at the cost of native varieties of plants and trees, groups of green activists have urged the Uttar Pradesh Forest department and the horticulture department to draw up a strategy to arrest the further growth of Juli Flora all over the state. A concerted campaign has been launched by Taj City's environmentalists against (vilayati babool) Prosopis Juliflora, a foreign specie, and highly invasive with pan India

spread. Senior Supreme Court advocate K C Jain, the campaign crusader, said: "This foreign species had become aggressively invasive and was a menace to local species of flora. It spread rapidly overtaking native vegetation thus threatening biodiversity." This thorny shrub disturbed the ecological balance and was causing esthetic pollution in the city of the iconic Taj Mahal, Jain told the activists at Paliwal Park on Sunday. Activists said the spread of the Juli Flora in the eco-sensitive Taj Trapezium Zone was a matter of concern and the UP Forest Department should immediately draw up a battle plan to mitigate its spread at the cost of other local varieties of trees that could sustain the exploding simian population, the butterflies and the migratory birds in the Soor Sarovar sanctuary area. Tree lover Ankush Dave said the first step was to contain the spread of this "evil tree" by removing the



existing plants with the roots. "This of course would be a huge challenge due to its rapid growth and resilience, but further expansion had to be prevented at any cost," Dave added. The UP Forest Department has to start a monitoring and surveillance programme to control and manage the spread of this tree. Along with physical removal, herbicides could be used in the initial stages. Care should be taken not to harm the native vegetation or disturb the surrounding ecosystem. Dr. Mukul Pandya, passionate horticulturist of Agra, said: "We need to start a public awareness and

education programme to garner support from all stakeholders. The UP Forest Department, the Archaeological Survey of India, the UP Tourism Department, and other agencies should get involved and mount a concerted attack on this vile species of flora which had hit the wide biodiversity of the Braj Mandal." After clearing the areas steps should be taken to restore the native vegetation in specified areas. Replanting native species and promoting their growth could help balance the ecosystem and biodiversity in the Agra region, Pandya added. The Juli Flora spe-

cies had spread its tentacles wide from the Chambal River in the southwest of Agra to the Yamuna river banks up north. "Earlier, hundreds of varieties of local trees were grown, hundreds of species of birds and butterflies were seen, but now all you see is the ubiquitous thorny Juli Flora," said Eco Club president Pradip Kumar. Lok Swar President Rajiv Gupta said: "Juli Flora was essentially a foreign species popularised in India by some British officials who brought it from South America. Some kings of Rajasthan took a fancy to this species because it is suited for semi-arid and arid areas, requiring little or no care. Brackish water and high salinity soil are also no deterrent for this species which propagates on its own. It has a pan India spread from Tamil Nadu to Kutch in Gujarat. We need to get agriculture scientists involved in research on this species."

NIA searches 19 locations in terror module network

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : The National Investigation Agency (NIA) on Wednesday carried out searches at over 19 locations in the country in connection with a radicalised jihadi terror group. Agency sources said that the searches are underway at over 19 locations since early morning. The sources said that the searches are in connection with the busting of a major IS jihadi terror group. Last week, the NIA carried out searches at over 44 locations and arrested 15 people in connection with the IS Module case. During the searches, the anti-terror probe agency seized large quantities of unaccounted cash, weaponry, sharp implements, sensitive documents, and various digital devices.



OPINIONmail



New resolve to tackle climate change

The Dubai COP 28 summit started a fortnight ago with little promise of any major breakthrough on climate rules. However, the governments and delegates this time proved their critics wrong and the final agreement announced that for the first time the world has agreed to move away from the coal, oil and natural gas that are the principal causes of global warming. Though right from the start or even before it started, the vibes from the Dubai Summit were not positive. However, as the jamboree ended, 198 countries announced that they are committed to phase out fossil fuels as they pose the main climate change accelerators. The countries agreed to contribute to a transition “away from fossil fuels in energy systems in a just, orderly and equitable manner, accelerating action in this critical decade, so as to achieve net zero by 2050 in keeping with the science.”

This could be counted as some progress as just a few years ago it was inconceivable that fossil fuels, which in fact still fulfil almost every country’s energy needs to a large extent will be phased and might be banned. However, the announcement doesn’t mean anything, as there is no mandate behind it, but it could help build momentum for more action from governments. The Paris climate agreement’s commitment that countries would pursue efforts to limit global heating to 1.50 degree C, above pre-industrial levels staged a version of this in 2015. In fact, the agreement doesn’t underline the urgency required to avoid worsening climate destruction, and it includes language, which may fuel further delay or non-action. While oil and gas companies have not yet committed to producing less fossil fuel, their pledge to cut emissions from their own operations is noteworthy. In the agreement, instead of highlighting the harmful effects of Carbon Dioxide – CO₂, the delegates were somehow influenced to focus more on Methane-CH₄. Methane, an odourless gas, is produced by virtually every oil and gas project worldwide. When it is not cost-effective to capture it, companies often release methane into the atmosphere via venting or burn it through flaring, which ironically converts it into Carbon Dioxide. The gas also leaks into the atmosphere from facilities via innumerable small, undetected or unreported leaks in pipelines or other equipment, or through large-scale releases called “super-emitter” events. Scientists say methane has been responsible for up to 30 per cent of global warming since the industrial era began, so the Dubai agreement offers a win for the climate, even if the 50 signatories account for less than a third of the industry’s total operational emissions. Oil companies may choose to shut some production because that is the most cost effective answer to the target of zero flaring of methane. Some of the biggest oil companies have already promised zero routine flaring and near-zero methane, and a number have shown that big progress can be made on the latter. A second COP28 commitment could affect demand for fossil fuels by tripling the world’s renewable energy generation capacity to at least 11,000 Gigawatts –GW by 2030. More than 120 countries signed up to this pledge, which will require a big leap in effort from what has been done before. It took 12 years from 2010 to 2022 to achieve the last tripling of renewable capacity. This one has to be done in the space of eight years. This means that meeting the goal will be difficult, but achievable. This is also supported by the fact that solar and wind are now the cheapest sources of new energy generation in most countries, but the growth of renewables is being held back by a range of bureaucratic and regulations bottlenecks that many authorities are struggling to unblock. The third COP28 commitment with implications for hydrocarbons is aimed at boosting energy efficiency. More efficient and smart use of energy is widely referred to as the “first fuel” in clean energy transitions because it offers some of the quickest and most cost-effective options for cutting emissions, lowering energy bills and bolstering energy security. The countries that signed up to the 2030 renewables pledge agreed to collectively double the global average annual rate of energy efficiency improvements from around 2 per cent to more than 4 per cent every year until 2030.

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

Has Dawood Ibrahim been poisoned in Pakistan? Why the speculated rumours do not fit?

Speculated reports and rumours about a suspected poisoning of underworld don and absconder terrorist Dawood Ibrahim Kaskar have taken the social media platforms by storm, making headlines on almost every mainstream media. While the news is still unconfirmed, there were many loopholes in the rumoured development that do not fit right. This week started with the major news development, referring to a rumour that the underworld Dawood, allegedly residing in Karachi, has been poisoned by an “unknown man” and was shifted to a hospital in critical condition. The news, banked on a rumour and unknown source, further claims that the 67-year-old has been living in Karachi with his second wife along with his three daughters and a son under tight security and away from the public glare. It also claimed that the hospital where Dawood has been taken is also put under tight security. While all the rumoured claims are yet to be confirmed by a reliable source in Pakistan, the news itself does not seem to have been thoughtfully drafted. Firstly, Pakistan has officially denies Indian claims that Dawood resides in Karachi or any other part of the country and therefore, would not confirm the rumour if it may be considered to be true. And even if the rumour is to be seen on its face value, the claim that Dawood has been poisoned by an unknown man seems to be far from the actual position on ground, especially in reference to the fact that he is an underworld don and India’s most wanted man. Reliable sources have said that it is almost impossible for any unknown person to have an access to Dawood as he is surrounded by his most trusted people, family members, close aids and security, who ensure that he is kept safe. “It is almost impossible for any person to have such kind of an access to Dawood Ibrahim. As I un-



derstand, he would be surrounded by his trusted security and aids. And even if he may be in Karachi or anywhere else, keeping him safe would remain as the top most priority of his people. So reports about him being poisoned by an unknown man do not fit at all,” said one of the sources. Dawood Ibrahim is an elderly man now. At the age of 67, it has been reported that he has medical issues and maintains his health through various medications. It is highly likely that he may have gotten sick due to the some medial issues, if only any part of the rumor is to be believed to be true.

The claim about presence of Dawood in Karachi is what India claims, referring to confirmations by his family members and their statements to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). In January 2023, it was reported that Dawood’s nephew confirmed to NIA that he had remarried in Pakistan and was living with his family in Karachi. “Dawood Ibrahim has a second wife. Her name is Maizabin. He has three daughters Marukh, Mehrin and Mariya, and one son Mohin Nawaz,” Alishah Parkar, son of Dawood’s sister Haseena Parkar, had said in a statement given to NIA during November last year.



SOUTH AFRICA’S RULING PARTY FACES SPLIT BEFORE NATIONAL ELECTIONS IN 2024

Former South African president Jacob Zuma has denounced the governing African National Congress (ANC) and vowed to vote for a new political formation in next year’s general election. Mr Zuma, who led the ANC from 2007 to 2017, said on Saturday that he was backing the newly formed Umkhonto we Sizwe party, which is named after the ANC military wing that was disbanded after the liberation struggle ended in victory. The former president called on other South Africans to vote

for the new formation, claiming that it would be “a betrayal to vote for the ANC” of President Cyril Ramaphosa. Even former president Thabo Mbeki said in an interview on Saturday that his “answer was still outstanding” when asked if he would encourage people to vote ANC in next year’s general election. Recent polls have suggested that the ANC could win less than 50 per cent of the national vote for the first time and may need to form a coalition government to remain in power. Mr Zuma described the ANC and Mr Ramaphosa as a “proxy for white monopoly capital” and

claimed that his decision was part of a bid to rescue the ANC. “I have decided that I cannot and will not campaign for the ANC of Ramaphosa in 2024. My conscience will not allow me to lie to the people of South Africa and to pretend that the ANC of Ramaphosa is the ANC of Luthuli, Tambo and Mandela,” said Mr Zuma, referring to previous ANC leaders Albert Luthuli, Oliver Tambo and Nelson Mandela. (IPA Service)

INDIA BLOCK NEEDS TO PICK UP THREADS ON DECEMBER 19 FROM WHERE IT LEFT IN SEPTEMBER

Opposition INDIA Block is coming back on negotiation table on December 19, after a long gap of 80 days since Mumbai Meet on September 1, a crucial time that it has already lost, without moving forward on the resolution made, including launching joint rallies across the country and finalization of seat sharing by September 30. The opposition Meet therefore needs to pick up the threads where it had left them that resulted into heavy loss of surging political public sentiment in its favour. Congress in particular greatly lost in the November state elections in the key Hindi heartland states in Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, and Madhya Pradesh, in the former two it could not retain its power, and in the later one its hope of wresting power was shattered. It not only disheartened the Congress but also other opposition leadership, several of them even excused themselves to participate in December 6 meeting called by the Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, who was then forced to defer it for December 19.

CAN BJP WIN LOK SABHA ELECTIONS WITHOUT HARD HINDUTVA NARRATIVE?

Since 1989, when the BJP adopted Hindutva as an ideology in the Palampur Resolution, it has consistently propagated it in elections. The RSS has significantly contributed to the evolution of Hindutva as the cultural identity of the nation. With the advent of Modi Politics in 2014, new economic policies, social welfare schemes, a shift in foreign policy, and the consolidation of strong cadre-based organizations have begun assimilating with this ideology. It is

largely perceived as part and parcel of Hindutva Politics, even though many of them do not directly correlate with Hindutva ideology. Opposition Politics has started building on the opposite pole to counter Hindutva politics, which essentially encompasses the other policies of Modi. Thus, a bipolar Indian Politics has started embracing the Hard Hindutva narrative at different occasions and, of course, during elections. The recently concluded assembly elections in five states, with an emphasis on three Hindi Heartland States, tell a different



tale. The spectacular win of the BJP in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Chhattisgarh had little to contribute to the hard Hindutva narrative. A holistic approach combining welfare schemes, organizational restructuring, and ground mobilization of party workers, both from the BJP and RSS, has had the last laugh. A new metamorphosis has taken place in politics where Modi or BJP’s policies and politics are only seen as Hindutva

politics, and many times they do not have a communal overtone. A religion-focused hard Hindutva narrative seems to be taking a back seat for the time being. Mind it, Twitter’s right-wing narratives are not BJP’s actual narratives. When it comes to Madhya Pradesh, the BJP’s central leadership did not attempt to rebrand Shivraj Singh Chouhan to try the party’s luck.

US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to arrive in Israel today

Tel Aviv, Dec 20 (IANS) : Following the recent high-profile visits by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan to Israel, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin will arrive here on Wednesday.

The visit assumes significance as the raging war between Israel and Hamas has entered the 73rd day, with International pressure mounting on the Jewish nation to stop the hostilities in Gaza following several civilian casualties.

Sources in Israeli Defence Ministry told IANS that Austin will announce a new Marine Protection Force in the Red Sea as the Iran-backed Houthi militia in Yemen have attacking and even hijacking ships passing through the crucial region.

The Defense Secretary will also visit Qatar as part of a larger framework for mediatory talks between Israel and Hamas.

He is also slated to make a stop in Bahrain.



US to suspend rail operations on southern border due to migrant surge

Washington, Dec 20 (IANS) : The US Customs and Border Protection (CBP) announced that it will temporarily suspend operations at the international railway crossing bridges in Eagle Pass and El Paso, Texas, from Wednesday due to the continued surge in migrant crossings. In a statement on Sunday, the CBP said the suspension, which will come into force at 8 a.m. (local time) on Monday morning, is "in order to redirect personnel to assist the US Border Patrol with taking migrants into custody". The agency further said that it is "continuing to surge all

available resources to safely process migrants in response to increased levels of migrant encounters at the southwest border, fueled by smugglers peddling disinformation to prey on vulnerable individuals". "After observing a recent resurgence of smuggling organisations moving migrants through Mexico via freight trains, CBP is taking additional actions to surge personnel and address this concerning development, including in partnership with Mexican authorities." it added.

The CBP went on to say that in the past few weeks, it has made a "number of operational adjustments in order to maximise our

ability to respond, process, and enforce consequences".

"In Eagle Pass, vehicular processing remains suspended at Eagle Pass International Bridge 1. In San Diego, California, San Ysidro's Pedestrian West operations remain suspended. In Lukeville, Arizona, the Lukeville Port of Entry remains closed.

"We continue to adjust our operational plans to maximise enforcement efforts against those noncitizens who do not use lawful pathways or processes... and those without a legal basis to remain in the US," it added. Earlier Wednesday, border authorities apprehended nearly 3,000 migrants in Del Rio, Texas, and around 1,300 migrants in El Paso, straining federal resources, CNN quoted a Homeland Security official as saying.

Eagle Pass is in the Del Rio Border Patrol Sector.

In the first 14 days of December, more than 37,000 migrants were apprehended in the Tucson Border Patrol Sector alone -- which includes Lukeville. Last month, border authorities apprehended about 192,000 migrants between ports of entry in November, a 2 per cent increase compared with the 188,000 migrant apprehensions in October.



4 more Israeli soldiers killed in Gaza, overall toll reaches 126

Tel Aviv, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Wednesday announced the death of four more soldiers in Gaza, taking the overall toll of fallen troopers in the ongoing ground offensive to 126.

According to the military, Sgt. First Class Urija Bayer (20), a commando in the Maglan unit from the northern town of Maalot-Tarshihadied, succumbed to his injuries he had sustained during combat in southern Gaza on December 14. Meanwhile Sgt. First Class Liav Aloush (21) and Master Sgt. (res.) Etan Naeh

(26) from the Duvdevan unit; and Master Sgt. (res.) Tal Filiba (23) of the Yahalom unit of the Combat Engineering Corps, were all killed on Sunday during fighting in southern Gaza. The IDF also said that a few soldiers were injured in the fierce fighting, including one from the Duvdevan unit who is undergoing treatment at a military hospital after being previously wounded.

Israel has launched its ground offensive in the Hamas-controlled enclave on October 27 -- 20 days after the militant group launched its massive attack against the Jewish nation

Fierce storm in Argentina kills 14 people

Buenos Aires, Dec 20 (IANS) : At least 14 people were killed after a fierce storm that brought with it heavy rain and winds of 150 km/h, lashed eastern Argentina, authorities said. The storm first made landfall on December 16 in the port city of Bahia Blanca, around 570 km (355 miles) south of Buenos Aires, damaging buildings and causing power outages before moving towards the capital city on Wednesday, the

BBC reported. According to the authorities, after hitting Bahia Blanca, the storm caused part of the roof of a sports centre to collapse during a roller skating competition, killing 13 people. An additional 14 people were injured, with some who were trapped beneath the rubble. An orange weather alert, indicating a threat to life and property, was in force in parts of Buenos Aires province. On Wednesday, a woman was

killed in the town of Moreno, a suburb of Bahia Blanca, when she was hit by a falling tree branch. Also on Sunday, newly-appointed President Javier Milei travelled to Bahia Blanca with several ministers to survey the damage, the BBC reported. His office said the government was "working together with the provincial and municipal authorities to assist the victims and control the damage". The storm also led to two deaths in neighbouring Uruguay.



Qatar presents new proposals on Hamas-Israel hostage deal

Gaza, Dec 20 (IANS) : Qatar has presented new proposals to resume the hostage deal between Israel and the Hamas to facilitate a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip amid the raging war, a Palestinian source said. A high-level Qatari delegation has been discussing the proposals with Israeli officials in unannounced meetings held in Norway since December 16, the source told Xinhua news agency on Wednesday, noting that the talks were "exploratory". "In coordination with Egypt, Qatar is seeking to revive the swap deal between Israel and Hamas in a bid to reach new un-

derstandings for a humanitarian ceasefire in Gaza," the source said. The discussions have touched on releasing the remaining Israeli hostages taken by Hamas in exchange for several days of humanitarian truce in Gaza as well as the release of Palestinian prisoners from Israel, the source added. Qatar is seeking to release three senior Israeli officers in exchange for the release of several Palestinian prisoners who are serving life imprisonment in Israeli prisons, according to the source.



12 shot dead in Mexico Christmas party

Mexico City, Dec 20 (IANS) : At least 12 people were shot dead during a Christmas party in the municipality of Salvatierra of Guanajuato state, Mexico, authorities have said. The bloodshed occurred on Wednesday during a Christmas posada, a traditional Mexican celebration, in the community of San Jose del Carmen, the Guanajuato Attorney General's Office said, adding that an investigation is under way. A group of armed attackers arrived unexpectedly and opened fire at posada participants, the majority of them young people, leaving 12 dead and 10 injured, Xinhua news agency reported, citing initial reports from the municipal government. The wounded were taken to hospitals in the municipality, authorities said, without providing details about their conditions.

HK media mogul Jimmy Lai's trial begins

Hong Kong, Dec 20 (IANS) : The trial of Hong Kong media mogul Jimmy Lai, who has been in prison since 2020 over charges of colluding with "foreign forces", began on Wednesday and if found guilty, the 76-year-old could face life imprisonment. Lai, a UK citizen, was arrested under the National Security Law (NSL), introduced by China in 2020 in response to massive pro-democracy pro-

tests in Hong Kong, insisting that the law was necessary to quell unrest. China considers Lai a traitor who sought to undermine its national security, the BBC reported. According to the media mogul's legal team, he has been denied his choice of legal representation, after Beijing barred him from appointing a UK lawyer. He is being tried by three judges handpicked by Hong Kong Chief Executive John Lee, the team added. Lai, an outspoken critic of

the Chinese Communist Party, is one of the most high-profile people to be arrested under the NSL. Before he was detained, he was often at the frontline of pro-democracy protests, such as the 2014 Umbrella Movement and the 2019 demonstrations against an extradition bill. He founded and ran some of Hong Kong's best-known media outlets, including the now-defunct newspaper Apple Daily.





Suspected ISI agent arrested from Bengal

Kolkata, Dec 20 (IANS) : The sleuths of the Anti-Terrorist Squad of the Mumbai Police on Wednesday arrested a suspected ISI agent from Kaliaganj in North Dinajpur district of West Bengal. The arrested youth has been identified as Mukta Mahato. He has been booked under various non-bailable sections of the Indian Penal Code (IPC). As per information passed on to the authorities of West Bengal police, besides Pakistan, the accused has also been identified to have been responsible for passing on crucial security related information to the respective intelligence agencies in Iran and Palestine.



HC grants bail to two, denies to one in 2020 Delhi riots case

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted bail to Arif and Anish Qureshi, held since March 2020 in connection with a Delhi riots case

where Rahul Solanki died. Justice Amit Bansal noted the prolonged trial duration and absence of evidence linking them to a planned murder. However, bail was denied to

Mohd. Mustaqeem, identified as the person who shot the fatal bullet, based on eyewitness testimony. The case (FIR 75 of 2020) involves charges under Sections 302, 149, 147, 148, 436, 120, and

34 of the Indian Penal Code. While observing the applicants were participants of an assembly, Justice Bansal says that mere association doesn't imply knowledge of a potential murder.

The prolonged judicial custody, charge sheet filing, and pending prosecution evidence contributed to the grant of bail to Arif and Qureshi. In contrast, Mustaqeem's alleged involvement in serious offences, combined with the gravity of charges, led the court to deny bail despite the extended incarceration period.

The court observed the charges, punishable by death or life imprisonment, as a factor influencing the decision. "I am in agreement with the submission of the learned SPP that the applicant cannot be granted bail only on account of long incarceration, as the applicant has been charged with offences punishable with death or imprisonment for life," the court observed.



Minimum temperature rises above freezing point in Srinagar

Srinagar, Dec 20 (IANS) : Night temperature rose above the freezing point in Srinagar on Wednesday as the Met Department has forecast a drop in minimum temperatures during the next few days in Jammu and Kashmir. An Department official said the minimum temperature was 0.5 degrees Celsius in Srinagar on Monday as it was minus 8 in Gulmarg and minus 5.8 in Pahalgam. Leh town in Ladakh region had minus 12.2, Kargil minus 11.1 and Drass minus had minus 12.5 as the minimum temperature on Wednesday. Jammu city had 6.1, Katra 6.5, Batote 1.7, Bhandarwah minus 0.2 and Banihal 3.4 as the night's lowest temperature, an official of the Met Department said. The 40-day long period of harsh winter cold known locally as the 'Chillai Kalan' begins each year on December 21 and ends on January 30.



Delhi LG sanctions prosecution in embezzlement case :

Head constable, 10 others face charges

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Delhi Lieutenant Governor (LG) VK Saxena has granted sanction for the prosecution of Head Constable Vijay Pal in a case involving the embezzlement of government funds amounting to Rs 2.44

crore. This development follows the approval of prosecution of ten other Delhi Police officials earlier this year. The accused face charges of cheating, criminal conspiracy, and criminal breach of trust, allegedly misappropriating funds

intended for salary, arrears, and tuition fees for personal use. The LG, after careful scrutiny of evidence, determined a prima facie case against Vijay Pal, justifying the sanction under Section 197(1) of the Code of Criminal Procedure. The bank account details of the accused, spanning from 2009 to 2019, were submitted by Delhi Police, supporting the case for prosecution sanction.

Investigation revealed that the embezzled amount was credited to the accounts of the accused individuals, who subsequently transferred a portion to Anil Kumar and his relatives after retaining a commission. The LG's previous sanction for ten officials prompted the Home Department to submit Vijay Pal's case, who was with the traffic department during the alleged offences.

Earlier prosecutions, including that of a woman Sub-Inspector and various Head Constables and Constables, were sanctioned in connection with the case. The Economic Offences Wing of Delhi Police had registered the FIR in 2019 under Sections 409, 420, and 120B. The accused had been dismissed from service, and a charge sheet was filed against four individuals, with approval sought for the remaining six accused.

The seized accounts hindered the recovery of embezzled funds. Section 197 of the CrPC mandates prior sanction for the prosecution of public servants accused of offences committed in the discharge of official duties.

Woman dragged by Metro train: Delhi Transport Minister directs DMRC to submit enquiry report

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Days after a 35-year-old woman succumbed to the injuries that she sustained after her saree and jacket got stuck in the door of a Delhi Metro train, resulting in her being dragged by for several metres, Delhi Transport Minister Kailash Gahlot has asked DMRC to share the enquiry report.

"I understand from media reports that an enquiry will be conducted by the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety. In this regard, it is directed that the period within which the Commissioner of Metro Railway Safety shall be submitting its enquiry report, be indicated. Any order issued in this regard be sent for my information," read the order by Gahlot on Wednesday.



Fortified rice key to address malnutrition: Experts

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 20 (IANS) : Fortified Rice Kernels (FRKs) are crucial for the country to collectively address malnutrition and anemia as they have been scientifically proven to be nutritious, cost-effective, scalable and sustainable, said experts. This was pointed out at a stakeholders meet on FRKs organised by CSIR-National Institute for Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (CSIR-NIIST), here on Wednesday. H N Mishra, Emeritus Professor, (Food Technology), IIT Kharagpur, said in the pursuit of the comprehensive strategy to eradicate micronutrient malnutrition, fortification has emerged as an efficient and cost-effective alternative.

Punjab gives 4% DA hike to employees, pensioners

Chandigarh, Dec 20 (IANS) : Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann on Wednesday announced a four per cent hike in dearness allowance (DA) for government employees and pensioners from December 1, thereby enhancing it to 38 per cent. The decision was taken at a meeting of the Chief Minister with employees here. Mann said this decision would benefit lakhs employees and pen-

sioners. "The employees are a critical segment of the state administration and safeguarding their interests is the government's top priority," he said, adding that every effort would be made to ensure welfare of the employees. Dwelling on another issue, the Chief Minister said the government would flag the issue of restoration of Old Pension Scheme with the Union government.



Haryana giving highest compensation to farmers under PM Fasal Bima Yojana: Minister

Chandigarh, Dec 20 (IANS) : Haryana Agriculture Minister J.P. Dalal on Wednesday informed the legislative assembly that the state is giving the highest compensation to farmers under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana. Under this scheme, a total compensation of Rs 7,967.40 crore has been given to the farmers. Dalal was replying to a question asked by member Abhay Singh Yadav during the winter session of the Legislative Assembly here. The minister said under the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, Rs 6.75 crore has been released to farmers of Mahendragarh in lieu of claims for mustard crop in the Rabi season 2022-23. "There is no outstanding claim from any farmer in the district in this regard," Dalal said under

the scheme, Rs 1,943.34 crore was taken as premium from the farmers, while the state's share was Rs 2,575.10 crore and the Centre's Rs 2,295.42 crore. A total of Rs 6,813.87 crore has been given to insurance companies, while a total compensation of Rs 7,967.40 crore to farmers. Replying to another question, Dalal said the government is making all-out efforts to ensure that the Yamuna river area in Karnal district is not affected due to floods. At a meeting of the Flood and Drought Relief Control Board, projects worth Rs 33.77 crore have been approved and their work will be completed soon. He was replying to a question asked by member Harvinder Kalyan. He said instructions would be given to the department concerned to get roads leading to the erosion points repaired so that repair material can be delivered to



various erosion points in the Yamuna catchment. In another question, Dalal said the project to drain out the water accumulated due to water leakage in the NTPC Power Plant in Jharli would be completed by December 31, 2024. Replying to a question of member Laxman Singh Yadav, the minister said two villages -- Goria in Jhajjar district and Liodh in Rewari district, located around the NTPC Power Plant have been facing waterlogging in about 300 acres due to leakage from the power plant.

Eat Jhatka meat to make Sanatan Dharma more strong : Giriraj Singh

Patna, Dec 20 (IANS) : Union minister Giriraj Singh on Wednesday asked the people to eat Jhatka meat to make Sanatan Dharma more strong. "In Sanatan Dharma, we have a tradition of sacrifice (Bali Pratha) in worshipping Hindu gods and goddesses.





Tata Boeing Aerospace Delivers 250 AH-64 Apache Fuselages, Manufactured in India

Hyderabad, Dec 20 (TIM Bureau) : Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited (TBAL) has delivered the 250th fuselage for the AH-64 Apache attack helicopter from its state-of-the-art facility in Hyderabad. These fuselages are manufactured for customers around the world, including the U.S. Army, and most recently, the six on order with the Indian

Army. This milestone reflects TBAL's continuous dedication to bolstering India's defence capabilities and advancing the nation's indigenous manufacturing prowess. The joint venture between Boeing and Tata Advanced Systems Limited (TASL) employs over 900 engineers and technicians, leveraging cutting-edge robotics, automation, and advanced aerospace con-

cepts in its manufacturing processes. TBAL's 14,000 sqm facility serves as a global sole source supplier for Apache fuselages, with over 90 percent of the parts used in the Apache aerostructure assemblies manufactured in India through more than 100 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSME) suppliers.



ShareChat lays off 200 employees to streamline its cost base

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Social media platform ShareChat has laid off 200 employees, or about 15 per cent of its workforce, as part of strategic restructuring. Mohalla Tech, the parent company of ShareChat and short video entertainment app Moj, said the decision reflects the company's commitment to streamlining its cost base and achieving profitability within the next 4-6 quarters.

"ShareChat, today undertook a strategic restructuring as part of its annual planning for the year 2024," a company spokesperson said in a statement. "In alignment with our strategic vision, the company undertook a comprehensive restructuring effort to streamline operations, enhance productivity, and position the company for sustainable growth," said the company.

Apple Watch ban may cost firm \$300 to \$400 mn in sales: Report

San Francisco, Dec 20 (IANS) : Apple's decision to stop selling two of the latest models of Apple Watches -- Series 9 and Ultra 2 -- in the US this week could cost the company hundreds of millions of dollars, media reports said. As estimated by Wedbush Securities analyst Dan Ives, if Apple moves ahead with its plan to stop selling the two smartwatches, the decision will likely cost Apple about \$300-400 million in holiday-season sales, reports Insider. That's a relative drop as analysts are expecting Apple to generate close to \$120 billion in sales during the October-December period, including the holiday shopping season.

The sales suspension on the two Apple Watch models "doesn't move the needle much for the company, but still, it couldn't have come at a worse possible time," Ives was quoted as saying.

So far, Apple's stock hasn't been significantly affected by the sales suspension on the two watch models, remaining near its record high, the report noted.

"Apple strongly disagrees with the order and is pursuing a range of legal and technical options to ensure that Apple Watch is available to customers," a representative for Apple was quoted as saying.



Nifty closes lower after positive opening

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Markets witnessed a sharp sell off on Wednesday after a positive opening. Nifty ended sharply lower and closed near the lows of the day as it finally lost 302.95 points or 1.41 per cent to close at 21,150.15.

Broad market indices like the BSE Mid Cap and Small Cap indices lost more, thereby underperforming the Sensex/Nifty, says Subash Gangadharan, Senior Technical and Derivative Analyst, HDFC Securities.

Nifty has broken its previous support of 21,337 and there has also been a negative moving average crossover as the 20 period MA has moved below the 50 period MA.

Momentum readings like the 14-day RSI too have declined sharply from overbought levels indicating a loss of momentum.



Microsoft Copilot

Microsoft Copilot now lets you create personalised songs with simple prompt

San Francisco, Dec 20 (IANS) : Microsoft has partnered with Suno, a leader in artificial intelligence (AI)-based music creation, to bring their capabilities to its AI-powered chatbot Copilot, allowing you to create personalised songs with a simple prompt. "Through this partnership, people will have at their fingertips the ability, regardless of musical background, to create fun, clever, and personalised songs with a simple prompt," Microsoft said in a blogpost on Tuesday. "Suno has been a leader in AI music technology, pioneering the ability to generate complete songs -- lyrics, instrumentals.

Sharp up-move in IT stocks implying faster demand inflection than what Accenture commentary indicates

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) Accenture's 1QFY24 growth albeit within its guided band was the slowest since the pandemic and interestingly, incremental deceleration over the past couple of quarters has come from Managed Services, a closer proxy for India IT Services demand, JM Financial Institutional Securities said in a report.

A soft 2Q guide despite a favourable comp, suggest trend reversal, if any, would be back-ended. In fact, lower end of Accenture's FY24 organic growth guidance (now slightly below 0-3 per cent) implies no improvement even in 2H.

Management indicated no change in demand environment -- persistent weakness in BFS, CMT and discretionary spend. Budget conversations, though not concluded, are still revolving around spend reprioritisation. Even genAI spends are not incremental. These point to a flattish 2024



IT budgets, the report said. Fed-pivot has raised hopes of demand inflection in the sector. But no visible green shoots, as indicated by Accenture mean expectations (and multiples) are running ahead of fundamentals. That could be a risk, the said. "A likely weak discretionary

demand environment is negative for Infosys, in our view. Incremental weakness in the UK could have negative implications for TCS, even though TCS' exposure in UK is skewed towards Insurance and Public Services, in our view.



Mumbai biz couple invests Rs 1,100 cr in SpiceJet for 19% stake

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : In a strategic move to bolster SpiceJet's financial position and spur growth, Mumbai-based businessman Harihara Mahapatra and his wife Preeti have announced a substantial investment of Rs 1,100 crore in the airline. The acquisition secures the couple a 19 per cent stake in SpiceJet, as revealed in a stock exchange filing by the airline. The investment plan includes participation from Aries Opportunities Fund, holding three per cent, and Elara Capital, securing an eight per cent stake through the conversion of warrants.

Earlier, the Board of Directors of SpiceJet unanimously approved the infusion of fresh capital exceeding Rs 2,250 crore.

This move involves issuing equity shares to financial institutions, foreign institutional investors (FII's), high net worth individuals (HNI's), and private investors.

An official from SpiceJet said, "The Board's unanimous decision reflects our commitment to strengthening the airline's financial foundation and propelling its growth trajectory. The issuance of equity shares and warrants under private placement is subject to necessary approvals from shareholders and regulatory bodies."

The proposed preferential issues encompass a diverse group of investors, including Elara India Opportunities Fund, Aries Opportunities Fund, Mahapatra Universal Limited, Nexus Global Fund, Prabhudas Lilladher, Resonance Opportunities Fund, among others, aiming to raise funds aggregating over Rs 2,250 Crore.

The Board of Directors, in a meeting held on December 12 gave the green light for issuing up to 31,83,00,000 equity shares of face value Rs10 each ('Tranche I Issue') and up to 13,00,00,000 warrants, convertible to equity shares ('Tranche II Issue'), on a preferential basis.

Suspense continues over fate of Ford India's Chennai plant

Chennai, Dec 20 (IANS) : Suspense continues over the fate of Ford India Private Ltd's plant near here with speculation that the US auto company was having a rethink about its India operations. Ford India was looking out for a buyer for its Chennai plant after it shut down

Indian manufacturing operations here and in Gujarat. Ford India had earlier sold its Gujarat plant to Tata Group. Sources had told IANS that several people had visited the Chennai plant but nothing concrete had come out. According to reports, talks with one of the interested parties -- JSW group-led by Sajjan Jindal -- have broken down.



Reliance continues to lead Wizikey's NewsmakersIndia Ranking by a wide margin

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Reliance Industries -- India's largest corporate by revenues, profits, market value as well as social impact -- topped the 2023 Wizikey News Score ranking as the country's most visible corporate in the media.

The Wizikey's News Score is determined by the volume of news, headlines presence, reach of publications and readership. Reliance has continued to top the Wizikey News Score annual rankings since their inception for each of the last four years. Most importantly, Reliance has improved its News Score year after year.

For its #1 position Reliance has a News Score of 96.46 for 2023. It was 92.56 for 2022, which was a marked improvement from its News Score of 84.9 in 2021.

Wizikey's News Score is the world's first standardised metric to measure news visibility for brands.



Westerners tried to create distorted image of Goa: CM

Panaji, Dec 20 (IANS) : Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant on Wednesday said that many westerners tried to create a distorted image of the coastal state. Sawant made the remarks while addressing the inauguration of the 'Geetamrutam', here. He said that the late President, APJ Abdul Kalam used to read the Bhagwad Gita daily and tell its importance to the country and world. "This shows that it offers guidance not only to particular religion or caste, but to the whole world. Many westerners tried to create a distorted image of Goa. But we, people and the government, are trying to get the cultured facet of Goa before the world," Sawant said, without naming anyone. According to the Chief Minister, his government is focusing on culture and presenting it before the world. "I congratulate students and youth for the mesmerising recital of the Gita, and all the organisers for organising such a program in Goa. I congratulate the Divyang Students of Lok Vishwas Pratishthan school and all the schools in Goa who have joined the initiative of Geetamrutam," he said. "The Bhagvad Gita is a visionary text for everyone.



Sugar output rises in UP but falls in Maharashtra, Karnataka

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Sugar production in the country declined by 10.7 per cent to 7.4 million metric tonnes during the current season so far (till Dec 15) as several mills in Maharashtra and Karnataka started operations a fortnight after the scheduled date of the start of the crushing season from Oct 1, according to Indian Sugar Mills Association (ISMA). The sugar output in Maharashtra's dropped to 2.44 million tons from 3.3 million tons compared to the same period last year, while Karnataka's production fell 11.7 per cent to 1.7 million tons. However, sugar production in Uttar Pradesh increased by 9 per cent to 2.2 million tons during the current season as mills started their operations early. The government has eased the ban on diverting sugarcane juice for the production of ethyl alcohol to allow mills to divert up to 1.7 million tons of sugar for the purpose so that their profitability is not hit and sugarcane farmers are paid in time.



Delhi HC refuses to entertain PIL for urgent implementation of Women's Reservation Bill

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court on Wednesday refused to entertain a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) urging to urgently implement the Women's Reservation Bill, 2023, ensuring 33 per cent reservation for women in the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The Union Government, represented by Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Chetan Sharma, informed the court that the Bill has become an Act. "It is an exercise after the census. It has been engrafted under the Act. It has been debated in the parliament...This is a publicity litigation," the ASG said. The petitioner, while not challenging the Act or Bill's

validity, sought time-bound implementation of women's reservation. "I am not challenging the Act or the Bill...In the history of India, for the first time the parliament has unanimously passed the Bill. Since 75 years, there has been no representation. Let them come and say we can do it in a time bound manner. I am not challenging anything. I am only trying so that it can be done in a time bound manner. Otherwise it is not going to happen," petitioner's counsel said. The court noted the parliamentary stipulation for delimitation before women's reservation and suggested challenging the provision's validity. It stressed on the ongoing matter in the Supreme Court and the need for the petitioner to

either seek quashing or present compelling grounds. With the PIL withdrawn, Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Mini Pushkarna granted the petitioner, lawyer Yogamaya MG, the liberty to approach the Supreme Court, where a similar petition is already pending. Last week, Justice Subramonium Prasad had refused to entertain the same matter and had observed that the prayers resembled a PIL and suggested the petitioner to withdraw the plea and file a fresh PIL. The court had granted the petitioner the liberty to file a new PIL properly framed according to the Delhi High Court rules.

How Taj Mahal was saved from environmental pollution

Agra, Dec 20 (IANS) : Tourists who visit the 17th century monument of love, the Taj Mahal in Agra, rarely fail to ask if the world heritage monument has finally become safe from the dangers of air and water pollution. Is the Taj Mahal sinking? Is the colour of the mausoleum turning yellow or grey? The answer to all these questions and fears is both yes and no. When the SC pronounced its judgment in a series of directives while disposing of the PIL of eco lawyer MC Mehta, be-

tween 1993 and 1997, there was an international alarm over the conservational flaws and threats from environmental degradation in Agra. The apex court on the recommendations of the high-powered committee headed by scientist S Vardarajan shut down all polluting industries in the Taj Trapezium Zone, spread over 10,400 sq km, ordered the laying of a natural gas pipeline, asked the Mathura Oil Refinery to set up hydrocarbon cracker unit and use low sulphur crude, directed the UP government to ensure uninterrupted power

supply to discourage the use of diesel generators. It also asked the UP Forest department to intensify greening efforts to insulate the Taj Mahal from air pollution. The SC also ordered the construction of a barrage or weir downstream of the Taj Mahal on the Yamuna River. Over the past two decades, the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) has undertaken a series of measures to protect the Taj Mahal and other monuments in Agra from pollution. Frequent mud therapy using Fullers Earth has removed dirt stains



from the surface. The Taj looks cleaner and healthier, most tourists say. The Agra Municipal Corporation, presently headed by a young official Ankit Khandelwal, continuously ensures that the areas outside the Taj remain clean and attractive. The security agen-

cies both inside and outside have modern types of equipment to deal with any situation. The UP Police have introduced innovative crowd management techniques, leading to a hassle-free experience for the visitors. Undoubtedly, some of the mea-

asures have yielded encouraging results. "The Taj looks as sparkling and cleaner than it did when I visited it with my family in 1994," said an elderly visitor from Maharashtra. First-time foreign visitors feel mesmerised and express their awe at the sight of the monument bathed in the soft wintry sunlight. "Yes, it looks dazzling and emits youthful romantic vibes," said a female visitor from Italy. She had heard a lot about pollution and the toll it had taken on the mausoleum. But she agreed that it did not look fatigued or worn out. "Surely, a masterpiece, a divine architectural model," her companion added. Agra's Taj Mahal continues to draw hordes of tourists from all over the world.



Increased benefit for lapsing customers to affect returns for persistent life insurance policyholders

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : The proposed modification in the surrender value (or charges) of non-linked life insurance policies in the recently released the 'Exposure Draft Product Regulations 2023' by Insurance Regulator IRDAI has stirred up a hornet's nest, Emkay Global Financial Services said in a report. The idea behind this move seems to be bringing in additional control on expenses. The proposed changes in the surrender charges are looking to eliminate any surrender penalty above the "threshold premium", which means a material and increasing change in the surrender value for higher-

ticket policies with increased premium, the report said. The proposal is still in the draft stage, to be applied prospectively, and there is no clarity on the "threshold premium", making it extremely difficult to gauge the extent of impact on individual life insurers. The accidental outcome of this proposal by the Regulator, to improve policyholders' friendly aspect, is an indirect nudge or encouragement towards surrenders—and this goes against its philosophy of positioning life insurance as the long-term savings and protection product, the report said.

Congress slams Vijayan as Kerala turns India's 'Covid capital'

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 20 (IANS) : Amid a spurt in active Covid-19 cases in Kerala, Congress slammed Pinarayi Vijayan government, and said that it is busy with the statewide yatra and not doing anything. According to the figures released by the Centre on Sunday, of the total 1,828 active cases in the country, 1,634 cases are now in Kerala. On Wednesday, Kerala recorded 111 fresh cases out of the 122 in the country. More importantly, one Covid death was also reported on Sunday in Kerala.



7 illegal Bangladeshi immigrants, one local agent held from Howrah station

Kolkata, Dec 20 (IANS) : Seven illegal Bangladeshi immigrants and one local agent were arrested by the cops of the Railway Protection Force (RPF) on Wednesday from the premises of the Howrah Station near Kolkata. Sources said that the RPF got a tip-off that some illegal immigrants from Bangladesh were arriving by train. On Monday morning, the RPF cordoned

off the Howrah Station premises and started hunting for the immigrants. After an extensive search they were able to track the seven illegal immigrants, which included four men and three women. They have been identified as Md Kausar, Usman Sheikh, Kabir Hussain, Hakim Sheikh, Chalna Begum, Minara Begum and Tanha Tania.

Three persons of a family gunned down in Bihar

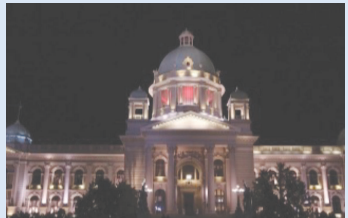
Patna, Dec 20 (IANS) : Three persons of a family were gunned down in Bihar's Madhepura district on Wednesday, police said. According to the police, the incident took place at around 12.30 a.m. in Sakarpura village under the Sadar police station limits when the victims were preparing to sleep. The unidentified miscreants barged into their house and shot them. The victims have been identified as Suryanarayan Shah (50), his wife Anita Devi (46) and son Pradyuman Shah (25). "We have learnt about the incident of a triple murder in Sakarpura village and recovered the bodies.





Social media, internet services face disruptions across Pakistan

Islamabad, Dec 20 (IANS) : Internet services faced disruptions almost across the country on Wednesday night as a large number of users complained about difficulties in accessing social media sites, Pakistani media reported. The apps, especially the website versions have been down since around 7 p.m. local time, Geo News reported, citing Downtetector. Karachi, Lahore, Mir Pur Khas, and Rawalpindi were the most affected cities in the country. Some users have taken to WhatsApp to report issues as well. The reason behind the outage is yet not clear as the Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (PTA) has not issued any statement on the matter, the media outlet reported.



Serbia holds extraordinary parliamentary election

Belgrade, Dec 20 (IANS) : Polling stations are open as Serbia conducted extraordinary elections on Wednesday, with citizens voting at parliamentary and local levels to decide state leadership for the next four years. Polling stations, numbering 8,273 both within Serbia and abroad, opened early Wednesday morning. A total of 18 political parties or coalitions are vying for 250 seats in the national parliament, Xinhua news agency reported. The political parties or coalitions securing the highest votes can engage in negotiations to shape the upcoming government.

Serbian President Vucic claims absolute majority at snap polls

Belgrade, Dec 20 (IANS) : Serbian President Alexander Vucic announced that the coalition around the ruling Serbian Progressive Party (SNS) won over 127 out of 250 seats at the snap parliamentary elections. "This is an absolute victory that makes me very happy," Vucic said on Wednesday night, noting that the coalition around SNS also won the elections in Serbia's northern

province of Vojvodina. Vucic said that Serbia will stay on the path to European Union (EU) accession while defending its territorial integrity in its southern province of Kosovo and Metohija, reports Xinhua news agency. According to unofficial results of the independent election monitoring organisation CESID, based on 80.2 per cent of their sample, the coalition around SNS "Serbia Must Not Stop" won 46.4 per cent of votes.



The second-ranked is the pro-European opposition coalition "Serbia Against Violence" which won 23.3 per cent. The SNS has been in power since 2012 but there have been three

elections in the past three years. As well as voting for parliament, Serbians were deciding on Sunday who would control 65 local authorities. Turnout nationally was estimated

at 59.1 per cent. Serbia is a candidate to become a member of the EU, and President Vucic is under pressure from both the bloc and the US to normalise relations with Kosovo. Kosovo declared unilateral independence from Serbia in 2008, and while it is recognised by more than 100 UN members, Serbia has refused to do so - backed by allies like Russia, China and five EU members. Some 95,000 ethnic Serbs live in Kosovo and those who wanted to vote had to cross into Serbia to cast their ballot.



Vivek Ramaswamy participates in over 40 campaign stops in a week

Washington, Dec 20 (IANS) : Indian-American presidential hopeful Vivek Ramaswamy participated in 42 campaign stops last week, more than any other 2024 candidate. According to the USA Today newspaper, the 38-year-old biotech entrepreneur hopes to keep up his rigorous timetable, hitting 38 events this week. At a campaign stop in Iowa on Wednesday, Vivek acknowledged that there is a "logistically grueling element" to his schedule, but the energy of the crowds in the state is keeping him motivated. The Yale Law School graduate with a net worth of about \$630 million said the formula that works for him is "W-O-R-K", and it all stems from a lesson learned from his parents. "Here's how you spell luck: W-O-R-K," Ramaswamy said.

"It's always been a formula that has worked for me in my life and be it in my academic background, be it as a student, be it in my career, as a businessman and now on this journey," he told USA Today. Anson Frericks, who co-founded the company Strive Asset Management with Ramaswamy early last year, told USA TODAY there's no time for rest in the latter's schedule. "There's no one that I've ever met that gets up in the morning, works out while he's taking phone calls," said Frericks, who's known Ramaswamy since high school. Ramaswamy worked 16 hours per day at Strive, Frericks said, and that work ethic culture "permeated" throughout the organisation. He is running fourth nationally in the aggregation of polls by RealClear Politics, which shows him with five per cent support in Republican primaries.

In the New Hampshire state primary, RealClear Politics places him fifth with seven per cent. On January 23, that state will be the second to hold intraparty elections for the Republican Party nomination, which can enable it -- and Iowa, which will be the first on January 15 -- to influence the primaries that follow in determining who stays on in the race where former President Donald Trump holds an overwhelming lead. "I'm confident that's going to be the right way to get elected -- not being insulated from the people who are representing, but in many ways, being responsive to the people we're representing," he told USA Today. "I'd rather spend time with these caucusgoers and Pizza Ranches across the state, rather than being a cloistered mega donor retreat," he added.

N.Korea fires 'unspecified ballistic missile' toward East Sea for 2nd day

Seoul, Dec 20 (IANS) : North Korea fired an unspecified ballistic missile toward the East Sea on Wednesday, the South Korean military said, just hours after it launched a short-range missile, amid speculation the latest one could be an intercontinental ballistic missile. The Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said it detected the launch but did not give further details, Yonhap news agency reported. North Korea fired a short-range missile from in or around Pyongyang at 10:38 p.m. Sunday, and it flew about 570 km before splashing into the East Sea, according to the JCS. The back-to-back missile launches came after South Korea's First Deputy National Security Adviser Kim Tae-hyo said a few days earlier

that the North could fire an ICBM within this month. The firings also came days after Seoul and Washington held the second session of the Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) and agreed to complete the establishment of guidelines on the planning and operation of a shared nuclear strategy by the middle of next year. Just after Wednesday's launch, the North's defence ministry lambasted the NCG meeting as "an open declaration on nuclear confrontation" and criticized the U.S.' deployment of major military assets to the Korean Peninsula this year. The North's latest sabre-rattling also came amid heightened tensions after Pyongyang scrapped a 2018 inter-Korean military agreement designed to reduce tensions and prevent accidental clashes along the border last month.



Israel opens Kerem Shalom crossing with Gaza for 1st time since conflict

Jerusalem, Dec 20 (IANS) : Israel opened the Kerem Shalom border crossing with the Gaza Strip, allowing the first entry of aid through the crucial channel into Gaza since the start of its conflict with Hamas on October 7. A government official, speaking anonymously, confirmed that security screening at the crossing has begun, allowing the entry of "several" aid ship-

ments on Wednesday into the enclave, Xinhua news agency reported. The decision to open the crossing was approved by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's cabinet on Wednesday. According to a statement from Netanyahu's office, the move specifically permits the transfer of humanitarian aid from Egypt into Gaza.



Blood supplies running low in China due to a spike in respiratory illnesses



Beijing, Dec 20 (IANS) : China is facing a shortage of blood -- a problem blamed on the current spike in respiratory illness, the cold snap and a fall in the number of donors, the media reported. Local authorities and blood centres in several of the biggest provinces, including Henan, Shandong, Fujian, Hubei and Shanxi, have warned of a sharp drop in the number of donations and appealed for people to contribute, South China Morn-

ing Post reported. According to state-controlled news outlet ThePaper.cn, blood stocks in Xinxiang, a city in Henan province, were running so low that they threatened the supply for operations and other hospital needs, SCMP reported. The city's publicity department and local Red Cross Society issued an urgent appeal on Wednesday, saying demand was surging but fewer people were donating because it was winter.

Covid-19 fears resurface in K'taka, health dept orders mock drills at hospitals

Bengaluru, Dec 20 (IANS) : As fears of the Covid-19 pandemic have resurfaced in Karnataka after several people in neighbouring Kerala have been infected by the new JN.1 variant, the state health department has ordered mock drills to be conducted at all government hospitals to ensure the preparedness of the medical infrastructure in case of an

emergency. Concerns have also been raised over the monitoring of the movement of people from Kerala to the border districts of Karnataka. The health department has ordered 3 lakh medical kits and increased the number of rapid antigen tests (RAT) in the state, especially in bordering regions and the state capital Bengaluru.



Assam Police arrest 4 persons involved in Jorhat blast

Guwahati, Dec 20 (IANS) : Assam Police have arrested at least four persons for their involvement in the minor blast which happened recently in Jorhat town near an Army camp, officials said on Wednesday.

The arrested individuals have been identified as Rahul Mohan, Dibyajyoti Chetia, Mintu Chetia, and Rintu Nath. Police said that all of them were working closely with the United Liberation Front of Assam -- independent (ULFA-I) cadres.

On December 13, a mild blast occurred near an Army camp in Assam's Jorhat town's Lichubari area.

Lt. Col. Mahendra Rawat, the Army PRO at Guwahati told IANS: "The miscreants threw a handmade bomb in a dustbin near the gate of the army camp in Jorhat. However, there were no casualties."

The banned militant group ULFA-I had taken responsibility for three small explosions that happened in the districts of Tinsukia, Sivasagar, and Jorhat in Assam between November 22 and December 13.



WBSSC faces Calcutta HC's ire over unsatisfactory report in school job scam

Kolkata, Dec 20 (IANS) : The West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) authorities, on Wednesday, faced the ire of a Division Bench of the Calcutta High Court for an unsatisfactory and incomplete report on the school job recruitment irregularities case that had been submitted to the court. The Division Bench of Justice Debangsu Basak and Justice Shabbar Rashidi even observed that in the last report filed in court, the third such report filed by the commission, the WBSSC seemed to have made an attempt to hide a lot of things.

Justice Basak and Justice Rashidi also directed the commission to file its fourth report within the next 48 hours as the matter will come up for hearing again on December 20. The Division Bench of Justice Basak and Justice Rashidi is a Special Bench constituted by the Calcutta High Court's TS Sivagnanam to hear the cases relating to the multi-crore cash-for-school job case in West Bengal. The Special Bench was constituted following a direction from the Supreme Court in the matter. Earlier, several secondary teachers in different state-run schools in West Bengal lost their jobs following an order of the Calcutta High Court. The job-losers subsequently approached the Supreme Court of India challenging that order.

Will commit suicide publicly, says Shiv Sena (UBT) leader accused of mafia links, graft

Nashik, Dec 20 (IANS) : Rubbishing allegations of graft and mafia links against him, Shiv Sena (UBT) Nashik leader Sudhakar Badgujar on Wednesday said if charges against him are proved, he will commit suicide in public. Badgujar, facing a SIT probe for allegations of mafia links after photos and videos showed him dancing with a terror convict Salim Shaikh alias 'Kutta', is now booked by Nashik Police on Sunday in a forgery and cheating



case. The ACB case pertains to a 2016 panel report of the Nashik Municipal Corporation claiming that Badgujar, then a Municipal Corporator and a NMC Standing Committee Member, was allegedly cornering civic contracts for his own company. Stoutly denying the charges, Badgujar told mediapersons today

that false cases are being filed pertaining to old matters against Opposition parties, but he will fully cooperate with the investigations. "If the charges against me are proved true, then I will hang myself publicly in front of the ACB office in the presence of my Shiv Sainiks," he declared.



Elderly, people having Covid symptoms, comorbidities must wear masks : K'taka minister

Kodagu, Dec 20 (IANS) : After Covid-19 sub-variant was detected in a woman in neighbouring Kerala, Karnataka Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao on Wednesday said that people who are having Covid symptoms, co-morbidities and above 60 years of age must wear masks, and an order related to

this will be issued soon. Addressing reporters in Kushalnagar town, Minister Rao emphasised that individuals with symptoms such as fever, cold, and cough must wear masks compulsorily. He said, "The current situation does not warrant the imposition of prohibitions. We have increased

the number of Covid tests. If the tests indicate an increase in the number of cases in two to three days, then we will initiate appropriate measures."

"There is no need for concern. Restricting the movement of people is unnecessary. The situation is normal. We will monitor the situation and take action based on evolving trends," he said.

"We have also directed to conduct Covid tests for individuals with influenza, respiratory issues, cold, fever, and cough symptoms. We appeal to people to wear masks compulsorily, and hospitals are being prepared for any eventualities," Rao said.

Daily monitoring is being undertaken in the state, especially in districts such as Chamarajanagar, Kodagu, and Dakshina Kannada in Karnataka, which share border with Kerala.



ASI submits survey report on Gyanvapi mosque, court reserves verdict

Varanasi, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Wednesday submitted a 1,500-page survey report on the Gyanvapi mosque at a Varanasi court in a sealed cover.

ASI submitted the report before the Varanasi district Judge A.K. Vishvesha.

The court has reserved its verdict on the matter.

Last week, the court had given a week's extension to the ASI to submit a scientific survey report of the Gyanvapi mosque complex in Varanasi.

Talking to reporters, Madan Mohan Yadav, a counsel for the Hindu side, said: "The ASI has submitted its scientific survey report before the Varanasi District Court." On the other hand, a petition has been moved by the

Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee (which manages the mosque) seeking information about the survey report. After the submission of the report, the Hindu worshippers prayed before the court to make the report public and sought directions for the supplying of copies of the report to all parties. The ASI conducted a scientific survey of the Gyanvapi complex in Varanasi as per the July 21 order of the Varanasi District Judge to determine if the mosque was constructed over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. On August 4, the Supreme Court refused to stop the ASI from surveying the mosque, except the 'wuzukhana' area where a 'Shivling' was claimed to have been found last year. Taking on record an undertaking made on

behalf of the ASI that no excavation would be done at the site and no damage will be caused to the structure, the court had allowed the survey to take place.

The court had ordered thus while disposing of a petition filed by Anjuman Intezamia Masjid Committee (which manages the Gyanvapi Mosque at Varanasi) challenging the Allahabad High Court order (of August 3) which permitted the ASI survey. On July 21, Varanasi District Judge directed the ASI Director to conduct a "scientific survey" of the Gyanvapi mosque premises except for the area that was sealed earlier (wuzukhana) to find out if the same has been built over a pre-existing structure of a Hindu temple. This order was upheld by the Allahabad High Court on August 3.



Fine villagers who stood mute spectators during victim's nude parade : K'taka HC to Govt

Bengaluru, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Karnataka High Court on Wednesday expressed the opinion that the villagers who stood mute spectators as a Dalit woman was stripped and paraded naked, should be fined by the Government, and the amount must be given to the victim.

A Division Bench, headed by

Chief Justice PB Varale and Justice Krishna S Dixit, while looking into the PIL filed regarding the case, further stated that the Karnataka Government should make a provision for punishment or imposition of fines on the people of Vantamuri Village in Belagavi district where the incident took place. The Bench mentioned that William Bentinck, a

Governor General of British-occupied India, imposed additional duties on villages where people indulged in thefts. Likewise, if additional duties are levied in the present circumstances, the people will show more responsibility in future.

"If people turn mute spectators when such incidents occur, what message goes out to society? The villagers who displayed cowardice for selfish goals should understand their responsibility towards the community. Such acts cannot be tolerated. The Government has to impose additional duties and collect fines from every resident of the village," the Bench stated. "The behaviour of the villagers at a time when a woman is stripped and assaulted, being mute spectators, is condemnable. If incidents like this are to stop in the future, a message has to be delivered to civil society. In this backdrop, we are ordering the collection of fines," the Bench explained. Advocate General Shashi Kiran

Shetty, representing the Government, submitted that a person named Jahangir helped the woman. "When the incident took place, there were 60 to 70 people, and no one, including gram panchayat members, dared to help the victim," said Advocate General Shetty. "The victim has undergone counseling, and better treatment is being administered. Her health is improving daily. "The Government has taken the case seriously and handed it over to the CID for an effective probe and 11 people were arrested.

The Government has also given two acres of land and Rs 5 lakh as compensation to the woman," he explained. The police officers and others who showed negligence are suspended. This incident would not have taken place if the members of the gram panchayat had intervened, he added.

Kerala Guv walks through crowded famed 'Sweet Street' in Kozhikode

Thiruvananthapuram, Dec 20 (IANS) : Making his intentions clear that he cannot be cowed down by the threats of the SFI-the student wing of the CPI-M, Kerala Governor on Wednesday reached the famed and crowded 'Sweet Street' in Kozhikode. He left the Calicut University campus after writing to the State Police Chief that he doesn't need any security cover.

"I love the people of Kerala and I know the people also like me. I

won't succumb to any threats," he told media persons and drove to Sweet Street.

Earlier, the SFI camp had said they will not allow him to step into the streets of the state.

While en-route to Sweet Street he stopped seeing school children and spoke to them while kissing a student. The people and school kids were seen rushing to him and he greeted them. He stopped at the busy Sweet Street and here also people greeted him.





Over 3 dozen Pakistan's TTP terrorists held in Afghanistan

Kabul, Dec 20 (IANS) : Afghan government has arrested over three dozen militants affiliated with Pakistan's outlawed militant outfit, the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP), over the past year, a local media outlet reported on Wednesday. "More than 35 or 40 persons of Pakistan's TTP are in our custody," Tolonews quoted Abdul Matin Qani, the spokesman of

the Ministry for Interior Affairs, as saying. Qani also told the private television channel that a number of the fighters of the Islamic State outfit have also been held in Afghan prisons, but did not give a specific number, Xinhua news agency reported. "The Islamic Emirate won't allow any group to use Afghan soil against any country," the official said.



War in Gaza spurs hate crimes against Muslims, Jews in US, Europe

Washington, Dec 20 (IANS) : A seven-year-old Palestinian-American boy was killed while his mother was injured by their landlord in Illinois state of the U.S. ten days after Hamas attacked Israel on October 7. Around a month later, a 69-year-old Jewish man was killed during a dueling pro-Israel and pro-Palestine rally in California. In November, three Palestinian college students were shot and injured in Vermont. The cycle of violence continues feeding of escalated anti-Semitism and Islamophobia sweeping across the

U.S and indeed in other parts of the world in the aftermath October 7 attack and the invasion of Gaza by Israel. Anti-Defamation League, which tracks anti-Semitism around the world, also reported an incident in Paris which on Wednesday. "A man entered the office of a kindergarten director who is Jewish, brandished a large knife, and said, 'You're a Jew. You're a Zionist. Five of us are going to rape you & cut you up like they did in Gaza'," the group said in a post on X. There has been a marked increase in both anti-Semitism and Islamophobia since October 7. ADL has said it recorded

2,031 anti-Semitic incidents between October 7 and December 7, which is 337 per cent more than the 465 incidents recorded over the same period in 2022. The Council on American-Islamic Relations, an advocacy group for Muslim Americans, has said it has received 2,171 complaints of anti-Muslim and anti-Palestinian bias. The rift has been playing out in U.S. colleges where anti-Semitism reached an alarming level that ended in the resignation of the president of one of the top universities following a congressional hearing.

Russia downs multiple Ukrainian drones

Moscow, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Russian air defence downed 33 Ukrainian drones over several Russian regions, the Russian Defence Ministry said on Sunday. "Thirty-three Ukrainian unmanned aerial vehicles" were "destroyed and intercepted" over Russia's Lipetsk, Rostov and Volgograd regions, the Ministry said in a telegram post. The Governor of the Volgograd region, Andrey Bocharov, said the drone attack did not result in any casualties or destruction in the area, Xinhua news agency reported.



S.Korea to coordinate bilateral, trilateral measures with US, Japan against N.Korea's provocations: Official

Seoul, Dec 20 (IANS) : South Korea will work toward coordinating bilateral and trilateral measures involving the US and Japan if North Korea continues to engage in provocations, a senior Seoul security official said on Wednesday. Principal Deputy National Security Adviser Kim Tae-hyo made the remarks at Incheon International Airport, west of Seoul, after returning home following his attendance at the second meeting of the South Korea-US Nuclear Consultative Group (NCG) in Washington. Last week, Kim raised the pos-

sibility of North Korea launching an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in December. North Korea last test-fired a Hwasong-18 solid-fuel ICBM in July, Yonhap news agency reported. "If such provocations from North Korea continue, we will work toward coordinating necessary measures between South Korea and the US, actions the two countries can take individually and joint actions that South Korea, the US and Japan can collectively implement," Kim told reporters after arriving at the airport. Kim added that Washington also "recognises the possibility of North Korea



conducting ballistic missile provocations, including ICBMs, by mid-December or at the latest early next year". He noted that the North Korea's potential capability to equip missiles with nuclear warheads was a crucial concern that the NCG needs to be attentive of. Amid renewed North Korean ICBM launch concerns, the USS Missouri (SSN-780), a Virginia-class nuclear-powered US

attack submarine, entered a key naval base in Busan, 320 km southeast of Seoul, earlier on Sunday, according to the South Korean Navy. The deployment of the submarine comes just three weeks after the USS Santa Fe (SSN-763), a Los Angeles-class submarine, entered the Jeju Naval Base on the southern resort island.

Floods displace over 6,500 people in Malaysia

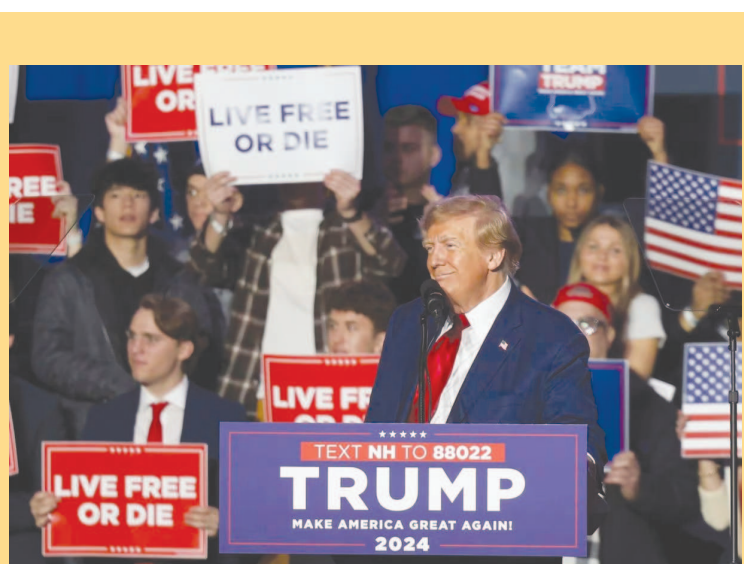
Kuala Lumpur, Dec 20 (IANS) : Floods displaced more than 6,500 people in four states in Malaysia following heavy rains on Wednesday. The east coast states of Kelantan and Terengganu are the worst hit, with more than 6,370 people being held in 39 flood relief centres, according to the Social Welfare Department. Meanwhile, the west

coast states of Perak and Selangor recorded 85 and 50 flood victims, respectively, Xinhua news agency reported. The Meteorological Department has issued warnings of heavy rains due to the northeast monsoon, which typically lasts from October to March, with strong winds and rough seas expected in northern states and the country's east coast.



Emergency flood alerts issued for parts of Australia's Queensland

Sydney, Dec 20 (IANS) : Emergency flood alerts were issued for parts of Australia's northeastern state of Queensland on Wednesday as a result of torrential rainfall in the wake of Tropical Cyclone Jasper. Major flood warnings were issued for the Barron river, the Daintree river, the Herbert river, the Johnstone river catchment, the Mulgrave river, and the Tully and Murray rivers, according to the Bureau of Meteorology. The Barron river at Lake Placid was currently sitting at 13.34 metre, which was 1.34 metre above the major flood height, the local Courier Mail newspaper reported. More water was pouring down towards the coast from the Atherton Tablelands, and the river was expected to rise further, the report said. Queensland Fire and Emergency Services urged residents to move to higher ground if it was safe to do so, or to the upper floors of their buildings, Xinhua news agency reported.



Trump tells rally immigrants are 'poisoning the blood of our country': Report

Washington, Dec 20 (IANS) : Former US President Donald Trump, just weeks after using the fascist terminology "vermin" to describe sections of American society he dislikes, again declared at a New Hampshire rally that immigrants are "poisoning the blood of our country," the media reported. Condemned for his previous remarks at the last rally he held in New Hampshire -- where he threatened to "root out the communists, Marxists, fascists and the radical left thugs that live like vermin within the confines of our country that lie and steal and cheat on elections" -- Trump appeared to double down in Durham, The Guardian re-

ported. "They're poisoning the blood of our country. That's what they've done," Trump told the crowd. "They poison mental institutions and prisons all over the world, not just in South America ... but all over the world." "They're coming into our country, from Africa, from Asia, all over the world," The Guardian reported. It is the second time Trump has used the "poisoned blood" phrase, which has been widely condemned for echoing white supremacist rhetoric. The first time he did so, in October, US President Joe Biden said the former President, who faces 91 criminal charges, was starting to use language heard in Nazi Germany.



Bangladesh to deploy army ahead of general elections

Dhaka, Dec 20 (IANS) : Amid continued tensions, army personnel will be deployed across Bangladesh to assist the civil administration in ensuring security ahead of the country's general elections slated for January 7, 2024, according to a poll body official. Bangladeshi Election Commission Secretary Md Jahangir Alam told journalists that President Mohammed Shahabuddin on Wednesday approved in principle the deployment of the army during the upcoming general elections, reports Xinhua news agency. Army personnel would be deployed as a striking force, Jahangir Alam said, adding that the decision came from a meeting between the president and the chief election commissioner Kazi Habibul Awal on Wednesday.

Migration threatens to 'overwhelm' Europe nations: Rishi Sunak

London, Dec 20 (IANS) : UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak has said "enemies" want to use migration as a "weapon" to deliberately drive people to their shores to 'destabilise the society'. In one of his strongest attacks on illegal immigration, Sunak warned that the growing number of migrants could "overwhelm" European countries if swift action is not taken to address the issue, The Evening Standard reported. "Criminal gangs find the ugliest

ways to exploit our humanity and don't have a problem with putting people's lives at risk by putting them on boats," Sunak said, addressing a gathering of Italian Conservatives and Right-wingers in Italy. "If we do not tackle this problem, the numbers will only grow. It will overwhelm our countries and our capacity to help those who actually need our help the most." The Prime Minister also said changes to global refugee rules could be needed to tackle illegal migration.





Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy to be awarded Arjuna Award

Bengaluru, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Sports ministry on Wednesday announced the National Sports Awards 2023 as a visually impaired cricketer and captain of Indian Men's Cricket Team Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy has been named for the prestigious Arjuna Award. Illuri Ajay Kumar Reddy (Blind Cricket) is among the 26 sportspersons selected for the Arjuna Awards for outstanding performance in Sports and Games 2023, who

will be awarded by the President of India at a specially organized function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on January 9, 2024. "Ministry of Youth Affairs & Sports announced the National Sports Awards 2023 today. The awardees will receive their awards from the President of India at a specially organized function at Rashtrapati Bhavan on 09th January, 2024 (Tuesday) at 1100 hours," the Sports Ministry said in an official statement. Illuri Ajay Reddy, who is currently working in SBI regional office in Bangalore described it as the "best moment" of his life.

'8 months ago I didn't have a state deal or BBL contract', says Spencer Johnson after Rs 10 crore GT deal in IPL

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Australia pacer Spencer Johnson, who was bought by Gujarat Titans (GT) for a whopping Rs 10 crore, in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 mini-auction held on Tuesday, has called it a "life-changing" deal. At 28, Spencer stood on the brink of a life-changing moment, a dream transforming into reality. His left-arm deliveries, touching speeds of 150 kph, had earned him a place among the elite, alongside cricketing luminaries like Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins, Glenn Maxwell, and Cameron Green.



IPL Auction 2024 : We believe in Shubman Gill, that's why he's made captain, says Ashish Nehra

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Gujarat Titans head coach Ashish Nehra said the franchise believes in the leadership qualities of Shubman Gill, which is why the opener will now be the side's skipper ahead of IPL 2024 season.

Gill was made GT's skipper after Hardik Pandya, who won them IPL 2022, was traded back to Mumbai Indians and is now their captain.

"See, IPL is a fast game and it throws challenges for everyone, including for the ones who are proven captains. We have seen how Shubman Gill has been playing for three-four years and how he has shaped up. He is 24-25 but he has a good head on his shoulders. We are there to support him." "We believe in him, there's no

doubt about it and that's why we have made him the captain. I am not someone who will always go by results. There are so many other things too. Yes, everyone strives and looks for results. But when it comes to captaincy, you must see different things. We are very confident that Shubman Gill is the right guy (to captain Gujarat)," said Nehra in a virtual press conference after the players auction in Dubai.



5 Nations Tournament: Indian Men's Hockey beat France 5-4 in a thriller

Valencia, Dec 20 (IANS) : The Indian Men's Hockey Team on Wednesday defeated France 5-4 in their fourth and final match of the 5 Nations Tournament. The match that went back and

forth throughout its duration saw Jugraj Singh (20', 60') and Harmanpreet Singh (25', 56') scoring a brace each while Vivek Sagar Prasad (16') contributed one goal for India. The first quarter saw France take

the lead by means of a penalty corner conversion from Lucas Montecot (11'). India quickly equalized early in the second quarter after a field goal from Vivek Sagar Prasad (16'). Jugraj Singh (20') then put India in the lead after converting a penalty corner before Captain Harmanpreet Singh (25') doubled the lead through another penalty corner.

France was soon awarded a penalty stroke and Etienne Tynevez (28') scored to make full use of it as the score read 3-2 in favour of India at halftime.

France equalized late in the third quarter with a field goal from Gaspard Baumgarten (43'). With the score reading 3-3, both the teams tried to break through each other's defence in the final quarter. France stole the lead through another penalty corner conversion by Etienne Tynevez (53') but their joy was short-lived, as Harmanpreet Singh (56') scored through a penalty corner to bring up his second goal. Jugraj Singh (60') returned to score his second goal through yet another penalty corner as India went on to win 5-4 and end their tournament on a high.



Ramita makes it two out of two in national rifle/pistol trials

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Asian Games bronze medalist in the event Ramita Jindal, took both the women's 10m air rifle national trials titles, winning trial 2 on Wednesday, day three of the on-going national rifle/pistol selection trials at the Karni Singh Shooting range. The Haryana shooter had earlier on Tuesday, won trial 1 as well. She shot 252.0 in the final to finish on top of the eight-finalists field, with Tamil Nadu's R.Narmada Nithin taking second place, 0.9 behind.

85th Senior National Badminton: Dhruv-Tanisha off to a flying start, Tarvi beat Tanya in two straight game

Guwahati, Dec 20 (IANS) : The mixed doubles pair of Dhruv Kapila and Tanisha Crasto on Wednesday defeated Vanlalringgheta Joseph/Laldingpull Ralte 21-5, 21-7 on day one of 85th Senior National Badminton Championship, here at R. G. Baruah Sports Complex.

Just three days ago, Dhruv and Tanisha had claimed victory at the Yonex Sunrise Odisha Masters 2023. Their victory over Joseph and Ralte in their round of 64 match in 18 minutes speaks volumes about their level of confidence and dominance.



IPL auction 2024: Faf feels RCB 'need to improve at home' as they strengthen bowling Unit

Bengaluru, Dec 20 (IANS) : As Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) executed well-thought-out six bids to shape a strong squad for the upcoming season, skipper Faf du Plessis Captain Faf du Plessis stressed the need to boost home performance while highlighting the fact that RCB did well last year while playing away from Chinnaswamy Stadium. RCB made strategic acquisitions to successfully achieve optimal team balance at the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 Player Auction in Dubai on Tuesday. With a strong nucleus already present in the top order with players like Du Plessis, Virat Kohli, Glenn Maxwell and Rajat Patidar, and having acquired services of all-rounder Cameron Green.



IPL Auction: Starc will be of massive help to our domestic bowlers, says KKR mentor Gambhir

New Delhi, Dec 20 (IANS) : Gautam Gambhir, the mentor of Kolkata Knight Riders (KKR), believes acquiring Australia's fast-bowling spearhead Mitchell Starc for a whopping INR 24.75 crore will also help the side massively in terms of passing on crucial learnings to the domestic fast-bowlers.

On Tuesday, Starc became the IPL's most expensive player ever, taking over the tag from his Australia captain Pat Cummins in less than two hours at the auction,

as Kolkata spent more than 75% of their purse at the auction. Starc has played only two seasons of the IPL in 2014 and 2015 for Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and was slated to play for KKR in 2018, but pulled out due to a leg injury. "He is an X-factor, there is no doubt about that. Someone who can bowl with the new ball, bowl in the death overs and more importantly, someone who can lead the attack."

2023 National Billiards & Snooker: Double for Natasha; Shruthi win Junior girls' crown

Chennai, Dec 20 (IANS) : Karnataka's Natasha Chethan bagged the Sub-junior girls' snooker title on Wednesday to record a double in the ongoing 90th National Billiards & Snooker Championships at the Nehru Indoor Stadium here. The Bengaluru teenager rallied to beat Gujarat's Aanya Patel 3-1 (35-57, 57-43, 55-42, 41-29) in the snooker final after defeating her for the Sub-junior girls' billiards crown last week.

"It feels amazing to win against a skilled opponent. It's my first twin title, looking forward to a few more," said Natasha, who was a semi-finalist at the IBSF women's under-21 world snooker championships in Riyadh in July. It was the day's second defeat in the final for Aanya, who lost to Tamil Nadu's L Shruthi in the Junior girls' billiards.

