

# THE INDIAN MAIL

ENGLISH DAILY

SUNDAY, 14 January 2024

VOLUME : 14 ISSUE : 137 PAGES : 12 ₹ 4

PUBLISHED FROM HYDERABAD, VIJAYAWADA



## KCR wishes people on Sankranti festival

BRS party president K Chandrasekhar Rao today greeted the people of Telangana on the occasion of Makar Sankranti festival.

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## Australia Open: Coco Gauff eyes "double-digits" Grand Slam goal

At just 19, the American phenom Coco Gauff, already a Grand Slam champion, spoke with unyielding determination about her aspirations to clinch "double digits" of Grand Slam titles.

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## LIC wins Rs 25,464 Income Tax refund on interim bonus

In a victory for Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the Income Tax Department has issued a refund intimation of Rs 25,464.46 crore for seven assessment years. The refund pertains to the...

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## Telangana CM seeks nod for Hyderabad-Vijayawada industrial corridor

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) : Telangana Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy on Saturday requested Union Industries and Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal to grant approval for the establishment of a new industrial corridor between Hyderabad and Vijayawada via Miryalaguda. He also sought final clearances for the proposed Hyderabad-Nagpur industrial corridor, estimating a substantial benefit of Rs 2,300 crore for Telangana. In a meeting held in New Delhi, CM Revanth Reddy, along with Deputy Chief Minister Mallu Bhatti Vikramarka, presented various proposals for industrial development to Goyal. He urged the Union Minister to reconsider the earlier plan of establishing a Pharma City between Hyderabad and Warangal and instead endorse the forthcoming proposal for a Pharma City to be submitted to the Centre.

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## Govt to create 5 lakh acres new ayacut by year end: Uttam

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) : Minister for Irrigation and Civil Supplies N Uttam Kumar Reddy said the Congress government in Telangana is set to optimise spending on irrigation projects, aiming to create a new ayacut of approximately 5 lakh acres by the end of this year. Uttam Kumar Reddy made these remarks during a me-

dia briefing following a review meeting with officials from the Irrigation Department at Jalasoudha on Saturday. He highlighted that the review meeting exposed significant wasteful and unproductive expenditure during the previous BRS government.

Continued on pg 02



## INDIA bloc approves Kharge as chairperson

New Delhi, Jan 13 (IANS) : INDIA bloc has approved Mallikarjun Kharge as the chairperson of opposition parties during a virtual meeting on Saturday. However, INDIA bloc is yet to officially announce Kharge's name. Sources said that Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar was the contender for the post of convener of INDIA bloc. However, during the meeting, he said that someone from Congress should assume the charge.

## Priyanka Gandhi likely to contest LS polls from K'taka, Telangana

Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) : Congress General Secretary Priyanka Gandhi is likely to contest on two seats from Karnataka and Telangana during the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Sources said that AICC -- without informing the local Congress unit -- has already conducted

surveys in Koppal constituency of Karnataka and is also considering fielding Priyanka Gandhi from another seat in Telangana. Koppal is one of the most backward districts of Karnataka and among the 8 assembly segments, 6 are with

the Congress. The survey, undertaken by AICC, has suggested that it is a safe seat for Priyanka Gandhi. Currently, Koppal constituency is represented by BJP's Karadi Sanganna.

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## Paigah Palace to become CM Revanth Reddy's Camp Office?

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) : After official inspections at the MCR HRD Institute, is the State government now taking a good look at the Paigah Palace to be finalized as Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's new camp office?



## Animal Welfare Board asks AP, Telangana to stop cockfights

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) : The Animal Welfare Board has issued emergency advisory to Andhra Pradesh and Telangana to stop cockfights during Makar Sankranti. The advisory has been issued on a complaint by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA).

Continued on pg 02

## Sharmila meets Chandrababu to invite him for son's wedding

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) : Congress leader Y. S. Sharmila on Saturday called on Telugu Desam Party (TDP) president N. Chandrababu Naidu at his residence here and invited him for her son's wedding next month. Sharmila drove to the former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister's residence in Jubilee Hills here and extended the invitation. Her son Y. S. Raja Reddy is scheduled to tie the knot with his girlfriend Atluri Priya on February 17.

Continued on pg 02



## Ministers were like puppets in BRS Govt : Mallu Ravi

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (NSS): Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) senior vice-president Mallu Ravi alleged that the ministers were like puppets in the previous BRS government.

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# Govt to create 5 lakh acres new ayacut by year end : Uttam

Continued From pg 01

Consequently, Uttam emphasized the need for the present government to prioritize optimal expenditure, focusing on maximizing new ayacut under irrigation.

He further stressed that preference would be given to projects capable of generating new ayacut swiftly.

"We discussed projects and expenditure during the meeting, identifying those where new ayacuts can be generated within 6 months and within one year. We categorized the time frames for new ayacut

creation, with a decision to maximize expenditure on projects achieving this goal within six months to one year. Our target for this calendar year, by December 2024, is to create new ayacuts spanning 4.5 to 5 lakh acres," he asserted. The Minister mentioned the initiation of a vigilance enquiry into the Medigadda barrage collapse and assured that those responsible would be held accountable. He also disclosed Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy's letter to the Chief Justice of the Telangana High Court, urging the appointment of a sitting judge for a judicial inquiry into the Kaleshwaram

project.

Addressing the issue of water rights, the Irrigation Minister affirmed the State Government's commitment to safeguard Telangana's water rights and expressed openness to productive discussions with neighboring States and the Central government.

"Recently, Chief Minister and I met with Central Minister for Water Resources Gajendra Singh Shekhawat, seeking national project status for the Palamuru Rangareddy Lift Irrigation Scheme. Though the Union Minister clarified the absence of a spe-

cific scheme for national project status, he assured funding for the Palamuru Rangareddy under different Central Government schemes," he said adding that a proposal would be sent this week to the Centre for funding of the project as assured by Union Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat.

Responding to another query, Uttam Kumar Reddy criticised former Chief Minister K Chandrashekar Rao for changing the Ambedkar Pranahita Chevella project to the Kaleshwaram project.



# Sankranthi rush on Hyd-Vijayawada highway: Motorists face difficulties

Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) :

When the Sankranthi festival arrives, the city of Hyderabad will be emptied. The villagers living in Hyderabad and other towns travel to their native places. Sankranthi festival is celebrated by the people, especially in the Telugu States. However, in many parts of Andhra Pradesh, the festive mood is even higher.

With this, APSRTC and TSRTC have arranged special buses from Hyderabad to various parts of AP. Those who own vehicles

(cars and other vehicles) are travelling to their native places in their vehicles. Vehicular traffic on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada highway has increased. Traffic jams have become a common scene. Motorists and commuters suffered a lot on Saturday due to the increase in vehicular traffic on the Hyderabad-Vijayawada national highway. Vehicles moved slowly on the highway due to fog in the morning hours. A large number of vehicles were stranded at the Choutuppal Panthangi toll plaza.

# Sharmila meets Chandrababu to invite him for son's wedding

Continued From pg 01

After the meeting, Sharmila told mediapersons that she invited Chandrababu Naidu and his family members and he accepted the invitation.

Sharmila, daughter of late Andhra Pradesh chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy, said Naidu recalled his relationship with her father.

Sharmila, sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy, advised mediapersons not to view everything from the political angle.

She mentioned that on Christmas, she sent sweets to not just Naidu and his son Lokesh, but

also to BRS leader KTR, Kavitha and Harish Rao. Sharmila had announced the engagement and wedding of her son on January 1.

The engagement is scheduled on January 18.

Sharmila had kept the first invitation card at her father's grave in Idupulapaya in Kadapa district on January 2.

The next day she handed an invitation card to her brother in Amaravati.

It was said to be the first meeting between the siblings in four years. On January 3, Sharmila joined the Congress party at a programme in New Delhi in the presence of AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge and senior leader Rahul

Gandhi. She merged YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) with the grand old party.

Sharmila had floated YSRTP in 2021 following differences with her brother.

The Congress is yet to give any position to Sharmila but she has expressed her willingness to take up any responsibility including the post of party president in Andhra Pradesh.

While joining the Congress party, Sharmila had stated that making Rahul Gandhi the Prime Minister was the dream of her late father and she would work towards realising that dream.

# Priyanka Gandhi likely to contest LS polls from K'taka, Telangana

Continued From pg 01

Earlier, former prime minister Indira Gandhi had also got political rebirth after winning the Chikkamagaluru parliamentary seat from Karnataka in 1978. Presently, the constituency is called Udupi-Chikkamagaluru seat represented by Union Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers Welfare Shobha Karandlaje.

Sonia Gandhi contested from Ballary seat in Karnataka in 1999 against late senior BJP leader Sushma Swaraj and emerged victorious after a close battle. Sources said that if Priyanka Gandhi will contest from Karnataka.

# Telangana CM seeks nod for Hyderabad-Vijayawada industrial corridor

Continued From pg 01

Revanth Reddy also brought to Goyal's attention the relocation of the National Design Centre (NID) from Hyderabad to Vijayawada post the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh and urged him to sanction a NID for Telangana.

The Chief Minister also sought approval for a Mega Leather Park, already designated for Nellore district in undivided Andhra Pradesh, to be relocated to Telangana, where the necessary land in Karimnagar and Jangaon districts has been acquired. Additionally, he appealed to Goyal to accord greenfield status to the Mega Textile Park in Warangal under the PM Mitra scheme.

Revanth Reddy emphasized the potential for accelerated industrial development, noting that the conversion from brownfield to greenfield would attract an additional Rs 300 crore in funds.

Highlighting the state's readiness to establish industries related to technical textiles, such as bullet-proof jackets, conveyor belts, and airbags, the CM urged Goyal to grant a Centre of Excellence for Technical Textiles/Testing Centre. Furthermore, he requested the allocation of a National Handloom Technology Centre (IIHT) to Telangana, emphasising the positive impact it would have on training weavers in modern technology and enhancing their income levels, especially with seven handloom Clusters already established in the state. Union Industries Department Joint Secretary Balaji, Union Textiles Department Additional Secretary Rohit Kansal, State Textiles and Handlooms Department Director Alugu Varshini, TSIIC CEO Madhusudan, Delhi Telangana Bhavan OSD Sanjay Jaju, Resident Commissioner Gaurav Uppal and others also participated in the meeting.

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**E-TENDER NOTICE NO: S&T/01/2024 DATED: 12.01.2024**

For and on behalf of the President of India, Senior Divisional Signal and Telecommunication Engineer (Maintenance) South Central Railway Guntakal invites e-tenders (Open) for the following work up to 15.00 hrs of 05.02.2024.

**Tender No.: 01-SNT-01-2024**  
**Description of the work (Signal and Telecom work):** Guntakal division - (1) Guntakal division - S&T requirements and associated works in connection with Engineering track renewal related works (TTR(R), TFFR, TSP(R), TRR(P), CTR(S) & renewal of SEJs works (Details of locations carried out available as detailed in Special Conditions) (2) VENDORU station - S&T works in connection with replacement of old dilapidated station building. **Advised Tender Value of the work (₹):** 17466213.82 **Earnest Money Deposit (₹):** 237300.00 **Completion Period:** 12 Months

**Tender No.: 02-SNT-01-2024**  
**Description of the work (Signal and Telecom work):** Guntakal division - (1) Improvements/ upgrade of telecom network facilities at officers residential colony/ Officers Rest House at Guntakal station. (2) Telecom arrangements for alternate control office at Guntakal station. **Advised Tender Value of the work (₹):** 21264211.72 **Earnest Money Deposit (₹):** 256300.00 **Completion Period:** 09 Months

**Tender No.: 03-SNT-01-2024**  
**Description of the work (Signal and Telecom work):** (1) Signal & Telecom works in connection with the construction of RUB's in lieu of traffic interlocked LC Nos.107 (TPT Yrd), 109(TCNR yard) & 120 (HX Yard) in Guntakal Division ( 3 Nos). (2) Replacement of MSDAC Tx/Rx coils on age-cum-condition basis in PMT-GTL section. **Advised Tender Value of the work (₹):** 37373473.20 **Earnest Money Deposit (₹):** 336900.00 **Completion Period:** 12 Months

**Tender No.: 04-SNT-01-2024**  
**Description of the work (Signal and Telecom work):** Krishnapuram station - S&T arrangements in connection with the proposed GATI SHAKTHI cargo terminal take off along with provision of OFC connectivity at switching station. **Advised Tender Value of the work (₹):** 12752626.95 **Earnest Money Deposit (₹):** 213800.00 **Completion Period:** 12 Months

If the date of opening of tenders happens to be declared holiday at later date, the tenders will be opened on the next working day at the stipulated time. Validity of the offer should be 45 days from the date of opening. Corrigendum will be issued for the above tender notice if necessary through online only. For further tender conditions /details and for downloading of tender document, please visit website [www.ireps.gov.in](http://www.ireps.gov.in).

**Sr.Divisional Signal & Telecom Engineer(M),Guntakal**

For further tender conditions / details and for downloading the tender documents, Please visit website at <https://www.ireps.gov.in> or [www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in](http://www.scr.indianrailways.gov.in)

**KCR wishes people on Sankranthi festival**

**Hyderabad, Jan.13 (NSS):** BRS party president K Chandrasekar Rao today greeted the people of Telangana on the occasion of Makar Sankranti festival. In a statement, KCR said Uttara yanam, which begins with the entry of the sun into Capricorn, was considered as an auspicious occasion. He wished that the Sankranti festival fill people's lives with joy and happiness. He also wished that people be balanced with the riches and pleasures.

**Jaipal Reddy's 82nd birth anniversary on Jan. 16 in city**

**Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Former union minister Jaipal Reddy's 82nd birth anniversary will be celebrated on January 16 at Spoorthi Sthal, Jaipal Reddy memorial place, PVR Marg, Necklace Road, near Sanjeevaiah park, here from 9 am. On the occasion of the dedication of spoorthi sthal, a memorial built to honour his indelible legacy and lifetime spent in service of the people will be held.

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Note: "It is informed that "SHIRAM CITY UNION FINANCE LIMITED" has been amalgamated with "SHIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" as per order of NCLT, Chennai. Subsequently the name of "SHIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" was changed as "SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED" with effect from 30.11.2022 vide Certificate of Incorporation pursuant to change of name dated 30-11-2022. Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Shiram Finance Limited (SFL) under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of SFL has been handed over the physical possession of the mortgaged Properties described herein below in pursuance of the order passed by the Hon'ble Chief Judicial Magistrate, at Hanamkonda, in Cr.I.M.P. NO. 42/2023, under Section 14 of the said Act and Rules, on this 12th Day of January' 2024.

Borrower Name and Address	Amount due as per Demand notice
1) Chandrasena Deshini S/o Veeramallu, Age: 47 Years, Occ: Saritha Ladies Emporium & Vijaya Sri Shopping Mall, Parka, # 2-12, Angadi Bazar, Parka, Warangal (Dist) 2) Vijaya Deshini W/o Chandra Sena, Age: 45 Years, Occ: Business, # 2-12, Angadi Bazar, Parka, Warangal(Dist), 8106107427. 3) Swamy Veldandi S/o Ramakoti, Age: 47 Years, Occ: Saibaba Photo Studio, # 4-113, Rangapur, Mogullapally, Warangal (Dist)	<b>Rs. 46,37,807/-</b> (Rupees Forty Six Lakhs Thirty seven thousand Eight hundred and seven only)

**Description of Property:** Open Plot in Sy.No.614/B to an extent of 630.11 Sq.Yards or 526.853 Sq.Mtrs situated at Madharam Village, Parkal Mandal of Warangal Rural district, the limits of registration District, Warangal and Sub-Registrar, Parkal is located within the following boundaries: **East :** Land of Pitta Anli. **South :** Damera Cheruvu Katta. **North :** 20 Ft wide Proposed way. **West :** Land of Pavushetty Sidhar

This notice is also hereby to caution the general public at large that the authorized officer of SFL is in the lawful Physical Possession of the immovable properties mentioned herein above and the Borrowers or any person shall not after receipt of this notice transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise deal with/ alienate any of the above mentioned secured assets referred to in this notice, without prior written consent of SFL.

**Place:** Parkal  
**Date:** 12-01-2024

**Sd/-Authorised Officer**  
Shiram Finance Limited

**Animal Welfare Board asks AP, Telangana to stop cockfights**

**Continued From pg 01**

India that despite a ban on cockfighting in the country, arenas have been set up and steroids and alcohol administered to roosters. According to PETA, the Animal Welfare Board of India (AWBI) swiftly issued a letter to the Andhra Pradesh Animal Welfare Board and the Telangana State Animal Welfare Board to direct authorities to take appropriate actions under the law and furnish an action taken report. Cockfighting is prohibited under Sections 11(1) (m) (ii) and (n) of the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act, 1960.

PETA India also sent letters to state police in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana urging action and offering to take in seized birds.

The Andhra Pradesh Director General of Police has issued instructions to unit officers to be vigilant against cockfighting during Makar Sankranti. "PETA India urges anyone who learns about a cockfight to report it to the police."

**CM Revanth greets people on Sankranti festival**

**Hyderabad, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Saturday, Revanth Reddy wished the people to celebrate the Bhogi with prosperity, Sankranti and Kanuma which marks the beginning of lights in their life, with abundant happiness. Stating that the people should celebrate the festival happily by enjoying the freedom in the 'Praja Palana' started in the Telangana State, the Chief Minister stated that his government is committed to work for the welfare of all sections of people and to take the State on the development path.



## Inauguration of Ram Mandir is 'festival' for Indians : Kumaraswamy

**Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Former Chief Minister and JD(S) State President H. D. Kumaraswamy on Saturday said that inauguration of Ram Mandir at Ayodhya is a "festival" for all Indians as people of the country since long wanted it to be built. On Congress leaders deciding not to attend the inaugural event of Ram mandir, Kumaraswamy told reporters that they (Congress leaders) should explain why they are not attending the event. "There is no connection between their decisions and me," he said.

Kumaraswamy said JD(S) has forged an alliance with BJP in the state, but the decision on candidates and constituencies has not been taken. Once the talks are over, the candidates will be decided and once the decision is taken, there will be no confusion and everything will fall in place, he said. On Congress high command's decision not to attend the inauguration of Ram mandir, State Home Minister G. Parameshwara said, "We have to obey the orders of the party. Since the high command had taken a call not to attend the event, we will not go for the inauguration in Ayodhya." State Cooperation

Minister K. N. Rajanna said the leaders have explained as to why the decision is made not to attend the inauguration of the Ram mandir. "Every village and town has had a Ram temple for thousands of years. The uniqueness of Ayodhya Ram mandir is that it is built at birth place of Lord Rama. Valmiki is the author of Ramayana. It is the demand of all communities that Valmiki temple should be built in Ayodhya. "We had gone to Ayodhya when Ram Lalla was worshipped in a tent. We will visit Ram mandir in future. It is a personal decision," Rajanna said. State Excise Minister R. B. Timmapur stated that Hindu religion is not the property of anyone. "We, Dalits are made to stand outside temples. People don't invite us inside." "There is no compulsion that we should visit Ayodhya. We can pay respect from here. Those who talk about Hindutva must speak about Dalits. They should clarify whether their definition of Hindu includes Dalits. If Dalits founded a place, the BJP should inculcate etiquettes of Dalits," Timmapur said.



## Techies design app to carry out flesh trade involving foreigners, arrested in B'loru

**Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Karnataka police have arrested two software professionals on charges of running a prostitution racket involving foreign nationals after designing an exclusive app. The main accused is identified as Govindaraju. The police have also arrested eight other persons in connection with the case and rescued seven women foreign nationals. According to police, the accused, though earning handsome income, lost money in share market and came under heavy financial burden. To repay the money to the banks he had taken loan from, he thought of earning money by running a prostitution racket with women from foreign countries. The accused developed an app for the purpose and came in contact with a Turkish woman in Bengaluru.

## SC extends interim bail to ex-Maha Minister Nawab Malik for six months

**New Delhi, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court on Saturday extended for six months the interim medical bail of former Maharashtra Minister Nawab Malik in an alleged money laundering case. A bench of Justices Bela M. Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal ordered that the temporary bail granted to Malik on medical grounds be extended for six months. In a brief hearing, Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S.V. Raju, appearing for Enforcement Directorate, said that the anti-money laundering agency has no objection if Malik's interim bail is extended by the apex court. "Interim bail is extended for a further period of six months as prayed for. List the main matter

after six months," the apex court ordered. Previously, the top court had extended the interim relief for three months noting that Malik is still suffering from chronic kidney ailments and his medical condition has not improved. Malik was ordered to be temporarily released on bail by the Supreme Court in August last year solely on medical grounds for a term of two months on such terms and conditions as may be determined by the trial court. The ED had arrested the senior political leader of the state in February 2022 under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) in a money-laundering case arising out of an alleged under-valued property deal with underworld links.



## Ram temple inauguration : Congress given 'golden opportunity to reduce its sin', says Himanta

**Guwahati, Jan 13 (IANS) :** In response to Congress turning down an invitation to attend the inauguration of the Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said the grand old party was given a "golden opportunity to reduce its sin". In a post on X, Sarma said: "The @VHPDigital had given the Congress party a golden opportunity to reduce its sin by extending their leadership an invitation to attend the Shri Ram Mandir Pran Pratishtha Mahotsava. "Although, in my humble view, they did not de-

serve such an invitation at the first place for their views against the Ram Mandir from the very beginning. "By accepting this invitation, they could have symbolically offered an apology to the Hindu Samaj. However, like Pt Nehru did with the Somnath Temple, the Congress leadership did the same with the Ram Temple. History will continue to judge them as an anti-Hindu party." He also attached a letter by Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh dated January 10 of officially declining the invitation.



## Northeast Frontier Railways to eliminate all manned level crossings

**Guwahati, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Northeast Frontier Railways (NFR) is aiming to eliminate all the manned level crossings across the zone and several measures to spread caution and awareness among road commuters have been undertaken, an official said on Saturday. The official stated that the NFR has taken up the elimination of manned level crossing gates in a phased manner and the works are progressing rapidly. "During the current financial year up to December 31, a total of 13 manned level crossing

gates were eliminated. Five Road Over Bridges (ROB) were constructed and eight diversions were provided through different routes in lieu of level crossing gates," Sabyasachi De, the Chief Public Relations Officer of NFR told IANS. According to an official statement, in Assam, four level crossing gates were eliminated at Nagaon and one each at Jorhat, Sonitpur, Lakhimpur, Nalbari, Chirang and Morigaon districts. Moreover, in West Bengal, two level crossing gates were eliminated at Malda district. Also, in Bihar one level crossing gate was

eliminated at Katihar district during the period. De said, "NFR has been strengthening safety at level crossing gates by implementation of caution and signage boards with statutory warning indicating mandatory precautions to be observed when the railway gate is kept closed for the approaching train. Further, the zone has also been conducting awareness campaigns to alert road commuters on the importance of following rules and regulations at level crossing gates for their own safety."

## TN police conduct search in Periyar University campus ahead of Governor's visit

**Chennai, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Special teams of the Tamil Nadu Police conducted searches in many parts of Periyar university in Salem, hours before the scheduled visit of state Governor R.N. Ravi. The Governor is scheduled to meet the University officials in the afternoon. Six police teams led by six inspectors of the Tamil Nadu Police conducted searches in the campus. Searches were conducted at Internal Quality Assurance Cell (IQAC) office, Tamil Department Office, Computer Centre, Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) centre, Planning and Development Office and Finance Office. The University Vice Chancellor R. Jagannaathan is out on a conditional bail in a case of cheating and criminal conspiracy.



## Five UP cities to get funds for improving environment

**Lucknow, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Five cities in Uttar Pradesh -- Agra, Kanpur, Varanasi, Ghaziabad and Meerut -- will get a Rs 255.12 crore push from the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change for improving quality of

life as well as environment. The Centre's aid to Uttar Pradesh cities is part of the Modi government's push for improving overall standards of living in cities that have a million plus population.

## ECI seeks daily report on law & order situation in Bengal

**Kolkata, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The office of the Chief Electoral Officer (CEO) in West Bengal will now have to send daily reports on the law & order situation in the state to the Election Commission of India (ECI). Insiders in the CEO office said that the commission top brass wants information on every instance of breach in law & order normalcy in every corner of the state.



## Unprecedented dry spell shrinks water bodies in Kashmir



**Srinagar, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Unprecedented dry spell amid intense cold has resulted in many water bodies hitting the bottom in Kashmir as the weather office forecast generally dry weather till January 25. The ongoing 40-day long period of harsh winter cold

known as the 'Chillai Kalan' started on December 21 and will end on January 30. "If the present dry spell continues till the end of Chillai Kalan then we are headed for a miserable summer water situation. "Snowfall after the Chillai Kalan hardly replenishes the perennial

water reservoirs in the mountains", said a senior engineer of the Jal Shakti department. Srinagar had minus 5, Gulmarg minus 3.5 and Pahalgam minus 6.3 as the minimum temperature. Leh town in Ladakh had minus 15.8 and Kargil minus 14.9 as the night's lowest temperature.

## OPINIONmail



## IMPLICATIONS OF NATIONAL ELECTIONS FOR GOLD DEMAND IN INDIA AND WORLD MARKETS

Geopolitics and guidance from the US Federal Reserve may not be the only factors that determine the performance of gold in the New Year. The Indian and other elections slated for the year may also be determinants. India is the second largest gold consumer in the world and the rate at which change is happening in the country is unprecedented and has a bearing on the performance of the precious metal globally. The IMF forecasts that per capita GDP growth will increase 23 percent between 2022 and 2026. On the face of it, rising living standards benefit gold, but there are other factors in play: the country's savings rate is declining, and the government's 'bank the unbanked' initiative is creating a sea change in investment choice and availability. The Indian middle class expanded and household incomes have risen, with per capita net income rising from Rs 7,000 in the early 1990s to Rs 134,186 per year in financial year 2019-20. This is expected to presage an almost four-fold increase in consumer spending, from US\$1.5 trillion in 2018 to US\$5.7 trillion by 2030. Such a shift could have mixed implications for gold demand. Households in lower and mid-income groups have traditionally considered gold a better form of investment than bank deposit accounts. The role of gold as an inflation hedge is the biggest comforting factor for them. More than any formal financial training, their actual experience and intuitive understanding of inflation has guided their investment planning for years. Here, gold has become their default option compared to other financial products, not surprisingly making gold their natural hedge against inflation and contingencies. A study had found that households with low net worth were more likely to take an informal loan than households with high net worth. As a large amount of lending against gold happens in the informal sector, it further strengthens the fact that gold as an investment is preferred by low-income or rural households in India.

Globally, there were two major risks for gold in 2023. First was the Silicon Valley Bank failure, which affected every investment product. The other one was the Israeli-Hamas conflict, which rather added to the yellow metal's safe haven value. According to the World Gold Council, national elections this year, including the US, EU and Taiwan, apart from India, could also mean need for higher hedges by investors, which should play out positively for gold. According to the council, despite some bumps along the way, the global economy proved remarkably resilient in 2023 and talks of an impending recession diminished as the year progressed. Now, market consensus for 2024 points to a 'soft landing' given the expectation of positive growth ahead. Alongside the economic deceleration, market participants also expect inflation to cool sufficiently for central banks to begin cutting rates. Such a soft-landing scenario would be a welcome outcome for investors.

Gold's performance responds to the interaction of its roles as a consumer good and as an investment asset. It draws not only from investment flows but also from fabrication and central bank demand. From a historical perspective, a soft-landing or a no-landing scenario could result in a flat to slightly weaker average gold performance next year, the council feels. However, this time around there are two additional factors in gold's favour: increased geopolitical risks and the increasing demand by central banks for gold. Purchases by official institutions have helped gold defy expectations over the past two years. In 2023 excess central bank demand is estimated to have added 10 percent or more to gold's performance. And they will likely continue buying. Even if 2024 does not reach the same highs as the previous two years, the council anticipates that any above-trend buying should provide an extra boost. If the no-landing scenario does occur, it could prove initially challenging for gold. While positive economic growth would support consumer demand and higher inflation would increase the need for hedges, it is likely that the combination of higher rates and a stronger US dollar would create a drag, as they did in September 2023.

(By K Raveendran)

EDITORIAL  
the indian mail

## WILL BILAWAL BHUTTO BE THE CHOICE OF PAKISTANI ARMY AS AGAINST NAWAZ SHARIF?

The Pakistani National Assembly passed a resolution on Saturday declaring a resolution demanding a delay in the February 8 general elections as undemocratic and unconstitutional. The new resolution calls for the elections to be held on time. The resolution was passed after an independent Senate Member, Dilawar Khan, presented a resolution in the Senate on Friday demanding that the elections be held after February 8 due to the severe cold and security reasons in February. The resolution was accepted in the Senate in the presence of 14 members. Jamaat-e-Islamic leader Mushtaq Ahmad Khan presented the new resolution in the Senate Secretariat. The resolution calls for the elections to be held on time by the constitution. This resolution effectively averts the crisis looming over the February 8 general elections. The opposition parties in Pakistan had vehemently opposed the proposal to postpone the February 8 general elections. They argued that the elections should be held on time as scheduled. The Election Commission did not take any decision on the proposal, which led to speculation about the future of the elections.



## ISRAELI SHIFT IN MILITARY TACTICS THREATENS TO TURN INTO A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

US pressure on Israel to switch gears and focus on targeted precision strikes and killings, rather than indiscriminate bombing of the Gaza Strip, potentially heightens the risk of the war escalating into a regional bust-up and expanding beyond the Middle East.

The heightened risk suggests US efforts to allow Israel to continue attempting to destroy Hamas while minimising civilian Palestinian casualties could backfire. This would further underline that the only way of preventing an escalation, protecting innocent lives, and securing the release of Hamas-held hostages, is a ceasefire.

Even so, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, on his fifth visit to Tel Aviv since the war began, reaffirmed in talks with Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, "Israel's right to prevent another October 7 from occurring" but "stressed

the importance of avoiding civilian harm, protecting civilian infrastructure, and ensuring the distribution of humanitarian assistance throughout Gaza." Blinken was referring to Hamas' October 7 attack on Israel that sparked the Israeli assault on Gaza. His reference to infrastructure constituted the United States' first public criticism of Israeli attacks on Gazan hospitals, schools, and other civilian infrastructure.

Signalling differences with Blinken, Netanyahu's office did not issue a readout after the meeting.



## HAS NARENDRA MODI'S KERALA VISIT BOOSTED BJP PROSPECTS?

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders in Kerala are on cloud nine. They think that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's recent visit to Thrissur will help them win five to six seats in the Lok Sabha elections in 2024. But, the BJP's chances of opening their LS account from Kerala this time around are not at all bright, given the ground realities in the State,

which has remained BJP-hostile and a secular bastion.

No doubt, the Prime Minister's visit to Thrissur did create ripples. The massive crowds that thronged the Thekkinkadu Maidan where Modi delivered a fiery speech must have gladdened saffron hearts. But they must realize one thing. Managing a crowd is easy for a party like BJP which has enormous resources and manpower at its disposal. The million

dollar question is: will all the people who flocked to Thekkinkadu Maidan be at the polling booths to vote for the BJP? Opinion is sharply divided on this crucial question. The Prime Minister, for a change, singled out women for special praise in his speech. He spoke at length about the benefits his government has showered on women.

## FRANCE'S CHANGE OF PRIME MINISTER WON'T REVIVE MACRON'S FORTUNES

Ending her nineteen-month stint as French prime minister on Monday, Elisabeth Borne seemed keen to remind us that she was, despite all evidence to the contrary, a woman of the Left. Making clear that she was not going willingly, Borne's resignation statement near-directly echoed the words with which the Socialist Michel Rocard had left the prime minister's office back in 1991. Borne's reference to the center-left governments of decades past was, *Le Monde* observed, a symbol of her "left-wing reference points" — even if her administration's final act was "the passing of an immigration reform hailed by the far-right as its own 'ideological victory.'" The legislation Borne passed last month with the help of conservative opposition MPs punitively tightened the rules on migration, causing upset even among some more liberal Macronites. It limits access to benefits, places an overall cap on the number of foreigners arriving, and makes it easier to expel "delinquents" even if they are not criminal convicts.

## WONDERFUL PROGRESS IN INDIA BLOCK SEAT-SHARING TALKS FOR NOW

The second week of January 2024 has witnessed a wonderful progress in INDIA block seat-sharing arrangements, which only a week ago seemed too difficult to achieve, due to respective stand of the constituent political parties having unreasonable claims on seats. However, when talks were officially begun with Congress coming forward with their plan, the hurdles started melting away, which is much frustrating to the BJP in general and PM Narendra Modi in particular since they would be seeking their third term during Lok Sabha Election 2024 but will have to face stiff united contests from INDIA block candidates.

A glimpse of the progress and its smoothness can be seen in case of Maharashtra where seat sharing among the Congress, Shiv Sena (UBT) and NCP (Sharad Pawar) was being considered difficult. However, when they sat to settle the issue, they did it in wonderful smoothness. The state has 48 Lok Sabha seats, and seat-sharing was agreed upon in all the seats. All the three political parties have been part of the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in the state and now are in INDIA block. They also agreed to induct Prakash Ambedkar's Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi into its fold. Broad agreement has been reached in 40 seats while differences could not be solved on 8 seats. As per the understanding Congress and Shiv Sena

(UBT) may contest on 18-20 seats each while NCP (Sharad Pawar) may contest on 8-10 seats. Maharashtra would be the first state to officially announce seat sharing arrangement. After a final meeting early next week. It should be noted that in the 2019 Lok Sabha election Shiv Sena (undivided) and the BJP had contested under NDA, in which BJP had won 23 seats, Shiv Sena (undivided) 18 seats, NCP (undivided) 4 seats, and Congress 1 seat. The seat sharing arrangement achieved among INDIA constituents show great trouble for the BJP since the party was able to bag only 27.59 per cent of votes. A section of Shiv Sena and a section of NCP after splits led by Eknath Shinde and Ajit Pawar respectively are with

BJP, but with their partial support base BJP may not be able to even retain its seats. Seat-sharing in Bihar is also in progress in the right direction. The constituent political parties have almost theoretically agreed on the number of seats they would be contesting. JD (U) and RJD would be contesting on 17 seats each while the Congress would contest on 4 seats, and the Left parties on 2 seats. The final agreement would be announced soon, that may spell a great trouble for the BJP, for it had won 17 seats and merely 23.58 per cent of votes from the state in 2019 Lok Sabha election that too when it had contested in alliance with JD(U), a party that has lately deserted the BJP, and now part of INDIA block.



## Sweden fulfilled significant part of responsibilities for NATO bid: Turkey

**Ankara, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Sweden has fulfilled an important part of demands by Turkey for the Nordic country's NATO bid, Turkish parliament speaker Numan Kurtulmus said. "We see that Sweden also fulfills a significant part of its responsibilities," Xinhua news agency quoted Kurtulmus as saying to reporters. "If we are to act jointly within an alliance, Turkey has extremely legitimate expectations," he said, noting that Ankara expected relevant countries to end "any kind of support" to terrorist groups and ban what it called anti-Turkish activities on their lands. Sweden should act carefully and meticulously against Islamophobia in Europe, he noted, adding that his country is not against NATO's expansion. The Turkish parliament's foreign affairs committee approved

Sweden's NATO bid following deliberation in December last year, a first step necessary for putting it to a full parliament vote. Kurtulmus said that it was now up to the general assembly of Parliament to decide the timing of the vote after it returns from recess on January 16. A full parliamentary approval is needed before the protocol can be signed into law by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan. Turkey approved Finland's NATO bid in March last year but has slow-walked Sweden's accession, demanding the Nordic country further address Ankara's security concerns. Turkey is under pressure from the US to approve Sweden's accession to NATO, but Ankara has been holding up its ratification to press Washington to allow the sale of F-16 fighter jets.



## UNSC condemns Houthi attacks on Red Sea shipping, demands immediate end

**United Nations, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The UN Security Council (UNSC) has condemned the attacks on ships by Houthi rebels and demanded that they immediately end the assaults in the Red Sea region vital to commerce for India. The resolution proposed by the US and Japan was adopted on Saturday after China and Russia abstained on the resolution rather than vetoing it after three amendments introduced by Moscow failed to pass. The resolution received 11 votes in the 15-member Council, with Algeria and Mozambique joining in the abstentions. The Council action came after

three days of intense backstage negotiations while the situation in the Red Sea region was heating up. Hours before the resolution was passed, the US and Britain said that a joint operation neutralised one of the biggest attacks by the Houthis using missiles and drones. US Permanent Representative Linda Thomas-Greenfield said: "There have been dozens of attacks since November on shipping in the Red Sea, which have affected more than 40 different countries." "If the Houthi attacks continue, there will be consequences," she warned.

## Indo-Canadian charged for trying to transport cocaine worth \$4.86 mn

**Toronto, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A 35-year-old Indian-origin commercial truck driver has been charged after he was caught by the authorities while trying to transport cocaine worth approximately C\$6.5 million (\$4.86 million) into Canada. Sukhwinder Dhanju was arrested by the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) on September 26 last year after he arrived at the primary inspection booth at the Queenston-Lewiston Bridge port of entry in Niagara-on-the-Lake in Ontario province.

The driver was referred for secondary examination of his truck and trailer, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) said in a release issued on Saturday. An inspection of the cargo led to the discovery of 202 brick-shaped objects which tested positive for cocaine, and had a total weight of 233 kg. Dhanju was then arrested by the CBSA, and transferred to the custody of the RCMP Border Integrity Unit, along with the suspected drugs.

## Pannun case: US says will not provide 'discovery material' to Nikhil Gupta

**New York, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The US government has refused to provide "discovery material" after it was asked by a New York court to respond to a motion filed by lawyers of Indian national Nikhil Gupta, named in an alleged plot to assassinate Sikh radical Gurbatwant Singh Pannun. Gupta's lawyers, while also claiming that their 52-year-old client is facing human rights violations, had sought material, or evidence, relating to the charges against him in a 'Motion to Compel Production of Discovery' filed on January 4 in the US District Court, Southern District of New York. Following this, in an order dated January 8, US District Judge Victor Marrero asked the government to file a reply to the motion within three days of the date of the order. In a response filed with the district court on Saturday, the US government, while objecting to provide the "materials", said "the defendant is

not entitled to discovery". "...the government is prepared to produce discovery promptly upon the defendant's appearance in this District and arraignment on this case. Before then, however, the defendant is not entitled to discovery, and he identifies no good reason for the Court to order it," federal prosecutors said. "The government stands ready to provide discovery to him, like any other criminal defendant, promptly upon his appearance and arraignment in this District. His motion to compel discovery should be denied," US Attorney Damian Williams said. On January 4, defence counsel filed the motion requesting that "the Court enter an order directing the Government to begin providing defence counsel with discovery material". Gupta's attorney Jeff Chabrowe said in the motion that the "defence materials" are "relevant to its ability to defend the instant charges". In response, the New York court had given the government three days to file a reply to the motion. A motion to compel is a request



made to the court to force a party to comply with a discovery request. It is typically filed by the party seeking the information or evidence, and it asks the court to order the other party to comply with a discovery request that has not been fulfilled. If the motion is granted, the court will typically order the other party to provide the requested information or documents within a specified timeframe. In addition, the lawyers mentioned in the court documents that Gupta, who was arrested by Czech authorities on June 30, 2023, in response to a request by the US under an extradition treaty, is facing human rights violations while being in custody. The motion stated citing Gupta's family that they have "limited ac-

cess" to him, he is not allowed consular access and "faces basic human rights violations in custody in Prague. In November last year, US prosecutors announced murder-for-hire charges against Gupta for involvement in a foiled plot to assassinate a US citizen allegedly on behalf of an Indian government employee. Gupta has been charged with murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, and conspiracy to commit murder-for-hire, which carries a maximum sentence of 10 years in prison, US Attorney for the Southern District of New York, Matthew G. Olsen, had said.



## Wrongly-accused UK post office managers to be exonerated under new law : PM

**London, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The UK government will introduce new legislation to overturn the convictions of hundreds of post office managers who were wrongly convicted of theft and fraud, Prime Minister Rishi Sunak said. During his weekly question time in the House of Commons, Sunak said on Saturday that the new law will make sure the victims of "one of the greatest miscarriages of justice" in the country's history are "swiftly exonerated and compensated", reports Xinhua news

agency. The scandal involved at least 700 post office managers who faced prosecution by the Post Office between 1999 and 2015. Many of them have spent years asserting their innocence, citing issues with a new accounting and stocktaking software program called Horizon, developed by a Japanese company. Some of the managers served prison sentences after being convicted of false accounting and theft. Many of them were financially ruined, and some committed sui-

cide. To date, fewer than 100 convictions have been overturned. Sunak said on Saturday that a new upfront payment of 75,000 pounds (\$95,000) will be offered to a group of former postmasters who took their case against the Post Office to the High Court in 2019. Business and Trade Minister Kevin Hollinrake said later that victims will sign a statement confirming they did not commit crimes, in order to have their convictions overturned and claim compensation.

## S.Korea's air traffic at over 80% of pre-Covid levels in 2023

**Seoul, Jan 13 (IANS) :** South Korea's air traffic recovered to over 80 per cent of pre-pandemic levels last year on unleashed pent-up demand for travel following years of Covid-19 virus curbs, the Transport Ministry said on Saturday. The number of passengers on domestic and international routes exceeded 100 million in 2023, accounting for 81.5 per cent of 123 million recorded in 2019 before the pandemic hit the airline industry, Yonhap News Agency reported citing data from the Ministry. The number of passengers on domestic routes came to 32.19 million, or 97.6 per cent of pre-pandemic levels, while that of passengers who traveled abroad via the country's two international airports stood at 68.32 million, or 75.6 per cent of pre-pandemic levels.



## Singapore hopes to recruit auxiliary police officers from India, other Asian nations

**Singapore, Jan 13 (IANS) :** An Indian-origin minister in Singapore has said that the city state is considering hiring auxiliary police officers (APOs) from Asian nations like India, China, the Philippines and Myanmar. Home and Law Affairs Minister K. Shanmugam told Parliament on Saturday that his Ministry hopes to expand the jurisdictions where officers can be recruited from for their Auxiliary Police Force, Channel News Asia reported.

In a written parliamentary response to MP Sylvia Lim, Shanmugam said the move is being considered as the number of APOs, currently being hired from Taiwan, dropping significantly since the practice began in 2017. The minister also pointed to a growing demand for APOs due to heightened security threats and new infrastructure, such as Changi Airport Terminal 4. "We need to allow the auxiliary police forces to recruit foreign APOs to meet the increasing demand for security services,"



Shanmugam said. "They (Auxiliary Police Force) face challenges in sustaining an adequate pool of APOs, given the shrinking local workforce, requirements such as physical fitness, and the job options

Singaporeans have." Singaporeans made up about 68 per cent of the total population of APOs, with the remaining 32 per cent being Malaysian and Taiwanese as of November last year.



## Allahabad HC imposes fine of Rs 25,000 on UP govt for 'wasting' time

**Lucknow, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court has imposed Rs 25,000 fine on the state government as its counsel "wasted" 10 minutes precious time of the court. The order was passed by Justice Abdul Moin on a petition filed by Rajit Ram Verma. The matter was related to the Arms Act. In the case, the state had filed its reply already. To the reply of the state, the petitioner filed his rejoinder affidavit, which was taken on record by the court. After the matter had been argued for around 10 minutes, the court had gone through the provisions of the Arms Act, 1959 as well as the judgements as cited by petitioner's counsel. The court had also noted the arguments of

petitioner's counsel. Thereafter, the state counsel requested for some time to study the matter. As such, on his request, the court listed this case after a week. The court said, "As the matter has been adjourned after hearing for around 10 minutes, a cost of Rs 25,000 is imposed upon the respondent -- state for its counsel having wasted precious judicial time of the court. A request for studying the matter could have been made by the standing counsel as soon as the case was taken up.

## Calcutta HC dismisses PIL by BJP on Sandeshkhali attack

**Kolkata, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Saturday dismissed a PIL filed by West Bengal unit of BJP on January 5 attack on the ED and CAPF officials at the residence of a local Trinamool Congress leader in Sandeshkhali. Dismissing the PIL, the division bench of Chief Justice T.S. Sivagnanam and Justice Supratim Bhattacharya observed that the PIL was filed just on the basis of media reports. Since the PIL lacked any background research on the event it was not admissible. The division bench also observed that the central security and investigation agencies have enough authority and knowledge on how to deal with such events. The PIL was filed on January 8 and the first hearing in the matter happened on Saturday, where the division bench dismissed it.



## 'Ram Naam Maha Yagna' in Ayodhya from Jan 14 to 25

**Ayodhya, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A grand 'Ram Naam Maha Yagna' to establish 1,008 Narmadeshwar Shivlings, will be held on the bank of Saryu River in Ayodhya from January 14 to 25.

Sources said that 21,000 priests from Nepal will arrive to conduct the Maha Yagna for which 1,008 huts have already been raised to place the Shivlings, along with a grand mandap, which has 11 layers of roof.

A tent city has been established on 100 acres on the sand ghat of Saryu River, 2 km away from Ram temple. The Maha Yagna

will start from January 17 with the chanting of 24,000 verses of Ramayan, which will continue till January 25. Every day, the Shivlings will be anointed with 'panchamrit' and 1,100 couples will perform havan with recital of Ram Mantras in 100 ponds built at Yagyashala. He said that for the carving of Shivlings, stones have been brought from Narmada River of Madhya Pradesh. "The carving work will be completed before January 14," he added. Atmanand Das Maha Tyagi claimed that the Nepal King had named him 'Nepali Baba'.

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## Refusal to attend Ram mandir inaugural due to fear of losing minority votes: Joshi tells Siddaramaiah

**Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Union Minister for Mine, Coal, Law and Parliamentary Affairs, Pralhad Joshi on Saturday said that the Congress party's decision not to attend the Ram mandir inauguration was taken out of fear of losing minority votes. Earlier, Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah had released a press statement and put out a social media post supporting the Congress party's decision not to attend the inauguration of the Ram mandir. Reacting to the statement,

Union Minister Joshi stated in Bengaluru, "They have rejected the invitation fearing loss of minority votes. They had not attended the inauguration of the Somnath temple. People are observing the height of appeasement politics by the Congress party." Further, rebutting CM Siddaramaiah on social media, Joshi stated, "Mr. Siddaramaiah it is not a rally being conducted by the Congress party, which was founded by a foreign national, which is being held in Ayodhya. It is a programme of the installation of the



statue of Sri Ram who represents the devotion of 140 crore Indians." "Those who have faith in Sri Ram will visit the temple without bothering about politics. You have come to power through false assurances and in order to hide the failures of

governance, you should not bring these futile matters to the forefront. Not only the state, the whole nation is seeing which direction your false government is moving in," he charged.



## Review petition filed against SC's decision on abrogation of Article 370

**Srinagar, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A review petition was filed in the Supreme Court on Saturday against the five-judge Constitution Bench's decision on abrogation of Article 370. Confirming this, one of the original petitioners, Muzaffar Iqbal Khan told reporters that he had filed the review petition in the apex court today. The Constitution Bench of the Supreme Court on December 11, 2023 unanimously held that the Parliament's right to abrogate Article 370 was ab-

solute. According to law, the review petition against any decision of the Supreme Court must be filed within 30 days of the announcement of the decision. The review petition has to be heard by the same Bench that passed the original order. Since one of the judges out of the five who delivered the historic judgment, Justice Sanjay Kishen Koul has since retired, the review petition will be heard by the remaining four judges who sat on the original Constitution Bench.



## Rajbhar's security personnel booked for thrashing lawyer

**Lucknow, Jan 13 (IANS) :** An FIR has been registered against the security personnel of Suheldev Bhartiya Samaj Party (SBSP) president Om Prakash Rajbhar, for allegedly thrashing a lawyer on the road when the former's convoy was passing by. "The incident took place on December 7, 2023, evening but the matter came to light after an FIR was registered at the PGI police station on January 9 on the chief judicial magistrate's order to investigate the matter," said Brijesh Chandra Tiwari, SHO, PGI. The unidentified security personnel have been booked under Section 323 (voluntarily causing hurt) of the IPC. The case was registered on the complaint of Ashutosh Kumar, 28, a resident of Pancham Khera at Rae Bareilly Road, who stated that he is a lawyer at the Lucknow bench of Allahabad high court.

## Mumbai cops nab double murder accused after 1200 km, 12-day hunt across states

**Mumbai, Jan 13 (IANS) :** After a hot pursuit lasting 12 days and 1200 kms across multiple states, the Mumbai Police finally caught a killer who was on the run after clobbering to death his wife and brother, an official said here on Saturday. The accused, Drayson M. D'Sa, 40, had a huge quarrel at home and allegedly killed his wife Chitra, 35, and older brother Damian M. D'Sa at their home in Malad west late on December 29, before fleeing from there. According to a complaint by his sister-in-law, Bindu Damian D'Sa -- who had gone to office at the time -- Drayson had pounded his wife Chitra and brother Damian with a china clay

flower pot and also stabbed them with some sharp objects. While Chitra died immediately, Damian lapsed into a coma due to the trauma injuries and died after five days (January 2) in a private hospital. The purported motive is said to be an old property dispute between the two brothers and their wives, which claimed the lives of two, an official said. Based on the complaint by Bindu, the Bangur Nagar Link Road Police Station lodged an FIR of double murder and started the probe as the killer had gone incommunicado. In a smart tactic to stay off the police radar, Drayson did not carry his mobile phone or use any elec-

tronic gadgets or bank cards, making it extremely difficult for the police teams to track or trace him. Nevertheless, the police teams took into account all aspects, especially the possible modes of travel when he was on the run, and started scanning CCTV footage of the vicinity. From a single grab on CCTV, the police launched a veritable manhunt, painstakingly scanning the CCTV footage on the 'escape route' of Drayson, spanning Maharashtra, Goa, Karnataka and finally zeroing in on him in Kolkata, West Bengal, as he was reportedly preparing to cross the borders to either Bangladesh or Nepal.



## Akali Dal seeks CBI probe into molestation of girls in Punjab school

**Chandigarh, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia on Saturday demanded a CBI probe into the molestation of girls in a government elementary school in Majitha town, besides calling for the dismissal of Education Minister Harjot Bains. In a statement here, Majithia said in case, Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann did not dismiss the Educa-

tion Minister immediately, it would be surmised that he was siding with the perpetrator behind the heinous act instead of the victims and their parents. He also questioned why the Chief Minister had not visited the victim families till now. "You have time to attend Vipassna retreats and ferry your boss Arvind Kejriwal across the country but you don't have time to visit adolescent victims of sexual abuse."





## BHEL bags Rs 15,000 cr EPC contract from NLC India for Odisha project

**Chennai, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Integrated lignite and coal mining and power generation company for 2,400 MW pit head greenfield thermal power project in Odisha, the two companies said. In a regulatory filing, NLC India said the 2,400 MW (3x800 MW) pit head power project will come up at Jharsuguda District in Odisha based on Ultra Super Critical Technology.

EPC contract scope includes engineering, manufacturing, supply, erection and commissioning of equipment such as boilers, turbines, generators, balance of plants and others.

"The entire power of 2,400 MW is tied up with the states of Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Kerala and Puducherry and PPAs (power purchase agreement) already executed," NLC India said.

The coal linkage is available from 20 MTPA Talabira II & III OCP mines of NLC India which is already operational from the year 2020 in Jharsuguda and Sambalpur districts of Odisha. The water required for the project is linked from Hirakud Reservoir.

Boilers will be designed to suite the co-firing of Bio mass as part of Green initiative.

## 'A contractual obligation': Wipro on lawsuit against Jatin Dalal

**Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Bengaluru based corporate giant Wipro on Saturday clarified that there is nothing personal about lawsuits filed against former top officials of the company. "It's about contractual obligations," the company said. Thierry Delaporte, Wipro CEO, addressing media after announcement of December quarter results said that the company is sticking to business practice. "The company is not destabilised by these decisions because we have the pipeline. We have been in business for 30 years. I know how this is working and we only apply those normal terms and we are committed to our employees," Thierry Delaporte said. "We realise that when you are bringing talent, we have been also promoting a lot of talent, it triggers a little bit of churn and you must be prepared for that. If you are transforming the organisation and if you are providing as much talent in the organisation as we have done over the last two to three years,

you have prepared for the fact that some people will decide to go," Thierry Delaporte said. The Bengaluru-based corporate giant Wipro has filed a lawsuit against its former Chief Finance Officer (CFO), Jatin Dalal, in the Bengaluru Civil Court. In turn, Dalal, presently with Cognizant as CFO, has submitted an application to the court requesting arbitration. Wipro has sought Rs 25.15 crore damages from its former Chief Financial Officer (CFO) Jatin Dalal for violating the non-compete clause of his employment contract.



## LIC wins Rs 25,464 Income Tax refund on interim bonus

**New Delhi, Jan 12 (IANS) :** In a victory for Life Insurance Corporation (LIC), the Income Tax Department has issued a refund intimation of Rs 25,464.46 crore for seven assessment years.

The refund pertains to the ongoing dispute between the Income Tax Department and LIC over allowing interim bonus paid to policyholders by the corporation as deductible expenditure.

The aggregate Rs 25,464 crore refund pertains to AY 2012-13, 2013-14, 2014-15, 2016-17, 2017-18, 2018-19, and 2019-20, LIC said in a filing with stock exchanges. While LIC's stand was that such interim bonus payouts came under permissible expenditure for taxation purposes, the assessing officer of the Income Tax Department had initially taken a view that it was taxable as surplus was being distributed as an interim bonus. LIC had

challenged the assessing officer's decision in various appellate forums including ITAT, which directed the IT Department to re-examine the case. On reconsideration, the assessing officer, while issuing the refund for seven assessment years, also made a separate demand order of Rs 2,133 crore for two other years.

So as against earlier expected refund of about Rs 27,500 crore for seven assessment years, LIC has now got refund of Rs 25,464 crore after adjusting Rs 2,133 crore, sources said. LIC now plans to appeal to Commissioner, Appeals against all the demand orders - Rs 2,133.67 crore, Rs 1,395 crore, and Rs 1,370 crore - for various assessment years, according to LIC's filings with the stock exchanges. LIC also said there is no material impact on financials, operations or other activities of the corporation due to these demands orders.

## FAA to keep Boeing 737 MAX 9 grounded till further notice

**Washington, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) announced that it will keep Boeing 737-9 MAX grounded for the safety of travellers until extensive inspection and maintenance are conducted and data from inspections is reviewed.



## Citigroup to cut 20,000 jobs in big corporate overhaul

**New York, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Global banking major Citigroup will reduce 10 per cent of its workforce, or about 20,000 employees, in the next two years in a major corporate overhaul. About 20,000 employees will be let go over the "medium term", Citigroup said after presenting fourth-quarter earnings late on Saturday. Citigroup CEO Jane Fraser hailed 2024 as a "turning point" for the US banking group, reports CNBC.

## Hyundai, Kia's sales of eco-friendly cars to hit 1 mn units in US

**Seoul, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Accumulative sales of eco-friendly vehicles produced by Hyundai Motor and Kia, South Korea's leading automakers, are expected to exceed 1 million units in the first quarter, the companies said on Saturday.

Accumulative sales of eco-friendly units of Hyundai and Kia combined had amounted to 946,962 units as of the end of 2023. They are expected to surpass the 1 million mark in the January-March period, Hyundai and Kia officials said. Last year, the companies sold 278,122 eco-friendly cars, including electric vehicles and hybrids, combined in the United States, representing a 52.3 percent sales



growth from 2022, reports Yonhap news agency.

According to company officials, Hyundai and Kia's combined market share of eco-friendly vehicles in the U.S. stayed above the 20 percent mark for three consecutive years since 2021. Hyundai and Kia also said they aim to strengthen sales of premium car

models, such as Hyundai's independent luxury brand Genesis, as well as recreational vehicle models.

Accumulative sales of Genesis models, in particular, in the U.S. are likely to surpass the 300,000 unit mark in the third quarter, company officials said.

## LG opens 1st overseas EV charger plant in US

**Seoul, Jan 13 (IANS) :** LG Electronics has opened its first plant in the U.S. for electric vehicle (EV) charging stations, as part of its strategy to advance into the fast-growing EV charging solutions business. The factory based in Fort Worth, Texas, has an annual capacity of over 10,000 units, according

to LG Electronics. LG said earlier its 11 kilowatt wall-mounted and stand-type slow chargers, and 175 kW fast-charging models will be available in the U.S. market in the first half of 2024, reports Yonhap news agency. The company said 11 kW units are equipped with a load management solution that automatically controls the output ac-

ording to the power situation in commercial spaces, such as shopping malls and supermarkets, providing stable quality charging services even with limited power capacity. The fast-charging model will support both Combined Charging Standard version 1 and North American Charging Standard connectors to provide a more

convenient charging experience for customers. LG said it will expand its EV charger lineup for commercial and long-distance travel. The South Korean company, which began developing EV charging solutions in 2018, has been focusing on the booming business since it acquired HiEV Charger.

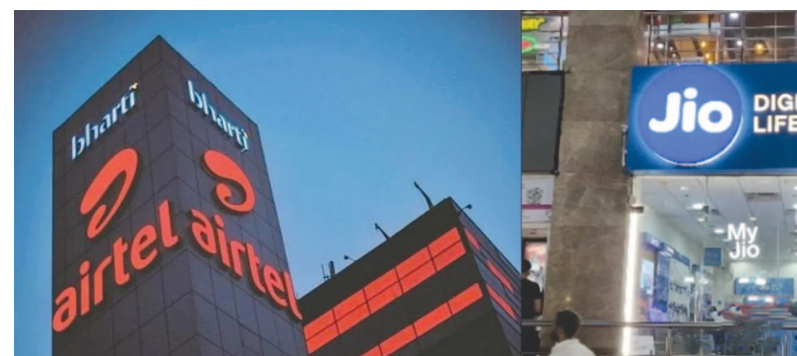


## Airtel, Jio may soon withdraw unlimited 5G data plan, charge up to 10% more: Report

**New Delhi, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Reliance Jio and Bharti Airtel might discontinue their unlimited 5G data plans for premium customers soon, media reports said on Saturday. As per the analysts, the companies will likely charge at least 5-10 per cent more for 5G services compared to 4G, starting from the second half of 2024, Eco-

nomics Times reported. This move is aimed at increasing monetisation and boosting revenue growth.

The two telecom operators are also expected to raise mobile tariffs by at least 20 per cent in the September quarter of 2024 to improve their ROI (return on capital employed).



## NABARD projects Credit Potential of Rs 2.37 lakh cr for FY 2024-25 in Kerala

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 13 (IANS) :** NABARD has projected a Credit Potential of Rs 2.37 lakh crore under priority sector to be financed by all banks in Kerala for the 2024-25 financial year. This was discussed at the State Credit Seminar conducted by NABARD under the chairmanship of



Kerala Chief Secretary, Dr V. Venu. At the meeting attended by various bankers and numerous departmental heads.

## Imran Khan's PTI missing from poll body's symbols' list

**Islamabad, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Ahead of the crucial February 8 general elections in Pakistan, former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) was not included in the national poll body's list of symbols allotted to parties. PTI is struggling to maintain its presence among the contesting parties amid major legal challenges and cases challenging its existence in the political sphere. As the crucial polls are fast approaching, political parties and their representatives are in the process of getting their nomination papers approved by the Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP). However, the PTI is facing numerous challenges, including the rejection of many of its candidates and the party

symbol itself under scrutiny of the courts. On Saturday, the poll body sent details of election symbols of at least 145 political parties to the returning officers (ROs) But in the list, the PTI's "bat" symbol is missing. In a letter to the ROs, the ECP said that the respective election symbol should be allotted to the candidates nominated by the political parties. "The election symbols of political parties should not be given to any independent candidate." ECP sources confirmed that the symbols of some political parties had been withheld to non-conduct of intra-party elections. Moreover, the appellate tribunals are expected to complete the process of hearing the appeals against acceptance or rejections of nomination papers of candidates for the upcoming elections.



"The tribunal headed by high court judges would conclude hearing of the appeals on Saturday and the revised list of candidates would be published on Saturday. The withdrawal of nomination papers is scheduled for January 12 and the final list of candidates will also be released on the same day," a spokesperson of the poll body said. The ECP's appellate tribunals have already

dismissed appeals of many candidates, including former Information Minister Fawad Chaudhry and PTI leader Murad Saeed. However, many other top leaders of PTI have been accepted to contest the elections. But the question remains if they would be able to contest under the PTI's bat symbol.



## Norwegian Parliament greenlights seabed mineral exploration

**Oslo, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Norwegian Parliament has voted in favour of allowing mineral exploration and exploitation on the deep seabed, edging the Nordic nation closer to becoming the first country in the world to initiate commercial deep-sea mining. With a decisive vote reflecting broad cross-party support, the proposal is set to accelerate the search for seabed minerals, reports Xinhua news agency. According to Norway's national broadcaster NRK, most members of parliament are convinced that mining operations can be profitable, sustainable and environmentally responsible.

The focus area spans 281,000 square km across the Barents Sea and the Greenland Sea. Earlier reports from the Norwegian Offshore Directorate highlighted the rich mineral resources on Norway's continental shelf. Some parties voted against the decision, saying that Norway lacks knowledge about the marine environment in 99 per cent of the area that it plans to open for deep-sea mining. The decision was also met with an immediate backlash from environmental groups including Greenpeace, who criticised the Norwegian government for disregarding environmental concerns.

## 8 dead after major rioting, unrest in Papua New Guinea

**Port Moresby, Jan 13 (IANS) :** At least eight people have died amid major rioting and unrest in Papua New Guinea's capital, Port Moresby, an official confirmed on Saturday. Hundreds of people took to the streets of the capital city after the police went on strike over a pay dispute, resulting in mass looting of supermarkets, while cars and shops were set ablaze, the BBC reported. As a result of the unrest, the government has deployed the army to try and restore order. In a radio broadcast on Saturday, National Capital District Governor Powes Parkop claimed the looting had been carried out by "opportunists" and said the "unprecedented level of strife in our city" is "something that has never happened before in the history of our city and our country", reports the BBC. Without giving out an exact figure, Parkop also said that "some people sadly lost their life today". Before the unrest erupted.



## Scientists deem 2023 as 2nd-hottest year on record in New Zealand

**Wellington, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The past three years have been record setting years in New Zealand summer temperatures, with 2023 confirmed to be the second hottest year on record, scientists said on Saturday. The year of 2022 was New Zealand's warmest on record, surpassing the record set the year before in 2021, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research (NIWA) meteorologist Tristan Meyers said. Global climate scientists said 2023 had Earth's warmest temperatures by an "exceptionally large" margin and 2024 could be even warmer, reports Xinhua news agency. New Zealand is experiencing hotter temperatures and more extreme weather events, said NIWA meteorologist Chris Brandolino. Year 2022 was a bit warmer than 2023, so 2022 has remained New Zealand's hottest year

so far and 2023 pushed 2021 into the third place, Brandolino said. The marine heatwave conditions in 2022 or the impact of the water vapour released from the January 2022 volcanic eruption in Tonga may raise 2022's temperatures, he said. The last three years saw the three warmest years on record, he added. New Zealanders are also expected to see this ongoing summer to remain warmer than normal, scientists said.

## British-Indian dentist fined for dodging over 53K pounds in tax

**London, Jan 13 (IANS) :** An Indian-origin dentist in England's West Midlands region has been ordered to pay 22,654 pounds by His Majesty's Revenue and Customs (HMRC) for evading tax worth 53,528 pounds. Jasbinder Singh, a resident of Coventry, was named publicly by the HMRC for deliberately defaulting on tax from April 6, 2012 to April 5, 2015 and April 6, 2015 to April 5, 2018, the Coventry Telegraph reported recently. A person or business is named publicly if they have deliberately defaulted on more than 25,000 pounds in tax, according to HMRC. In the West Midlands, the biggest amount of tax avoided by a company was a whopping 243,647 pounds. It was said to have been owned

by Daily Drinks 007 Ltd in Smethwick, Birmingham. Golden City Limited in Selly Oak, Matthew Electronics Limited in Birmingham and Solihull Financial Services Limited are some of the other companies in the West Midlands that have failed to pay tax. Last year, an Indian-origin manufacturer was found guilty in what the HMRC described as one of the country's largest ever "carousel" tax frauds. Arif Patel was sentenced to 20 years' imprisonment for false accounting, conspiracy to cheat the public revenue, the onward sale of counterfeit clothing and money laundering. He was accused of trying to steal around 97 million pounds via VAT repayment claims on false exports of textiles and mobile phones.

## Impact assessment underway in Australian state after major flooding

**Melbourne, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Authorities in Victoria on Saturday confirmed that impact assessments were being conducted at several towns in the Australian state's north, as floodwater has started to recede. "In Yea, we saw six properties with above-floor flooding, 17 with inundation in and around their property. At Seymour, we saw seven businesses with above-floor flooding and another 11 residential properties that have had a range of flooding impacts, either above or below the floor," Victoria State Emergency Service Chief Operations Officer Tim Wiebusch told reporters. He also said that the emergency crew are currently undertaking impact assessments in and around Rochester and Goornong, with floodwater down to the level that enabled them to get into those areas, Xinhua news agency reported.



## Is GOP Prez contender Vivek Ramaswamy out of steam? Done? Over?

**Washington, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Indian American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy's presidential campaign may be drawing to a close after bringing national and international attention to this -- as he has said about himself -- "a skinny guy with a funny last name". Ramaswamy failed to qualify for the Republican primary debate that takes place on Saturday, just five days ahead of the Iowa caucuses that will kick off the Republican presidential primaries.

He stopped TV advertising some weeks before and is also skipping the primaries in Illinois, where his name is not among the candidates, who include all the other Republicans in the fray: former President Donald Trump, former Governor

Nikki Haley, Governor Ron DeSantis, and former Governor Chris Christie. There are reports that his campaign staff are already looking around for jobs in anticipation of his exit from the fray. The 38-year-old from Ohio is at Number 4 in polls for the Republican presidential nomination, behind Trump, who is the front-runner by miles, DeSantis and Haley, but ahead of Christie. And that is a remarkable achievement for a newcomer to politics. But unlike another outsider to politics, Trump, who won the nomination in 2016, Ramaswamy doesn't appear to be anywhere close to his goal. Although he is averaging 4.4 per cent in RealClearPolitics' aggregated average of national polls, he is also fourth in Iowa and a distant sixth in New Hampshire, the second state in the Republican primaries. Born to immigrant parents from



## Indonesian capital warns of possible landslide as heavy rain continues

**Jakarta, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Heavy rain has continued throughout Indonesia's capital Jakarta as the rainy season remains in full force, bringing further risk of landslides in several areas, the city's disaster mitigation agency has warned. The agency's chief Isnawa Adji told media on Saturday that as many as 16 sub-districts in the country's largest city were potentially prone to landslides this month, Xinhua news agency reported.





## 30 girl hostel inmates in Bihar's Arrah fall sick after dinner

**Patna, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A total of 30 girl students of Ambedkar hostel in Arrah city of Bihar fell sick after they were served partially-cooked rice in dinner on Saturday night, officials said on Saturday. The health of the students, who

complained of vomiting and stomach ache, deteriorated early on Wednesday and they were taken to Sadar hospital where 12 of them are still in a serious condition. The remaining 18 were discharged after the preliminary treatment.

## Swami Prasad Maurya justifies police firing on 'kar sevaks' in 1990

**Lucknow, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Former Uttar Pradesh Minister and Samajwadi Party (SP) National General Secretary, Swami Prasad Maurya, who had triggered a controversy with his comments on the Ramcharitmanas in the past, has kicked up another row by justifying the firing on 'kar sevaks' in Ayodhya in 1990 when SP founder, the late Mulayam Singh Yadav, was the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister. He also termed 'kar sevaks' as anti-social elements. "The anti-social elements created ruckus in Ayodhya in 1990. The then

Mulayam Singh Yadav-led regime had to order firing to safeguard the constitution and to ensure peace and harmony, and to maintain law and order," Maurya said on Saturday on the sidelines of an event in Ganjdundwada town of Kasganj district. Earlier, Union Minister of State for Health and Family Welfare, SP Singh Baghel, had blamed Samajwadi Party leaders for having ordered firing on kar sevaks. "SP Singh Baghel was in the Samajwadi Party when firing was ordered in Ayodhya by then Samajwadi Party government. As such, he should not make such a comment," Maurya added.



"What the state government did that time was its duty," he said. The firing was ordered in Ayodhya on October 30, 1990, during the Ram temple movement. Kar sevaks were killed in the firing and it became a major issue in the 1990s characterised by 'Mandal' and 'Kamandal' politics. Meanwhile, reacting to the statement,

Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya said that he strictly condemned it. "At a time when 'Pran Pratishtha' is all set to take place, this statement hurts. Statements of all Samajwadi Party leaders are written by SP Chief Akhilesh Yadav and they speak what are asked to," he added.

## ED will take action every time any financial crime takes place: MoS Home

**Patna, Jan 13 (IANS) :** A day after Enforcement Directorate (ED) served notice to Lalu Prasad Yadav's daughter Hema Yadav in land-for-job-scam, MoS Home Nityanand Rai said that ED will take action whenever any financial crime takes place in the country. "Whenever any scam or crime takes place, the independent agencies will work against it.

If any place where corruption takes place, ED will go there as per the law. If people misuse the power of the government and commit financial crime, ED will follow. Law is equal for all. Anyone who is guilty of any crime, the agencies will arrest the culprits," Rai said. He said that the leaders of "INDI alliance" are worried that their political careers may end after 2024 Lok Sabha election.



## 'Ghar-Ghar Congress, Har Ghar Congress' campaign in Haryana from Jan 15

**Chandigarh, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Congress on Saturday announced the start of the 'Ghar-Ghar Congress, Har Ghar Congress' campaign in Haryana from January 15. It was decided that the party would reach every home and every voter, showcasing policies of the Congress and the failures of the BJP-JJP government. A decision in this regard was taken at a meeting presided over by party in-charge Deepak Babaria here. Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister Bhupinder Hooda, state President Chaudhary Udaibhan, Rajya Sabha member Deepender Hooda, party MLAs, former MLAs, besides senior leaders and volunteers attended the meeting. Babaria said the Congress is continuously working in election mode. "Rahul Gandhi's 'Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra' is going to start from January 14, and this yatra too is also expected to get historical support like 'Bharat Jodo Yatra'. The very next day, a new campaign would be started by Haryana Congress," he said. "Jan Aakrosh rallies are being held continuously by the party, which are getting support from the public. Now one-to-one communication will be established with the voters through 'Har Ghar Congress' campaign.



## Ayodhya airport to follow 'drop-and-move' policy on Jan 22

**Lucknow, Jan 13 (IANS) :** In view of the fact that the newly inaugurated Ayodhya airport will witness unprecedented rush on January 22 when the Pran Pratishtha ceremony takes place at the Ram temple, concerned officials have decided to adopt the 'drop-and-move' policy. Airports Authority of India

(AAI) engineering in-charge and project director Ayodhya Airport Rajeev Kulshreshta said, "We have completed all the civil and technical work inside the airport and only final touches are being given to the rest of work. However, on January 22 only about 100 flights (coming and going) would be accommodated. The airport is me-

ticulously managing influx of these flights, mostly of VVIPs, by allocating tight time slots for both landing and take-off, necessitating efficient coordination to avoid congestion. It would be a drop and move affair for all the aircraft as we have limited parking facility in Ayodhya."

## Rise in number of Muslim women beneficiaries of PM Modi's schemes: Bommai

**Bengaluru, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Former Karnataka chief minister and BJP leader Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday said that there has been a rise in the number of Muslim women beneficiaries of various schemes introduced by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led government. Bommai said that the women have availed the benefits of schemes like Mudra Loan Yojana, Ayushman Bharat and Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. He further said that the BJP has planned a programme in Uttar Pradesh, 'Shukriya Modi Bhaijaan' to reach out to Muslim women. "It will be a successful one, and this is the symbol of change." He told reporters here on Wednesday that this was known to the women beneficiaries of PM Modi's programmes "but it was being hushed". "Shukriya Modi Bhaijaan" would become a big hit, and a huge setback for the INDIA bloc," he said. Bommai further said "Chief Minister Siddaramaiah was unnecessarily trying to put the blame on the Central government after the tableau from Karnataka was not selected for Republic Day".



## Goa Minister pitches for 'digital nomad visa', seeks Centre's support

**Panaji, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Terming the state of Goa as 'Global Opportunities Aggregator', the state Department of Information Technology, Electronics, and Communication on Saturday unveiled a vision as an opportunities aggregator, leveraging its natural ingredients conducive to fostering innovation and creative development. As per officials, renowned for its flourishing tourism industry, Goa is now becoming a hotspot for emerging startups and



professionals choosing it as a preferred workplace, drawn by its natural beauty, robust infrastructure, and supportive government policies.

## All Hindi textbooks for MBBS course to be available soon : MP DyCM

**Bhopal, Jan 13 (IANS) :** All Hindi medium textbooks for MBBS course in Madhya Pradesh would be available soon as the translation from English to Hindi would be completed by the end of this month, Deputy Chief Minister Rajendra Shukla told IANS on Saturday. Shukla, who is the health and medical education minister in Chief Minister Mohan Yadav's cabinet, made this statement after reviewing the progress of Hindi medium MBBS course at Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College (GMC). Notably, MBBS course in Hindi medium -- a first of its kind of pilot project -- was intro-



duced jointly by the Centre and the state government at GMC in 2022. Bhopal's GMC, the state's biggest medical institution, has a war room named 'Mandhar', which was set up in 2022, and around 100 doctors with different specialties have been working in preparing the Hindi textbooks.

## 'Cong will win both LS seats in Goa in general elections'

**Panaji, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Congress' Goa in-charge Manikrao Thakare on Saturday expressed hope that his party would win both Lok Sabha seats in the upcoming general elections. Thakare, after having a series of meetings with Congress leaders during his two-day visit to Goa, addressed a press conference, saying that "the people were fed up with the BJP's policies in Goa, and were waiting for the elections to teach them a lesson". "I am confident that we will strengthen our organisation. We will win the Lok Sabha elections this year, and also the Assembly elections later," Thakare said. He said that the double-engine governments are involved in corruption.





## World Bank forecasts Sri Lankan economy to grow 1.7% in 2024

**Colombo, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The World Bank forecasts the Sri Lankan economy to grow by 1.7 per cent in 2024 and by 2.4 per cent in 2025, according to its report on global economic prospects issued on Saturday. According to the global lender, the country's economy is estimated to have recorded a negative growth of 3.8 per cent in 2023, reports Xinhua news agency. Although the output in the island nation is also estimated to have declined in the 2022-2023 financial year, progress has been made in sovereign debt restructuring, said the World Bank. However, it said the outlook for Sri Lanka remains uncertain amid debt restructuring negotiations, particularly with private creditors. The growth in South Asia is estimated to have slowed slightly to 5.7 per cent in 2023, yet it remains the fastest among emerging markets and developing economy regions, according to the World Bank.

## Pakistani PM calls for deepening int'l cooperation to ensure global health security

**Islamabad, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Pakistani caretaker Prime Minister Anwar-ul-Haq Kakar has called for enhanced international cooperation to guarantee global health security. "Our commitment towards health security should extend to establishing global frameworks that facilitate information sharing, joint research, and collaborative strategies for an effective response during emergencies," Kakar said on Saturday while addressing an inaugural ses-

sion of the two-day Global Health Security Summit here. The Prime Minister stressed the need to explore mechanisms for global funding that could support nations in need, ensuring that no one is left behind, Xinhua news agency reported. "The call for a sufficiently funded, widely supported country's medium-term roadmap ... resonates globally. We must invest in open, transparent, and multi-sectoral processes to strengthen buy-in and commitment at all levels," he added. Highlighting the need for a col-

lective response to address external and internal health challenges, Kakar said that no state in the world could meet the health challenges alone. Calling for establishing a shared vision of the world where health security is not a privilege but a universal right, the Prime Minister stressed that the strength of a nation's health system should not only be measured by its capacity to respond to crises, but also by its ability to prevent, detect and mitigate health threats.



## Dutch parties resume talks over new coalition govt

**The Hague, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Negotiations among major Dutch parties over the formation of a new coalition government have again resumed after a break for Christmas and the year end holidays. The far-right populist Party for Freedom (PVV), led by Geert Wilders, won the general election by a landslide on November 22, 2023, reports Xinhua news agency. PVV has now begun a negotiation process with the rightist People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD), the new centrist party New Social Contract (NSC), and the farmers' movement BoerBurgerBeweging (BBB). The closed-door talks between party leaders Wilders,

Caroline van der Plas of BBB, Dilan Yesilgoz of VVD and Pieter Omtzigt of NSC continued until late Friday in Hilversum, a city in the province of North Holland. They negotiations are expected to last until Saturday. Ronald Plasterk, who was appointed as a "scout" to talk to all parties about the formation of a coalition government, said that he wants to complete this phase by early February at the latest, before reporting to the chairman of the House of Representatives. The main obstacles in the discussion are that the VVD wants to support, but does not want to join such a government. Meanwhile, the NSC has severe constitutional objections to some of the PVV's ideas.

## India has reservations over buying energy from Nepal produced by Chinese: Prachanda

**Kathmandu, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal "Prachanda" on Saturday said that India has reservations over buying energy from the Himalayan nation produced by Chinese contractors. Addressing a parliamentary committee meeting, he said though everyone is free to invest and produce energy in Nepal but as per long-term energy trade with India, New Delhi has reservations over buying energy produced by the Chinese companies/contractors. During External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar's

visit to Nepal last week, the two neighbouring nations had signed an agreement on long-term power trade paving way for Kathmandu to export 10,000 megawatts of energy to New Delhi. The agreement is valid for 25 years and subject to renewal every 10 years. "India has reservations over energy produced directly by Chinese government companies... The Chinese have asked us to tell India that it's not Chinese government owned companies but they were selected through the global competitive bidding process. "As per India's cross border energy trading guidelines, it will

only buy electricity from Nepal produced only by the Indian or Nepali companies and investment," Prachanda said. He further said that in the agreement with India, there is no mention of buying energy only produced by Indian companies. "We have requested India to consider to buy energy produced through the competitive bidding process whoever produces." As Nepal focusses on hydropower development to meet its own energy needs and export the surplus to neighbouring countries, a fresh study has identified that the Himalayan nation has the potential to harness over 72,000MW of hy-

dropower across 10 major river basins and their sub-basins. Nepal's rich water resources were long known, as the country has approximately 6,000 rivers with a total length of 45,000 km. The average annual water runoff from these rivers is about 220 billion cubic metres, according to an Asian Development Bank. The 25-year long-term agreement was initiated when Dahal visited India from May 31 to June 3, 2023. In New Delhi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced during a joint press meet with Dahal that the neighbour would buy 10,000 MW of electricity in 10 years from Nepal under



the long-term power trade agreement. "Under this agreement, we have set a target of importing 10,000 MW electricity from Nepal in the coming 10 years," Modi had said at the time. Besides exporting power to India, there is a sharp increase in Indian investment in

Nepal's energy sector. India's SJVN Limited, which is developing the 900 MW Arun-3 Hydropower Project, has also been granted a license to develop the 669 MW Lower Arun Hydropower Project and the 490 MW Arun-4.

## US Surgeon General Vivek Murthy renamed country representative on WHO board

**Washington, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Indian-American Surgeon General Vivek Murthy has been named again to serve as the US's representative on the executive board of the World Health Organization (WHO) by President Joe Biden. The 46-year-old's nomination was re-sent as his confirmation to the position had been pending in the Senate since October 2022. He will serve in his new position alongside his continued duties as the country's Surgeon General, the White House said in a statement on Saturday. In March 2021, he was confirmed by the US Senate to serve as the



21st Surgeon General of the US and had previously served on the same post under then President Barack Obama. As the Nation's Doctor, the Surgeon General's mission is to help lay the founda-

tion for a healthier country, relying on the best scientific information available to provide clear, consistent, and equitable guidance and resources for the public, the White House noted.

## 50K people participate in mass prayer in Jerusalem for return of hostages

**Tel Aviv, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Hostages and Missing Families Forum has said that 50,000 people participated at a mass prayer rally at the Western Wall, Jerusalem, on Saturday for the return of the hostages and salvation of the people. The spokesperson of the Forum, Liat Bell Sommer in a statement said that the senior rabbis led the prayer sessions. She added that the prayers included the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) personnel and those who are kidnapped and held hostages in Gaza under Hamas's captivity.



## Japan begins work for US base relocation in Okinawa despite local opposition

**Tokyo, Jan 13 (IANS) :** The Japanese government has begun ground improvement work for the relocation of a key US military base within Okinawa prefecture after overriding the local government's objection, regardless of the opinions of local residents. Chief Cabinet Secretary Yoshimasa Hayashi told a press conference on Saturday that the commencement marks the start of work, likely to take more than nine years, to reinforce the undersea soft ground at the relocation site

for US Marine Corps' Futenma air base. The ground improvement is necessary to carry out landfill work that is part of the project to relocate the Futenma base from a crowded residential district in Ginowan to the less populated Henoko coastal area of Nago, which is also in Okinawa. Okinawa Governor Denny Tamaki told reporters on Saturday that this is something the government is doing for its own convenience, and it is extremely regrettable, Xinhua news agency reported.

## 139 guards, officials still captive at Ecuadorian prisons amid violence

**Quito, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Inmates at five prisons in Ecuador continue to hold some 125 prison guards and 14 administrative officials captive following an unprecedented day of violence, which also saw a group of armed men interrupting a live TV broadcast. In a statement on Saturday, the

country's jail management agency said the captives were being held at prisons in the provinces of Azuay and Canar (south); Napo (centre-north); Tungurahua; and Cotopaxi (centre), Xinhua news agency reported. "The National Police and Armed Forces continue to work together" towards their release, the agency

added. Major rioting broke out after authorities confirmed on Sunday that Adolfo "Fito" Macias, the country's major drug trafficker and leader of the criminal gang "Los Choneros", had escaped from Regional Prison 8 in the southwest city of Guayaquil. The next day, President Daniel Noboa declared a nationwide state



of emergency to combat criminal activity, especially in prisons, amid an escalation in violence triggered by narco-terrorist groups vying for control of drug-trafficking routes.

## Ex-New Jersey Governor Chris Christie exits 2024 WH race

**Washington, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie has exited the 2024 Republican race to the White House, with a parting shot at party rival Donald Trump. The 61-year-old made the announcement at a town hall event in the state of New Hampshire on Saturday night just 13 days before the first-in-the-nation primary, the BBC reported. Deemed as the most outspoken critic of Trump who was once an ally, Christie devoted much of his announcement pleading to Republican voters to reject the former President, who he accused of "putting himself before the people of this country". "Donald Trump wants you to be angry every day because he is angry... I am going to make

sure that in no way do I enable Donald Trump to ever be president of the United States again. "Anyone who is unwilling to say (Trump) is unfit to be President of the United States is unfit themselves to be President of the United States," he added. He also told the audience that "it is clear to me tonight that there isn't a path for me to win the nomination, which is why I'm suspending my campaign tonight for President of the US". He called it the "right thing for me to do", CNN reported. But before making his announcement, he was caught making a few unofficial remarks off camera on a live microphone against his now former rivals in the Republican race -- Florida Governor Ron DeSantis and former South Carolina Governor Nikki Haley. "She's gonna get smoked and you

and I both know it. She's not up to this," Christie could be heard saying in apparent reference to Haley. "She's not up to this," he added. The former New Jersey Governor also mentioned that DeSantis had contacted him, CNN reported. "DeSantis called me, petrified that I would..." Christie said before the audio cut out. In response to his exit, Haley called Christie "a friend for many years" and commended him "on a hard-fought campaign". But DeSantis said he agreed Haley is "going to get smoked", reports the BBC. On his part, Trump said he "might even get to like (Christie) again" following his "very truthful statement" about Haley.



## Israel won't continue occupying Gaza : Netanyahu

**Jerusalem, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has said that Israel "has no intention" of maintaining the occupation of Gaza or displacing civilians. Netanyahu made the remarks on Saturday, a day before the opening of hearings at the International Court of Justice in The Hague, regarding the alleged genocide of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, Xinhua news agency reported. "I want to make a few points absolutely clear -- Israel has no intention of permanently occupying Gaza or displacing its civilian population," he said. He added that Israel's bombardments in Gaza are aimed at Hamas militants, "not the Palestinian population, and we are doing so in full compliance with international law." The Israeli army is "doing its utmost to minimise civilian casualties, while Hamas is doing its utmost to maximise them by using Palestinian civilians as human shields," said Netanyahu. "Our goal is to rid Gaza of Hamas terrorists and free our hostages," he added. Since Hamas launched its surprise attack on October 7, about 1,200 people in Israel, including 790 civilians, were killed in the initial assault as hundreds of Hamas fighters and Gazans raided southern communities. Hamas took 253 people hostage, with 132 people still held in Gaza. Meanwhile, the Hamas-run Health Ministry reported that the Palestinian death toll from the ongoing Israeli aggression has risen to 23,357, and about 1.9 million of Gaza's 2.3 million population is displaced as the Israeli bombardments have leveled entire neighbourhoods.



## Holiday gatherings, JN.1 variant fuel Covid-19 spread: WHO

**Geneva, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Holiday gatherings and the globally dominant JN.1 variant fueled the spread of Covid-19 across the world in December, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus head of the WHO, said. Almost 10,000 deaths from Covid-19 were reported to the WHO in December, while hospitalisations rose 42 per cent and ICU admissions jumped 62 per cent over the previous month, Ghebreyesus told a virtual press briefing in Geneva on Saturday. The trends are derived from data shared by less than 50 countries, mostly in Europe and the Americas, said the health agency's Director-General, who believed there are increases in other countries going unreported, Xinhua news agency reported. Although Covid-19 no longer constitutes a global health emergency, the virus is still circulating, changing and killing, he warned. Maria Van Kerkhove, WHO technical lead for Covid-19, attributed the increase in respiratory diseases across the globe to the coronavirus, flu, rhinovirus and pneumonia.



## German FM vows to offer 15 mn euros to support Lebanon's army

**Beirut, Jan 13 (IANS)** : German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock has vowed to offer 15 million euros (\$16.45 million) to support the Lebanese army amid growing fears of escalating tensions with Israel on Lebanon's southern border. During her visit to the Beirut port, Baerbock said on Saturday that the money would be used to buy fuel and train soldiers to monitor the border, according to Lebanon's Elnashra news website.



## Italian Parliament votes to continue to support Ukraine

**Rome, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Italy's Parliament has approved a resolution reaffirming the country's support for Ukraine for another year in that country's conflict with Russia. Both Houses of the Italian Parliament on Saturday supported the resolution, with the Lower House casting 195 votes in favour, 50 against and 55 abstentions. A few hours later, the Senate recorded 103 votes in favour, 24 against and 27 abstentions.

## Russian rockets strike hotel in Ukraine's 2nd largest city, 10 people injured

**Kiev, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Two Russian rockets hit a hotel in the second largest Ukrainian city of Kharkiv, partially damaging the structure, while also injuring 10 people, the country's State Emergency Service (SES) said on Saturday. In a social post, the SES said the attack occurred at about 10.30 p.m. on Saturday and the rockets targeted the central part of the city, located just 30 km from the Russian border. It also said that SES Units, the National Police and emergency medical services were immediately dispatched to

the scene. The teams found damage to the three-storey hotel building, as well as cars parked nearby. "The area of the fire was about 20 square meters. Eight people were evacuated from the building," the SES said in the post. According to preliminary data, 10 people were injured, including hotel staff, guests and a foreign journalist. Photos put out by the SES showed the hotel heavily damaged and firefighters at the scene. According to Kharkiv Governor Oleh Synehubov, the



attack was carried out by S-300 rockets, reports the BBC. The city's mayor, Ihor Terekhov claimed that "there were no military at all" in the hotel at the time of the attack, but 30 civilians were present. Tuesday's attack comes as Russia has stepped up air strikes on Ukrainian cities in the past two weeks. Kharkiv has suffered extensive damage from Russian air strikes since Moscow waged its war against Ukraine in February 2022.

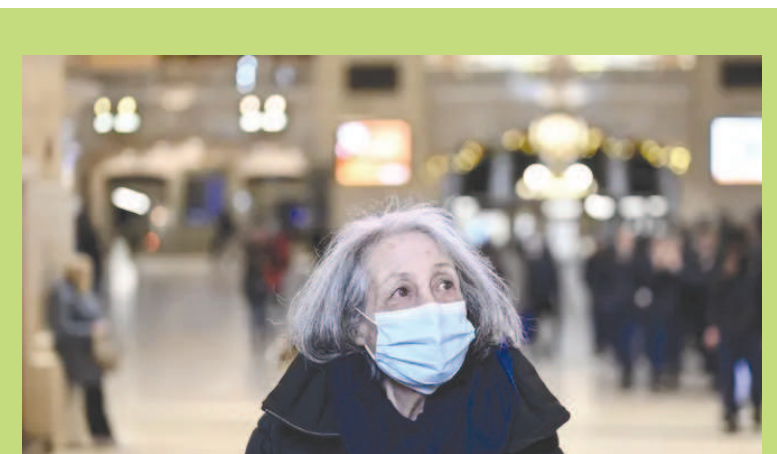
## Jordan, Palestine, Egypt stress rejection of any Israeli plans to displace Palestinians

**Amman, Jan 13 (IANS)** : Jordan, Egypt and Palestine have stressed their rejection of any Israeli plans to displace Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. The rejection was reiterated on Saturday during a trilateral summit held in Jordan's Aqaba, where King Abdullah II of Jordan, Egyptian President Abdel-Fattah el-Sisi, and Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas also called for international condemnation of and actions against such plans, Xinhua news agency reported. They stressed the need for continuing pressure on Israel to stop its aggression on Gaza and protect the innocent civilians in the strip, according to a statement by Jordan's Royal Hashemite Court. Meanwhile, the Egyptian Presi-

dent called for "a decisive stance" from the international community to push for a ceasefire in the besieged enclave and explained the efforts made by Egypt to open dialogue with all concerned parties to reach a truce agreement in Gaza. The leaders also expressed complete rejection of any attempts to liquidate the Palestine issue and to separate Gaza and the West Bank, both of which are integral parts of the Palestinian state, the statement added. At the summit, the three leaders reiterated the importance of ensuring sufficient delivery of humanitarian aid to Gaza to alleviate the dire humanitarian situation in the enclave. King Abdullah II, Sisi and Abbas also voiced "complete rejection of any attempts to reoccupy parts of

Gaza," stressing the necessity of "enabling the people of the Gaza Strip to return to their homes". Noting Israel's hostilities in the West Bank, as well as its violations of Islamic and Christian sanctities in Jerusalem, the leaders warned that such actions could escalate tensions in the region. The three heads of state agreed to continue working together in coordination with Arab and influen-

tial countries to find a political horizon for resolving the Palestine issue to achieve a just and comprehensive peace based on a two-state solution, which entails restoring the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and ensuring the establishment of their independent and sovereign state on the 1967 border and with East Jerusalem as its capital.



## Greek gov't urges vaccination against Covid-19, influenza, as cases surge

**Athens, Jan 13 (IANS)** : The Greek government has urged further increase in vaccination rates against Covid-19 and influenza, amid a surge of infections in recent weeks. The Greeks "who lost their lives lately were almost entirely unvaccinated," said Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis on Sat-

urday during a press conference in Athens. Out of 1,028 deaths linked to Covid-19 reported since September across the country, only two were vaccinated, and out of 90 patients currently hospitalised in intensive care units only two are vaccinated, according to data presented by Ministry officials.



## Australia Open: Coco Gauff eyes "double-digits" Grand Slam goal

**Melbourne, Jan 13 (IANS) :** At just 19, the American phenom Coco Gauff, already a Grand Slam champion, spoke with unyielding determination about her aspirations to clinch "double digits" of Grand Slam titles, setting an ambitious goal that fueled her relentless pursuit of excellence. Gauff, whose journey into the

Grand Slam scene began at the tender age of 15, expressed her desire to achieve multiple Grand Slam victories, highlighting the dynamic nature of her goals. After securing her maiden Grand Slam triumph at the US Open in the previous year, defeating Aryna Sabalenka in a memorable final at the Arthur Ashe Stadium, Gauff's hunger for suc-

cess showed no signs of abating. In a pre-tournament press conference, Gauff shared her mindset, stating, "I would say double digits would be pretty awesome. I don't know if it will happen, but I think that's a high goal." The young tennis prodigy emphasized that setting lofty goals served as a powerful motivator, propelling her beyond perceived limits and pushing her to continually elevate her game.



*Won't complain if pitches spin from ball one; it's about finding a method to combat it : Ollie Pope*

**New Delhi, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Ahead of England's five-match Test series that starts in Hyderabad on January 25, vice-captain and top-order batter Ollie Pope said his team won't be complaining if the pitches in the series spin from the first ball and added that it is all about finding a method to combat the spin challenge in the sub-continent. Pope was a member of England's squad which came to India in 2021. After winning the opening Test in Chennai, the visitors' lost their way to lose the series 3-1, with Ravichandran Ashwin and Axar Patel running through the batting order. "There will be a lot of outside noise. And pitches can be a massive talking point. But you have to remember the two teams are playing on the exact same wicket, so we just need to be as well equipped as we can."



## Vijayveer Sidhu wins silver and Paris 2024 Olympics quota place

**New Delhi, Jan 13 (IANS) :** In yet another history making result for Indian Sport Shooting, Vijayveer Sidhu won silver in the men's 25m rapid-fire pistol (RFP) at the ongoing Asia Olympic Qualification Rifle/Pistol in Jakarta, to give India their 17th Paris 2024 Olympics quota place, the first time ever that the squad has clinched all possible (four) Olympic spots in the 25m pistol events. The Chandigarh lad got 28-hits in the final, to finish behind Kazakh Nikita Chiryukin,

who shot 32 for gold, while also taking home the second available Paris quota in the event. Jong-Ho Song of Korea was third. "Yes, I am very very happy. We trained very hard in the camps and also after coming here. The range is quite similar to the Delhi range. I am not too happy with my qualification score and we know the areas we need to work on after we come back, but very happy with the way I shot the finals. I want to dedicate this to my parents, family and friends and of course to my coaches for the support," said Vijayveer after prize distribution. India now has a tally of 11 gold, 10 silver and seven bronze medals for the continental qualifiers and are quite a distance ahead at the top over second placed China.

## Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: Germany's Selin Oruz wants to add Olympic gold to stethoscope around her neck

**Ranchi (Jharkhand), Jan 13 (IANS) :** AS she turns out for the Germany women's hockey team at the FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi, Selin Oruz nurtures a dream -- becoming a doctor with an Olympic gold medal around her neck. Ric Charlesworth of Australia is one of the few doctors to win the Olympics and World Cup medals in hockey. But he did not win a gold medal at the Olympics. Selin is hoping that one day she will have an Olympic gold medal along with the bronze she won in the 2016 Olympics in Rio de Janeiro around her neck besides a stethoscope when she becomes a full-time doctor.



## Australia Open : It's an extra motivation for me: Carlos Alcaraz eyes to dethrone Djokovic

**Melbourne, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Carlos Alcaraz has said he fancies a crack at dethroning Novak Djokovic at the Australian Open 2024, starting on Sunday. Novak Djokovic, the maestro of Melbourne with a staggering 10 titles to his name, embarked on his quest for a 25th Grand Slam title against the resilient qualifier Dino Prizmic. As the iconic Rod Laver Arena witnessed the opening day's battles, Alcaraz, the second seed, braced himself for a face-off against French veteran Richard Gasquet in the first round. The narrative between Alcaraz and Djokovic had unfolded in compelling chapters the previous year. The Serbian claimed victory in their Roland Garros semi-final clash, exploiting a bout of crippling cramps that struck Alcaraz early in the third set.



## Malaysia Open: Satwik-Chirag script history, enter finals

**Kuala Lumpur, Jan 13 (IANS):** World No. 2 Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty etched their names in history, scripting a remarkable comeback to secure their place in the men's doubles final of the Malaysia Open Super 1000 tournament. Their triumph over Korea's Kang Min Hyuk and Seo Seung Jae not only showcased their resilience but also marked a historic milestone as the first Indians in any discipline to reach the final of the Malaysia Open in the Open Era, which spans back to 1983. Ranked World No. 2, the dynamic duo displayed their exceptional form from the preceding year, where they had already clinched six titles. Their prowess on the court was on full display as they faced an 11-18 deficit in the second game but rallied to register a gripping 21-18, 22-20 victory, sealing their passage to the final in emphatic fashion. The Bukit Jalil Axiata Arena in Kuala Lumpur bore witness to this historic feat, with fans eagerly following live updates and cheering for the Indian contingent. Satwik-Chirag's journey through the Malaysia Open 2024 became a beacon of pride for Indian badminton, underscoring the nation's growing influence on the global badminton stage.

## Adelaide International: Lehecka rallies past Draper to lift trophy

**Adelaide, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Jiri Lehecka, the 22-year-old Czech sensation, showcased his resilience and firepower to secure his inaugural ATP Tour crown against Jack Draper at the Adelaide International, on Saturday. Lehecka's comeback victory, marked by a 4-6, 6-4, 6-3 triumph, left spectators in awe at the hard-court ATP 250 in South Australia.



## Australia aiming to use white-ball tour of Bangladesh as preparation for Women's T20 World Cup

**Sydney, Jan 13 (IANS) :** Australia national selector Shawn Flegler said the women's team will be aiming to use their first-ever bilateral tour of Bangladesh as preparation and gathering information for the Women's T20 World Cup to be held in the country later in September

this year. As per the FTP, Australia will be playing a three-match ODI and as many T20I games on their tour of Bangladesh, to be held at the end of March and early April following the second edition of Women's Premier League (WPL) in India. Australia's last trip to Bangladesh was in 2014, when they won the Women's T20

World Cup, from which four players are still actively playing international cricket: captain Alyssa Healy, premier all-rounder Ellyse Perry, opener Beth Mooney and left-arm spinner Jess Jonassen. "We've got a couple of venues in Bangladesh that the World Cup will be played at so that will be part of the investigating during the

tour, about how wickets are going to play," Flegler was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. Australia have a problem of plenty in terms of their spin-bowling options. Left-arm spinner Jess, off-spin all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner and leg-spinners Georgia Wareham and Alana King are in the national set-up.

