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PM visits an exhibition during the inauguration of the new campus of National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN), in Andhra Pradesh on January 16, 2024.



Congress leaders told to work for winning Lok Sabha elections

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : Telangana AICC in-charge Deepa Das Munshi said that the party leaders should work aimed at winning majority of the Lok Sabha seats from Telangana in the upcoming elections. Deepa Das Munshi along with AICC Secretary Mansoor Ali Khan and Rohan Chaudhary held a meeting with the minority leaders of three Parliamentary constituencies- Secunderabad, Chevella and Hyderabad at Gandhi Bhavan here on Tuesday and discussed the party's plan of action for winning three Parliament segments. Deepa Das Munshi said the Congress leaders and activists should work hard and achieve good results in the Parliamentary elections. "The leaders should assess the strengths and weaknesses of the party in their respective areas and should prepare a plan of action to achieve good results in the upcoming Parliamentary polls.



Skill Development scam : SC delivers split verdict on Chandrababu Naidu's plea

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Supreme Court on Tuesday delivered a split verdict on a plea filed by Telugu Desam Party supremo and former Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu challenging criminal proceedings against him in the alleged Skill Development Corporation scam case. The split judgment was given by a Special Bench of Justices Aniruddha Bose and Bela M

Trivedi on the question whether proceedings against the former Chief Minister could have been initiated without getting a sanction from the Governor of the state. In his opinion, Justice Bose said that any action initiated under the Prevention of Corruption Act without obtaining prior approval under Section 17-A of the Act would be "illegal". However, he granted liberty to the state government to obtain fresh sanction for

prosecuting the TDP leader. On the other hand, Justice Trivedi opined that non-obtaining of sanction could not be a ground for quashing the FIR registered against a public servant under the penal code. She upheld the order passed by the Andhra Pradesh High Court in September 2023 dismissing Naidu's petition to quash the criminal proceedings initiated against him and to set aside his judicial remand.



Centre will not implement hit-and-run law now: Ponnampallam

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : Minister for Transport Ponnampallam Prabhakar has informed that the Union government will not implement the hit-and-run law now and transporters and lorry drivers need not worry about the law. In a press release here on Tuesday, Ponnampallam Prabhakar clarified that Union Home Secretary Ajay Bhalla has announced that the section related to hit and run will not be implemented now and assured that if the law has to be implemented in future, the decision will be taken only after holding discussions with the drivers and lorry owners.

Congress govt should take up more programs for welfare of textile industry: KTR

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : BRS party working president K Tarakarama Rao today said the State government should take steps for the welfare of the textile industry, especially the industry from his Siricilla assembly constituency.

In a statement here today, KTR said the textile industry of Sirisilla had grown tremendously in the last ten years. He said highly skilled powerloom workers had not only grown but also expanded their operations. He said the main reason for this was the cooperation provided by the BRS government in the last ten years. He said the State Congress government should also stand by the powerloom textile industry.



AAP following ideology of RSS, BJP: Owaisi

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : AIMIM President Asaduddin Owaisi has slammed Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) for deciding to conduct Sundarkand Paths and Hanuman Chalisa in every Assembly constituency of Delhi and stated that it is following the ideology of RSS and BJP.

Continued on pg 02



Sharmila appointed Andhra Pradesh Congress president

Amaravati, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Congress on Tuesday appointed Y. S. Sharmila as the president of the party's Andhra Pradesh unit. All India Congress Committee (AICC) president Mallikarjun Kharge appointed her as the president of Andhra Pradesh Congress

Committee (APCC), a day after Gidugu Rudra Raju resigned from the post to pave the way for her appointment. Kharge has appointed Rudra Raju as special invitee to the Congress Working Committee (CWC).

Continued on pg 02

Council chairman Gutta pays tributes to Jaipal Reddy

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : On the occasion of former Union Minister Sudini Jaipal Reddy's 82nd birth anniversary, Council Chairman Gutta Sukhender Reddy paid tributes at the statue of Jaipal Reddy at the spoorthy sthal on Necklace Road today. Speaking on the occasion, Sukhender Reddy said, "The efforts of Jaipal Reddy have been great for the formation of Telangana as a separate state.



Utilize Centre's schemes, Kishan tells people

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : Union Minister Kishan Reddy today participated in the Vikasith Bharat Sankalpa Yatra at Borabanda. Speaking on the occasion, he asked people to take advantage of the Central government's schemes. He was the chief guest at the Vikasith

Bharat Sankalp Yatra held at Borabanda's Ambedkar Nagar today. He said women were being given the highest priority under the Pradhan Mantri Mudra Yojana scheme and Pradhan Mantri Svanidhi, which are for their holistic development and socio-economic uplift. Continued on pg 02



Kite flying claims nine lives

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Sankranti festival has brought grief to many families. Many young men and children, who flew kites with enthusiasm accidentally died.

Sharmila appointed Andhra Pradesh Congress president

Continued From pg 01

Sharmila is sister of Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Y. S. Jagan Mohan Reddy and daughter of former chief minister Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy. Sharmila, who merged YSR Telangana Party (YSRTP) with the Congress party on January 4, thanked Kharge, Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi, Rahul Gandhi and K. C. Venugopal for trusting her with the post of the president of APCC.

Pran Pratishtha event an election, political function so Cong will skip it: Rahul Gandhi

Kohima, Jan 16 (IANS) : Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Tuesday said that the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on January 22 is “an election and political function” and that’s why the Congress has decided to skip the event in Ayodhya. On the third day of his ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (BJNY) which has now reached Nagaland, the Congress leader said that the event in Ayodhya is a political one as it is an RSS-BJP function. “It is difficult for us (Congress) to attend the January 22 function because it is Modi’s function. They (BJP) always give election flavour to all events and developments, including religious ones. We respect all religions and all religions are the same to us,” Gandhi told the media. He said that top Hindu religious leaders were also questioning the January 22 function as it has been mixed with politics and the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections. Asked about the ideology of the INDIA bloc, Rahul Gandhi said, “We do not want a divided India. We want a united India with no hatred. Dalit and other Backward Classes would also not be neglected. Their role in governance would get due importance.” To another query, the Congress

leader said that seat sharing talks between the INDIA bloc partners were going on smoothly. “The status of the INDIA bloc is very good. I believe everything will be resolved smoothly. There are a few issues but in most places there are not many complications and the media has been overplaying some issues. There is mutual respect among INDIA bloc partners,” he said. Rahul Gandhi said the alliance was getting ready and it would be well-prepared to take on the BJP in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. “The INDIA grouping will fight the elections against the BJP appropriately and win the polls,” the Congress leader stated. Regarding the long-pending Naga political issue, the former Congress President said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi had given certain commitments nine years ago but they had not been fulfilled as yet. To a question,



Rahul Gandhi said if the INDIA bloc comes to power at the Centre in the forthcoming elections, it would try to resolve the Naga political issue through concerted talks and mutual understanding. Noting that suitable solutions to the Naga political issue were required, Gandhi said that no progress had been made so far between the Government and the Naga groups and some superficial documents were prepared. “We are committed to finding suitable solutions to the Naga political issue,” he said. The 66-day-long

BJNY, which started on Sunday from violence-ravaged Manipur will culminate in Mumbai on March 20 or 21. The yatra entered Nagaland late on Monday evening after covering Manipur’s tribal-dominated Kangpokpi and Senapati districts. Hundreds of Congress supporters, including women, accorded the Congress leader a rousing reception on Monday evening in Nagaland’s Khuzama village, 28 km south of state capital Kohima.

Bank of Baroda
PBB Banjara Hills, Hyderabad, Ph: 040-23421643

NOTICE TO LOCKER HOLDER
(DEFAULTER IN PAYMENT OF RENT OF LOCKER)

It is hereby notified for the information of the hirers of safe deposit lockers bearing the numbers mentioned against their names given below that they have defaulted payment of ANNUAL HIRE CHARGES and the payments is not forthcoming despite notices and reminders. If the hire charges due to the Bank are not paid within 7 days from the date of publication of this notice, the bank shall invoke the provision under the lease agreement and break open the lockers. The lockers break open will be done on 25-01-2024 at the entire risk and cost of hirers.

Sr. No.	Locker No.	Name of the Locker Holders and Address	Rent Due From
1	2661BX0092 (Old No.254 BM)	V.J.Reddy, Address: 3-4-1005/7, Bus Depot Road, Barkatpura, Hyderabad-500027.	22-01-2020
2	2661BX0094 (Old No.256 BM)	Qudsiya Abdeen, Address: Flat No.2C, Block III, Falcon Crest, Road No.10, Banjara Hills-500034	18-03-2021
3	2661BX0102 (Old No.266 BM)	V.J.Reddy, Address: 3-4-1005/7, Bus Depot Road, Barkatpura, Hyderabad-500027.	22-01-2020
4	2661DX0020 (Old No.97 DM)	Rafia Begum Mohammed, Address: 8-3-231/A/292, 293, Sri Krishna Nagar, Yousufguda, Hyderabad-500045.	27-12-2020

Date: 16-01-2024, Hyderabad Sd/- Authorised Officer, Bank of Baroda

Omikara Assets Reconstruction Private Limited
Corporate Office: Kohinoor Square, 47th Floor, N. C. Kelkar Marg, R. G. Gadkari Chowk, Dadar (West), Mumbai-400028.
Tel: 022-26544000, E-mail: Mumbai@omikaraarc.com
Regd. Office: No.9, M.P. Nagar, First Street, Kongu Nagar Extn., Tirupur-641607.
CIN: U67100T2014PTC020363 | www.omikaraarc.com

POSSESSION NOTICE
APPENDIX-IV (For immovable property) Rule 8 (4)

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Omikara Assets Reconstruction Pvt Ltd. (OARPL) a Company incorporated under the provisions of the Companies Act, 1956, and duly registered with Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as an Asset Reconstruction Company under Section 3 of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (54 of 2002) (“The SARFAESI Act, 2002”); having CIN No.U67100T2014PTC020363 and its registered office at 9, M.P.Nagar, 1st Street, Kongu Nagar Extn, Tirupur-641607 and Corporate office at Kohinoor Square, 47th Floor, N.C. Kelkar Marg, R.G Gadkari Chowk, Dadar (West), Mumbai-400028, acting in its capacity as trustee of Omikara PS-33/2021-22 Trust which has acquired all rights, titles & interest of the entire outstanding of 1) NAGARAJU CHINTHAKINDI (Applicant), 2) JYOTHI CHINTHAKINDI(Co-Applicant), 3) KUMAR VEERABOINA (Guarantor) along with the underlying securities from IREP Credit Private Limited (IREP) under section 5 of Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 vide Assignment Agreement dated 25-01-2022. Pursuant to the said assignment of debt, OARPL has stepped into the shoes of IREP and has become entitled to recover entire outstanding dues and enforce the security and whereas, Authorised Officer of Omikara Assets Reconstruction Private Limited, under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Asset and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 9 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued demand notice dated 28-06-2022 calling upon 1) NAGARAJU CHINTHAKINDI (Applicant), 2) JYOTHI CHINTHAKINDI (Co-Applicant), 3) KUMAR VEERABOINA (Guarantor) to repay the amount mentioned in the notice aggregating to Rs.10,36,922.48 (Rupees Ten Lakhs Thirty Six Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty two and Forty Eight Paise Only) as on 18-05-2022 plus accrued interest/unrealized interest thereon, at the contractual rate(s) together with incidental expenses, costs, charges, etc. till the date of payment within 60 days from the date of the notice.

The Applicant, Co-applicant and Guarantor having failed to repay the amount, as per notice dated 28-06-2022 under section 13(2) SARFAESI Act, the Authorized Officer of Omikara Assets Reconstruction Private Limited, duly appointed under sub section (12) of section 13 of the SARFAESI ACT 2002 has taken Physical Possession of the property as described herein below per order 11th December 2023 issued by Chief Judicial Magistrate-Jangaon CR.MP.No.76 of 2023 in exercise of powers conferred upon him under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act, read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules, 2002 on this 30th day of September of the year 2022.

The Borrower & Co-borrower having failed to repay the amount, as per notice dated 28-06-2022 under section 13(2) SARFAESI Act and pursuant to the said assignment of debt OARPL has stepped into the shoes of IREP and per the order dated 11-12-2023 issued by Chief Judicial Magistrate at Jangaon, Omikara Assets Reconstruction Private Limited has become entitled to recover entire outstanding dues and enforce the security. The Authorized Officer of Omikara Assets Reconstruction Private Limited, duly appointed under sub section (12) of section 13 of the SARFAESI ACT 2002 has taken Physical Possession of the property as described herein below in exercise of powers conferred upon him under sub-section (4) of Section 13 of the Act, read with rule 8 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) rules, 2002 on this 10th day of January of the year 2024.

The Applicant, Co-Applicant and Guarantor in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with such property will be subject to the charge of the Omikara Assets Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd. acting in its capacity as trustee of Omikara PS-33/2021-22 Trust, having corporate office at 9, M.P. Nagar, 1st Street, Kongu Nagar Extn, Tirupur-641607 and Corporate office at Kohinoor Square, 47th Floor, N.C. Kelkar Marg, R.G Gadkari Chowk, Dadar (West), Mumbai-400028, for an amount Rs.10,36,922.48 (Rupees Ten Lakhs Thirty Six Thousand Nine Hundred and Twenty two and Forty Eight Paise Only) plus accrued interest/unrealized interest thereon, at the contractual rate(s) together with incidental expenses, costs, charges, etc. The borrower’s & co-borrower’s attention is invited to the provisions of sub-Section 8 of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets. The details of the assets/properties hypothecated/assigned/charged/mortgaged to our Company in the above account & whose physical possession has taken given hereunder:

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:-
All that pertaining to Residential House bearing No. 2-11-100/1 on Land admeasuring an extend 49.96 sq. yards, or 41-35 Sq.Mtrs, On its Structure of Tin sheets measuring an extent of 200.43 Sq.Fts, Toilet tin sheets measuring an extent of 33.00 Sq.Ft situated at Ganesh Street Jangaon Town & District, Telangana-500167, with the following Boundaries: North: House of M.Yadavamma, South: House share of Chinthakindi Salyanarayana, East: Open place of others, West: M.C.Road.

Date: 10-01-2024 Sd/- Authorised Officer
Place: Jangaon For Omikara Assets Reconstruction Pvt. Ltd. (Acting in its capacity as trustee of Omikara PS 33/2021-22 Trust)



PM inaugurates new campus of NACIN at Palasamudram

Palasamudram (Sri Sathya Sai Dt); Jan.16 (NSS): Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the new campus of National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics (NACIN) at Palasamudram, Sri Sathya Sai District in Andhra Pradesh today. He also took a walk through the exhibition showcased on the occasion. The Prime Minister also interacted with Officer Trainees of the 74th and 75th batches of the Indian Revenue Service (Custom & Indirect Taxes) as well as officer trainees of the Royal Civil Service of Bhutan. Addressing the gathering, the Prime Minister congratulated everyone for the inauguration of the National Academy of Customs, Indirect Taxes & Narcotics at Palasamudram. Highlighting the speciality of the region of Palasamudram, the Prime Minister said it is associated with spirituality, nation-building and good governance and represents the heritage of India.



Sravan Dasoju slams CM Revanth’s speech at Davos Summit

Hyderabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : BRS party leader Dr Sravan Dasoju has said after observing various tweets, social media and media coverage, “I feel compelled to express my concern regarding Chief Minister Revanth Reddy’s representation at #Davos2024 Summit #WorldEconomicForum2024. shall not make himself a

laughing stock and bring dishonour, disrepute and disgrace to the Telangana State with his incoherent, inconsistent and incompetent responses on a global platform. “His unintelligible comments like nuclear reaction, ring roads, political comments like duplicate and so on won’t bring any appreciation either to him personally or to the State of Telangana. He must

unlearn his loose cannon political rhetoric at least on international forums. “A State head attending the DAVOS Summit to attract investments should demonstrate competency in economic policies, a clear vision for development, regulatory transparency, and commitment to a conducive business environment.

AAP following ideology of RSS, BJP: Owaisi

Continued From pg 01
Reacting to AAP’s decision to conduct recitation of Sundarkand Paths in every Assembly constituency of Delhi on the first Tuesday of every month, the Hyderabad MP termed Delhi’s ruling party as ‘Chhota Recharge of RSS’. In his post on ‘X’, Owaisi wondered if AAP had taken the decision because of the January 22 event. He was referring to the scheduled inauguration of Ram temple at Ayodhya. Owaisi recalled that AAP leaders had maintained silence on the issue of Bilkis Bano and had said that they only want to talk on issues like education and health. “Is Sunderkand Path a lesson of education or health,” he asked. The All India Majlis-E-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader said that the fact is that they want to avoid justice. He alleged that AAP is giving full support to the agenda of the Sangh. “They don’t want us to talk about Babri (Masjid) but they keep beating the drum of justice, love, so-and-so and at the same time keep strengthening Hindutva,” Owaisi wrote. The MP asked AAP leaders as to how different they are from BJP and went on to add that there is no difference between them. Alleging that they are hypocrites, Owaisi said they were following the path of Narendra Modi and resorting to politics of competitive Hindutva.

Utilize Centre’s schemes, Kishan tells people

Continued From pg 01
He said the welfare schemes implemented by the Union government were providing social security to the families. He said Vikasit Bharat program had been launched with the intention of making Central schemes accessible to everyone, who is eligible. The officials who participated in the programme briefed the people about schemes like PM Jeevan Jyoti Bima Yojana, Suraksha Bima Yojana, PM Kisan, PM Atal Pension Yojana, Mudra Yojana and other schemes. The residents of Borabanda Basti watched Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s speech on the occasion. The Union Minister also released brochures published on government schemes along with the 2024 New Year calendar. In the inaugural function, centres have been set up for issuing free gas connections and social insurance schemes along with a medical camp. Many beneficiaries of various schemes at the event shared their experiences.

Safeguard Cows Protect Culture TTD Chairman

Tirupati, Jan 16 (NSS) : Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) Chairman Bhumana Karunakara Reddy called upon everyone to inculcate the habit of safeguarding cows to protect our culture as evinced in Vedas and Puranas. Participating in the Go Puja Mahotsavam held at Sri Venkateswara Go Samrakshanasala in Tirupati as Chief Guest as part of Kanuma festivities the TTD chairman said TTD has been promoting the Gopuja program to empower the younger generation about the significance of the holy cow. He said TTD’s Goshalas at Tirupati and Palamner consisted of about 2500 cows, bulls, elephants and horses. They stood as major attractions during the Utsavams of Tirumala and Tiruchanoor. Similarly, butter from desi cows is primarily used in all rituals and festivities of Tirumala. He said Gopuja is significant in Kanuma festivi-

ties from time immemorial as the practice empowers devotees with prosperity, health and peace. The SV Gosamrakshana trust had received donations of 2250 crore till date. Earlier the TTD Chairman participated in other puja programs at Sri Venugopal Swamy temple, Tulasi Puja etc. Later he also fed fodder to Cows, Horses, Bulls, elephants etc. after performing puja to them. The cultural programs, Annamaiah sankeertans and bhajans by artists of Annamacharya and Dasa Sahitya projects and students of SV College of music and Dance enthralled the devotees and citizens of Tirupati. TTD Gosamrakshana Trust members Srinivas Ram Sunil Reddy, Sridhar, SVBC CEO Shanmukh Kumar, Hindu Dharma Prachara Parishad Secretary Dhananjeyulu and other officials, devotees participated in the program presided over by Dr Harnath Reddy, the Director of SV Goshala.

FORM NO. 14 [See Regulation 33(2)]
OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - I/II
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD (DRT 2)
1st Floor, Triveni Complex Abids, Hyderabad-500001.

DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE UNDER SECTIONS 25 TO 28 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993 AND RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961.
RC/183/2023 UCO Bank 04-01-2024
Versus
Anika Packaging Industries And Others

To
(CD 1) Anika Packaging Industries, H.No.17-1-391/S/405, Saraswati Nagar, Singareni Colony, Saidabad, Hyderabad - 500 059. Also at: Factory at: Plot No.30/A, Phase-IV, IDA Cherlapally, kapra Circle and Mandal, Medchal -Malkajgiri Dist-501301 Rep. by its Managing Partner Smt. R. Anusha.
(CD 2) Smt. R. Anusha, D/o. R. Venkateshwar Rao, H.No.17-1-391/S/405, Saraswati Nagar, Singareni Colony, Saidabad, Hyderabad - 500 059.
(CD 3) Sri T. Dislip, S/o. T. Srinivas Rao, R/o. H.No.17-1-391/S/405, Saraswati Nagar, Singareni Colony, Saidabad, Hyderabad - 500 059.

This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL, HYDERABAD (DRT 2) in OA/33/2022 an amount of Rs.46,37,146.18 (Rupees Forty Six Lakhs Thirty Seven Thousand One Hundred and Forty Six and Paise Sixteen only) i.e. Rs. 17,63,014.82 Ps towards Cash Credit A/c No. 1906051000557, Rs.20,90,440.56Ps towards Term Loan A/c No.19060610029817, Rs.6,85,931.68 Ps towards GECL A/c No.190606610037263 And Rs.97,759.11Ps towards FITL A/c No.19060610039441 along with pendentille and future interest @ 10.45%, 8.45% 7.50% and 10.45% Simple Interest respectively on Cash Credit account, Term Loan Account, GECL Account and FITL Account yearly w.e.f. 27/05/2022 till realization and costs of Rs.100120 (Rupees One Lakh One Hundred Twenty Only) has become due against you (Jointly and Severally Fully Limited).

2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipts of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.

3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of yours assets on or before the next date of hearing.

4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on 14/03/2024 at 10:30 a.m. for further proceedings.

5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:
(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate / execution proceedings.
(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due.

Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 04/01/2024

Sd/- Recovery Officer
DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD(DRT 2)

Assam is dedicated to nation's growth by providing human resources: CM

Guwahati, Jan 16 (IANS) : Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday said that the state is dedicated to aiding in the nation's growth, particularly by providing qualified human resources for a range of industries. Speaking at the opening of the National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER)'s new campus in Changsari adjacent to Guwahati, Sarma claimed that the northeast's newfound emotional ties to the rest of the nation, forged under the Modi administration, have inspired residents to make even more contributions to the development of the country. Union Minister for Chemicals & Fertilizers and Health & Family Welfare, Mansukh Mandaviya virtually inaugurated the new campus of National Institute of Pharmaceutical Education and Research (NIPER) in Guwahati.



Vasundhara Raje skips BJP meeting on Lok Sabha polls

Jaipur, Jan 16 (IANS) : Former Rajasthan Chief Minister and senior BJP leader Vasundhara Raje on Tuesday skipped a party meeting that was held here to discuss the preparations for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. According to sources, Raje did not turn up for the meeting that was held at a hotel here due to her daughter-in-law's illness. The meeting was attended by Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma, state unit BJP president C.P. Joshi, Rajasthan in-charge Arun Singh, Union Ministers Gajendra Singh Shekhawat and Arjun Ram Meghwal among others. Cabinet Minister Jogaram Patel said: "BJP takes every election as a challenge. We will win 25 out of 25 Lok Sabha seats this time."



TN Minister Senthil Balaji denied bail again

Chennai, Jan 16 (IANS) : A special court here on Tuesday again rejected the bail application of Tamil Nadu Minister Senthil Balaji. Principal Sessions and Special Court for PMLA cases Judge S.Alli declined the bail application of Balaji, who had pleaded that circumstances have changed as the Enforcement Directorate (ED) had completed the investigation and that there was no reason for a custodial interrogation. The judge, however, observed that there was no change in

circumstances and denied his bail application. The Minister had filed bail applications in the Madras High Court as also the Supreme Court but both were rejected. Balaji was arrested and sent in Puzhal central prison on June 14, 2023 in a case related to the job for cash scam while he was a minister in the previous AIADMK government. Senior counsel Aryama Sundaram, appearing for the Minister, argued that his client was in prison for 207 days.



Bihar Police cracks rape-murder case of two minor girls, one arrested

Patna, Jan 16 (IANS) : Bihar Police on Tuesday claimed to have cracked a case regarding horrifying rape and murder of two minor girls in Phulwari Sharif town of Patna and arrested the accused. "We have arrested the accused on the basis of extensive investigation. The accused has confessed to the crime. He also revealed how he committed the crime. The interrogation of the accused is currently underway," Patna SSP Rajiv Mishra said. On Tuesday, two minor girls of the Mahadalit community, aged 8 and 12-year-old were found abandoned in a pit near Hinduni village. The 8-year-old victim had died while the 12-year-old was found unconscious. She was admitted to AIIMS Patna and is currently undergoing treatment.



15 kilometers of new railway lines being laid every day in Rajasthan: Ashwini Vaishnaw

Jaipur, Jan 16 (IANS) : Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw on Tuesday said that at least 15 kilometers of new railway lines are being laid every day in the desert state. "At least 400 kilometers of new railway lines are being laid in a year in Rajasthan, and around 15 kilometers of railway lines are being laid every day. In the coming time, all the projects of Amrit Station Scheme in Rajasthan will be completed within the stipulated time," the

Railway Minister said. He said that the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme was launched in 2023 and under the scheme work is going on to make more than 1300 railway stations across the country world class. The central government had passed a railway budget of Rs 9500 crore for Rajasthan and under this, work is going on to make 83 railway stations of the state world class under Amrit Station Scheme. "Out of which the work of about

25-30 railway stations has been completed," the minister said. He said that he inspected Jaipur Railway Station and gave instructions to the officials. Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma proposed to include Sanganer Railway Station in the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. Bhajan Lal Sharma has also proposed to form a review committee of railways under the direction of the Chief Secretary.



Delhi Waqf Board: Court reserves order in property case involving AAP MLA

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Rouse Avenue court on Tuesday reserved its order on the cognisance of the charge Sheet filed by the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in a Rs 36 crore property case involving AAP MLA Amanat Ullah Khan. Allegedly, a property worth Rs 36 crore was acquired with illicit funds, purportedly influenced by Khan, who reportedly handed over Rs 8 crore in cash. The ED had previously filed a charge sheet against Zeeshan Haider, his firm Skypower, Javed Imam Siddiqui, Dawood Nasir, and Qausar Siddiqui.

ED raids at Bengal minister's houses & office in municipalities recruitment case conclude

Kolkata, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted raids and search operations for over 13 hours at the residence and offices of West Bengal Fire Services Minister Sujit Basu in connection with the municipalities recruitment scam case, an official said. The ED sleuths left the minister's residence after accumulating many documents from two of his residences and one of

his offices. The raids and searches began at around 8 a.m. on Friday at Basu's residence in the Lake Town area. The ED team and Central armed forces personnel escorting them left the raiding spots after 9 p.m. Even as sources claimed that ED sleuths had collected several documents from the residences of the minister as well as from his office in the same locality, they refused to disclose the nature of the documents seized.



Odisha govt asks docs to write prescription, post mortem report in proper handwriting

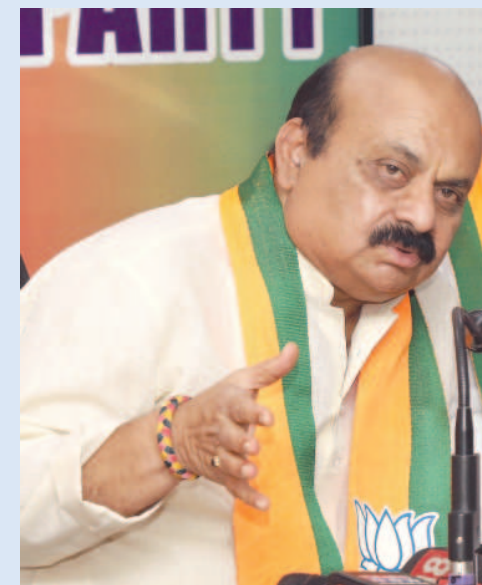
Bhubaneswar, Jan 16 (IANS) : Following the directions of the Orissa High Court, the state government has issued an order instructing all the doctors of private as well as government hospitals to write prescriptions or medico legal documents in proper legible handwriting or typed format. "All Registered Medical Practitioners / Medical Officers of Govt. Peripheral health care facilities/ Medical College Hospitals, Private Clinics and Pvt. Medical Colleges are to write prescription in proper legible handwriting or in

typed form as per guideline of NMC(Chapter 2-4B / Notification No 12013 Dt.23.05.2022)," said order issued by the Chief Secretary. The medical professionals have also been instructed to write the post mortem reports either in capital letters or in good handwriting. "The medico legal reports & post-mortem reports are to be written either in capital letter or in a typed form or in good legible handwriting to ensure appreciation of evidence in the judicial system.



Bomma questions K'taka CM's silence in moral policing-gang rape case

Bengaluru, Jan 16 (IANS) : Former Karnataka CM Basaravaj Bommai on Tuesday criticised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and questioned his silence on the Haveri moral policing incident wherein a woman had alleged gang-rape by vigilantes. "The government was treading the path of dual policy in giving protection to the victim who belongs to the minority community," he said, while accusing the state Congress of having double standards over moral policing. Talking to reporters here on Friday, he said the woman had been gang-raped, but the police had initially ruled out that offence and invoked the various sections of law that would give bail to the accused. "Now, the woman has openly stated that she had been sexually abused and the case then became serious. The victim must undergo the medical test afresh. The CM claims that he is the champion of minorities but a woman belonging to the minority community has been sexually assaulted. The government did not even come forward to provide her protection," the senior BJP leader said. The former chief minister claimed that there has been a 30 per cent increase in incidents of crime in the last nine months. "Similar incidents in the past have been hushed up. The Haveri incident must be probed separately. An investigation team must



be constituted to probe it," he said. A victim of moral policing released a video on Thursday in which she said that she was repeatedly gang-raped by vigilantes in Haveri district of Karnataka. The home-maker was dragged out of a hotel after being seen with a person from another religion and beaten up in Hangal town on January 8. The victim who belongs to the minority community stated that, when she was at the hotel, a gang of five to six men barged inside, questioned her and took her on their motorcycles forcibly.

SC sets aside Himachal Pradesh HC direction asking state govt to shift DGP Kundu

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Supreme Court on Tuesday set aside the order of the Himachal Pradesh High Court asking the state government to shift Director General of Police Sanjay Kundu from his post. During the hearing, a bench, headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud remarked: "Does the High Court have jurisdiction to transfer him (DGP Kundu) to some other post? It is a solitary post."



OPINIONmail



INDIAN ECONOMY HAS SHOWN ITS OWN STRENGTHS THROUGH HIGH GROWTH IN 2023-24

After fiddling with the Indian economy for years, Raghuram Rajan, former governor of Reserve Bank of India, finds himself in a kind of Hamlet moment. Rajan had observed that India would be lucky to reach a 5% growth rate during the current fiscal year. He was heaped with criticism for his pessimism and downside projections. Rajan is admittedly one of the most level headed and conservative economists who does not make wild kind of statement. However, there are probably some chinks in everyone's armour and occasionally even the most astute lands in quagmires. Rajan has landed himself in such a situation.. While he was taking of a sub-5% performance for the Indian economy, it turned out to be plus 7.2% growth in 2023-24, as revealed by the figures given out by the national statistical office. The difference between a sub-5% and plus-7% performance is immense for a large economy like India. Rajan over enthusiastically sought to explain the more than expected performance of the Indian economy in terms of sheer luck. In an interview he sought to explain this robust growth performance to certain global developments over which India had no control. But these were nonetheless hugely positive for the Indian economy.

Of these, Rajan took two to explain the more than expected turn out.

First, that the industrial economy of the developed countries did not land in a soup and recession as was widely being expected. Instead, they are merrily growing and showing healthy rates of employment growth. These should have generally buoyed up India's exports and economic activity at home. Secondly, Rajan referred to the slip shod functioning of the Chinese economy and the "muted" demand for commodities from China. Thus, China being the second largest economy in the world, its lacklustre growth and performance meant lower demand for everything and thus somewhat depressed prices in the global market. The Chinese situation had translated into lower commodities, particularly for oil, helped India majorly. But looking a little closer, it will be noticed several factors are at play, not just the luck factor. The two principal points raised by Rajan. First, that the developed world did not melt down and thus helped India. However, India's exports in the current year (2023-24) were not particularly buoyant, in terms of the GDP trends. These in fact flattened out at the same level. Maybe, that these did not drop, itself may have been helpful. But it does not typically work out that way. As for oil imports, the oil prices did after all rise. Over last one year, the oil prices had inched up and in between, when the Israel war had raged, there were moments when the markets expected the oil prices to shoot. India, admittedly, got a rising part of its crude requirements from Russia and fairly at price levels. However, the oil prices and the total import bill has been rising. If one looks at the GDP figures there are several trends. There is broad based and robust growth trends. The construction sector has grown by 10.7% during the last year, and this has critical importance. Construction creates the largest number of employment and additional economic activity. Double digit growth in the sector must have been an engine of growth. The three major sectors of the economy have all shown resurgence. Agriculture grew by close to 2%, mining grew by over 8% and manufacturing by 6.5%. These create the ground for ripple effect for broad based growth. Until now, several leading economists have warned against India's growth engines. They had pointed out that India was riding on a single engine for growth — that is, domestic consumption expenditure. What we see in the national income statistics is the tapering trend in the consumption expenditure. Private final consumption expenditure as a percentage of GDP slipped from around 58.5% in 2022-23 to 56.5% in 2023-24.

(By Anjan Roy)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

RSS's RAM MANDIR INAUGURATION IS POLITICALLY MOTIVATED, SAY FOUR TOP HINDU HEADS

So far the RSS and BJP have been working on their plan to rupture the social relation between Hindus and Muslims, but now in the wake of the consecration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya on January 22 differences have cropped up among the Hindus between those believing Sanatan ideology and the devotees of BJP's line of political Hindutva. RSS and especially its chief Mohan Bhagwat, in their pursuit for accomplishing the mission of establishing Hindutva as the official religion of the state, have even gone to the extent of questioning and undermining the authority of the four Shankaracharyas, who epitomise the Sanatan Dharma and Hinduism. No one is above them and they according to the Hindu religious ethics and traditions are the authorities to represent

the spirit of Hindusim. The four Hindu Dharam gurus have come at the target of RSS and BJP for their fault of pointing out the procedural wrongs of the consecration which are basically anti-Hinduism in character and content. Obviously being the Hindu Dharam Gurus they are finding it tough to exonerate the anti-Hindu actions being pursued by RSS and BJP. The Shankaracharyas had suggested to shift the date of consecration to Ram Navami to be celebrated in April. But the RSS and BJP leaders are not inclined to listen to their religious advice. The top seers are not too happy at the construction of the Ram temple, they strongly nurse the view that the plan to have it consecrated on January 22 purely has a political orientation and is a design to use it for electoral gain. The Dharam Gurus openly decry this strategy of the RSS and BJP and feel that it would not help Hinduism or Hindus. Since the consecration violates the spirit and



ethics of Hinduism they have decided to boycott the ceremony. Since the stance of the Dharam Gurus has the potential to wreck their designs to exploit Hinduism, the protagonists of Hindutva have lost their senses. Champat Rai, a RSS leader and protégé of Bhagwat, who is also the general secretary of Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust has out rightly disparaged the status and authorities of the Shankaracharyas by saying: "It is a Ram mandir, Ramanand tradition will be followed. The temple belongs to the Ramanand sect, and not to the Sanyasis, not to Shaiva or Shakta". With the RSS and BJP leaders adopting obstinate posture towards the Dharam Gurus, they too have launched the struggle for Hindu existence. They would boy-

cott the consecration. Dharam Gurus feel extremely hurt at this ridiculous and contemptuous statement and feel that this has been tacit support of the top RSS and BJP leaders. How could Rai, whose actions are not above board, dare to humiliate the Shankaracharyas. If the Dharam Gurus would have pointed out the religious and procedural discrepancies in that backdrop Rai must not have used this insulting language. Shankaracharya Nishchalananda Saraswati, who had confirmed that he would not be going to Ayodhya for consecration on January 22 criticised Rai's remarks, advising him not to diminish his stature while holding a position of power.

FRANZ BECKENBAUER IS REMEMBERED FOR HIS CLASSY STYLE AND LEADERSHIP

It is a player from a football team's forward line who emerges as a heroic figure in a crucial match dribbling and scooting past stolid defenders to score a goal himself or creating an opening for another forward to kick the ball into the net past a hapless goalkeeper. Seldom it is a member of the defence line or a mid fielder who grabs the limelight; the legend of German and world football, Franz Beckenbauer who passed away early this week was an exception.

To revert to "The Emperor" who is more, Beckenbauer was regarded as one of the greatest footballers of all times being ranked with Pele and Yohan Cruyff. As a player he invented and defined the modern football style.

Always calm under pressure and a skilful marshal of his defence, Beckenbauer could read a game astutely. Small wonder, he exactly knew the right moment to surge upfield.

There was an unhurried air about Beckenbauer. In a situation when others in his position were breaking into sweat, he essayed long raking passes to his strikers. Beckenbauer excelled in the dual role of silk and steel. He would snatch a ball off the opponent's feet with the faintest of touches and would essay the ball with almost equal felicity thread a gorgeous pass upfield. Physically the most imposing of strikers could not get the better of Beckenbauer. He could outwit the brainiest of the playmakers too.



REPUBLICAN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE NIKKI HALEY GETTING BIG SUPPORT IN CAMPAIGN

Republican presidential nominee hopeful Nikki Haley proved once again that she remains the American liberal media's candidate to prop up. Thursday Haley and Florida Governor Ron DeSantis honed further their debating skills at the CNN GOP Presidential debate in Iowa and Nikki won approval from the mainstream media while Ron DeSantis was the Social Media favourite. Also, Nikki Haley got a boost when fellow aspirant, former New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, dropped out of the race and the advantage went to Haley. Clearly, Haley appears to be getting all the breaks. A month ago, Haley had "lit up Vivek Ramaswamy — the other Indian origin Repub-

lican presidential nominee hopeful — like a pinball machine", which "the people appreciated very much". Haley, said a particularly fawning media outlet, is "looking to outperform expectations in the Iowa caucuses" and challenge former President Trump for the Republican nomination. That is notwithstanding Haley's blank stare, which she flaunts at awkward moments, that can scare off a cat if the cat cared to take a look at Nikki alias Nimrata, the name her Sikh parents gave her.

2024 WILL WITNESS MASSIVE SPACE LAUNCH PROGRAMMES BY INDIA, CHINA AND JAPAN

In 2024, the global space launch landscape is expected to see increased activity from both public and private sectors in countries like China, India, and Japan, following a year dominated by SpaceX.

Chinese startup LandSpace Technology is set to introduce reusable rockets by 2025, following a strategy similar to SpaceX. Meanwhile, India is preparing for a sequence of flight tests leading to a manned space mission, also targeted for 2025.

Japan is striving to become the fifth country to successfully land a spacecraft on the Moon this month. This follows India's achievement with Chandrayaan-3, which landed on the lunar surface on August 23, 2023. India has reportedly returned the propulsion module used for Chandrayaan-3 to Earth's orbit, potentially setting the stage for a future mission to bring back lunar samples.

Japan's involvement in space exploration dates back to 1970 when it became the fourth nation to launch a satellite into orbit, following the Soviet Union, the United States, and France. In re-

cent times, China and India have emerged as significant players in space exploration. China announced its goal to send astronauts to the Moon by 2030. Meanwhile, India has ambitious plans for establishing a space station by 2035 and aims to send its first astronaut to the Moon by 2040.

Shogo Yakame, a business consultant at Nomura Research Institute, expressed to the Financial Times his belief that India is likely to become a more formidable competitor in space to Japan than China. He pointed out the dynamic nature of India's

commercial space sector as the basis for his opinion.

Japan is set to demonstrate its advanced space technology with a groundbreaking lunar mission scheduled for January 20. The mission involves the Smart Lander for Investigating the Moon (SLIM), which aims to achieve the world's first "pinpoint" lunar landing. SLIM is expected to land within 100 meters of a designated target, located near the Shioli Crater by the Sea of Nectar, just south of the Moon's equator.



Hindu-American Tulsi Gabbard inks content deal with X to 'defend free speech'

New York, Jan 16 (IANS) : Tulsi Gabbard, the first Hindu member of the US Congress and a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, announced she has inked a deal with Elon Musk to host a show on X to "defend free speech". The social media company is bringing three new shows, featuring Gabbard, former CNN anchor Don Lemon, and sports radio host and former ESPN star Jim Rome. The former Hawaii Representative said she will be sharing stories of those whose "voices have been silenced", and people in power don't want them to be heard. "Freedom of speech is a fundamental right in America. Sadly we live in a time where debate, dialogue and dissent can be

cause for cancellation and censorship by those in power. To defend free speech, we must use it," Gabbard wrote in a post shared on X on Tuesday. The 42-year-old said that her new partnership with X will ensure that free speech is not only protected but also celebrated. "We will be bringing you stories & news about the truth of what's happening in our country and world but that those in power don't what you hear, and a series of short films that share the stories of those most impacted, but whose voices are silenced," she said. On October 11, 2022, Gabbard announced on Twitter that she was leaving the Democratic Party, denouncing it as an "elitist cabal of war mongers".



Greece urges vaccination against Covid-19, influenza as cases surge

Athens, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Greek government has urged an increase in vaccination against Covid-19 and influenza amid a surge of fresh cases in recent weeks. The people "who lost their lives lately were almost entirely unvaccinated", said Health Minister Adonis Georgiadis during a press conference in Athens. Out of 1,028 deaths linked to Covid-19 reported since September 2023 across the country, only two were vaccinated, Xinhua news agency quoted data from the Health Ministry.

Of the 90 patients currently hospitalised in intensive care units, only two are vaccinated, the data revealed. The health system in Greece was still not under significant pressure from hospitalisations. Therefore, the Ministry has opted to stay with a strong suggestion for the use of protective facemasks mainly in hospitals and not proceed to an announcement of mandatory use of masks or other measures, like the ones introduced recently in other European countries, officials said.

Russian tourists flocked to China, Europe during New Year holidays

Moscow, Jan 16 (IANS) : During the 2023 New Year holidays, there was a surge of Russian tourists flocking to China and Europe, a local media outlet said in a report on Tuesday. Citing data from a study made by the Russian telecom giant

MegaFon, the RIA Novosti news agency report said: "During the past New Year holidays, 11 percent more Russians went abroad compared to last year's winter holidays. Along with the growth of trips to China.



Biden names Indian-origin judge to Illinois District Court

New York, Jan 16 (IANS) : President Joe Biden has announced his intent to nominate Indian-American judge Sunil R. Harjani for the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Harjani is among six individuals named by Biden to federal district courts -- "all of whom are extraordinarily qualified, experienced, and devoted to the rule of law and our Constitution", the White House said in a statement. This will be Biden's 44th round of nominees for federal

judicial positions, bringing the number of announced federal judicial nominees to 215. "These choices also continue to fulfill the President's promise to ensure that the nation's courts reflect the diversity that is one of our greatest assets as a country - both in terms of personal and professional backgrounds," the White House said on Tuesday. Harjani has been a United States Magistrate for the Northern District of Illinois since 2019. He previously served as an Assistant Attorney and Deputy Chief of the Securities and Commodities Fraud



Section in the US Attorney's Office for the Northern District of Illinois from 2008 to 2019. He also practiced federal civil litigation as a senior counsel at the US Securities & Exchange Commission from 2004 to 2008 and as an associate at Jenner & Block LLP in Chicago from 2000 to 2001 and 2002 to 2004.

Harjani served as a law clerk for Judge Suzanne B Conlon on the US District Court for the Northern District of Illinois from 2001 to 2002. He received his J.D., cum laude, from Northwestern University Pritzker School of Law in 2000 and his B A from Northwestern University in 1997.



IMF allows immediate disbursement of \$700 mn to Pakistan

Islamabad, Jan 16 (IANS) : The International Monetary Fund (IMF) announced that its Executive Board has completed the first review of Pakistan's economic reform program supported by the global lender's Stand-By Arrangement (SBA), allowing for an immediate disbursement of about \$700 million. In an official statement, the IMF said that following the Board's decision, the total disbursements under the arrangement will get to around \$1.9 billion, reports Xinhua news agency. Pakistan's nine-month SBA was approved by the Executive Board in July last year, in the amount of about \$3 billion at the time of approval, aimed to provide a policy anchor for addressing domestic and external balances and a framework for financial support from multilateral and bilateral partners, it said. The economic activity has stabilised in Pakistan, although the outlook remains challenging and dependent on the implementation of sound policies, it added. The current IMF programme is expected to conclude in the second week of April. In November 2023, a Staff-Level Agreement was reached between the IMF staff and Pakistani authorities regarding the first review under the country's SBA. This agreement was contingent upon approval by the IMF's Executive Board.



London mayoral election: Second British-Indian throws hat in the ring

London, Jan 16 (IANS) : London may get its first Indian-origin mayor with finance and property broker Shyam Batra announcing his intent to run as an independent in the May 2024 election. Batra (62) is the second British-Indian to throw his hat in the ring after investment banker Tarun Ghulati in the fast-growing group of contenders for this year's election, looking to unseat Mayor Sadiq Khan, who is seeking reelection as a Labour candidate. A resident of Uxbridge in west London, Batra told the BBC that he did not see himself as a "party political candidate", but rather as someone who "just wants to fix London and give people a voice". Like Ghulati, his main priority, if elected, is to abolish the Ultra Low Emission Zone (Ulez) as well as the congestion zone and 20mph speed limits. "I drive an old car and now when I drive into London I have to pay congestion and Ulez charges. It is a joke. You should not be charged for driving in your own city," he told the BBC.

Some of his other priorities include, tackling the cost-of-living crisis and improving housing issues by introducing "a finance scheme to get everyone on the property ladder". Stating that he is "passionate" about making London a better place, Batra said: "I know what the general public think and what because I am one of them. I am fed up myself and if I am mayor I won't take any nonsense." So far, 12 candidates, including Batra, have reportedly declared their intent for the job, which Khan hopes to hold for an historic third term. The list includes, Conservative Susan Hill, Liberal Democrat Rob Blackie, Reform UK's Howard Cox, Green Party's Zoe Garbett and Social Democratic Party's Amy Gallagher.



Israel's war expenses in 2023 reached \$6.59 bn

Jerusalem, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Israeli government's expenses for the conflict with Hamas amounted to 24.7 billion shekels (\$6.59 billion) in 2023, the Finance Ministry said. The expenses were incurred between October 7, the day when Hamas attacked Israel, and December 31, with 17 billion shekels of the amount spent on defense and the rest on civilian purposes related to the fighting, reports Xinhua news

agency. In December alone, the conflict expenses amounted to 17.2 billion shekels out of a monthly total government expenditure of 71 billion shekels. The month's deficit stood at 33.8 billion shekels, reflecting an increase of 82.7 per cent year-on-year. The Israeli government's annual deficit amounted to 77.5 billion shekels in 2023, or 4.2 per cent of the GDP, compared to a surplus of 9.9 billion shekels registered in 2022.

Large part of New Zealand under water restriction due to high summer demand

Wellington, Jan 16 (IANS) : Many New Zealanders are facing water restrictions due to dry conditions and high summer demand, local authorities said on Tuesday. Residents in the capital Wellington, Picton and other central New Zealand regions, as well as the Otago region in the South Island, are being urged to consider water conservation over the coming weeks, as the demand continues to rise with summer temperatures increasing

nationwide, reports Xinhua news agency. The Wellington metropolitan region will move to level 2 water restrictions on January 17, which means a ban on sprinklers and irrigation systems for residential households. The ban applies to all irrigation systems, soaker hoses, and unattended watering systems. Residents can still water their garden by hand at any time, on any day, so long as this is not left unattended, the Wellington City Council said.



Planning to bring UG books in 12 Indian languages : UGC

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : University Grants Commission (UGC) on Tuesday said that they are working on providing textbooks at undergraduate level in arts, science, commerce and social sciences in 12 Indian languages. The UGC said these books in different regional languages, will be available and implemented in universities across the country. However UGC said that it will be completely optional for the students to

choose their desired languages. "We are identifying nodal universities in different states who will coordinate the exercise of forming teams of authors who can write high quality textbooks in Indian languages," UGC Chairman Prof Mamidala Jagadesh Kumar said. He said that this effort is in tune with NEP2020's goal to provide learning opportunities to students in universities in Indian languages.



Govt agencies have exposed BJP over unemployment in Goa: Congress

Panaji, Jan 16 (IANS) : Congress on Tuesday said that the Central government agencies have exposed Goa government over unemployment in the state but the Chief Minister Pramod Sawant is not willing to accept the reality and is trying to hoodwink people only to garner votes. AICC Media Incharge for Goa Harshad Sharma during a presser at Congress office

and slammed BJP government for their repeated false promises over providing employment to youths. Harshad Sharma said that Chief Minister Pramod Sawant is not ready to accept that unemployment exists in the state. "How will you get a solution or to address this issue, when he is not ready to accept it. Youth are suffering due to unemployment. This insensitive government has failed to create jobs," Sharma said.

In an apparent jibe at Home Minister Amit Shah, Sharma said that he (Shah) always talks about the chronology of events. "I would like to give him (Shah) a sequence of how Goa is reeling under unemployment. "In November 2022, NITI Ayog said that Goa's unemployment rate stood at 10.5 per cent, the third highest in the country.



Most-wanted Maoist leader arrested in Bengal's Purulia

Kolkata, Jan 16 (IANS) : In a significant achievement, the West Bengal Police have arrested the most-wanted CPI(Maoist) central committee member Sabyasachi Goswami a.k.a. Kishore Da, thus foiling fresh attempts to resurrect Left wing extremism in certain pockets of the state. Sources from the state police said that Goswami was arrested by a special team of cops from a secret location in Purulia district late Tuesday night. He will be presented at a district court in Purulia on Friday afternoon and the public prosecutor will seek his police custody for further interrogation, sources added.

SC to impose costs on states not responding on plea to declare minorities at state/district level

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Supreme Court on Tuesday said that it will impose costs on state governments for not submitting their response to the Central government on the issue of identification of minorities at the state or district level. A bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta said that the state government, if it fails to file an affidavit

before the apex court or furnish data or comments to the Centre within a period of six weeks, will have to pay a cost of Rs 10,000. The bench said that it will take up the issue of identification of minorities in April. It also asked the Union Ministry of Minority Affairs to file an updated status report at least two weeks prior to the next date of listing.



Manipur power plant fuel leak: Govt sets up three member panel

Imphal, Jan 16 (IANS) : Manipur government has constituted a three member committee to conduct an inquiry in the fuel leak at Leimakhong power station in Imphal West district, which continued for third day on Tuesday. The spillage happened on the night of January 10 at the Leimakhong power station, affecting Kantosabal, Sekmai and nearby villages. The fuel contain streams eventually join the Imphal river downstream, which is a vital water source for several villages, including Kantosabal and Sekmai. The Imphal river is the lifeline of Imphal valley, comprising several districts. Officials said that the inquiry committee to be headed by Additional Director General

of Police (Intelligence) Ashutosh Kumar Sinha and Power Secretary Shailesh Kumar Chaurasia and Additional Secretary Home Department M Pradip Singh are the other two members. A notification said that the inquiry committee after conducting a detailed study considering all the contributing factors that led to the sudden leakage of fuel suggested immediate and long-term measures for the safety and security of the power plant. The committee will submit its report to the state government within 15 days. The Secretary to Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Wednesday directed the departments and authorities concerned to take "immediate necessary action to prevent an environmental calamity, making use of all available resources in terms of machin-



ery, manpower and expertise." The main course of the stream has been blocked at Kantosabal to contain the spread of heavy fuel into the public water supply system and diverted to a nearby dug out field. A committee also constituted by the Public Health Engineering Department to monitor and ensure that potable water is available for consumption as well as for domestic use of the public with members from various de-

partments. As a precautionary measure, the general public is requested to not use raw water from the stream from Leimakhong to Lamdeng until the water testing report is confirmed. The general public is further requested to extend full cooperation to the government by reporting immediately any signs of affecting aquatic life and animals, the officials said.

TMC not to initiate further seat-sharing talks with Congress

Kolkata, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Trinamool Congress is no longer interested in initiating fresh talks with the Congress regarding the seat sharing arrangement for the Lok Sabha polls this year as part of the INDIA bloc. A veteran leader of the party and also a senior member of the West Bengal Cabinet said that the party supremo and Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee was of the opinion that further talks with the Congress were useless on two grounds. "The first reason is that the Congress' demand for eight to ten

seats in West Bengal is totally absurd considering that the vote share of the country's oldest national party had come down to just three per cent in the 2021 state Assembly polls. "Without a single member in the state Assembly and just two MPs in the Lok Sabha, the demand for eight to ten seats is nothing but overreach," said a state Cabinet member. He added, "It seems that the Congress leadership is more interested in a seat-sharing agreement with the CPI(M)-led Left Front rather than with the Trinamool Congress.



Madras HC quashes case against youth for watching porn video on phone

Chennai, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Madras High Court on Tuesday quashed a case registered by police against a Chennai youngster for downloading and watching two child porno videos on his phone. The Ambattur police had also seized the phone which the youth had downloaded the porno. Justice Anand Venkatesh, while quashing the case, said that the new generation of youngsters and teenagers are getting addicted to porn just like the earlier generations were addicted to liquor and cigarettes, and instead of punishing these youngsters, society must be mature enough to counsel them out of this addiction. He also held

that watching porn videos in private, per se, would not attract either Section 14 (1) of the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences Act, 2012 or Section 67B of the Information Technology Act, 2000 which had been pressed against the youngster, following an anonymous complaint. The court also stated that the two videos of a couple of teens having sex with an adult woman, which was downloaded from the Internet, had remained only within the private domain of the youngster. It also said that the youth was summoned by the court and admitted that he was addicted to watching porn films on the Internet.

ED raids at Bengal legislator's house conclude but continue at minister's residence

Kolkata, Jan 16 (IANS) : After almost 11 hours of a marathon raid that started a little before 8 a.m. on Tuesday, the team of Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials left the residence of veteran Trinamool Congress MLA Tapas Roy at around 6.30 p.m. However, the raid and search operations that started simultaneously at the two residences of West Bengal Fire Services Minister, Sujit Bose at Lake Town in the northern Kolkata is still continuing on Tuesday evening. In the midst of the raids, some ED personnel

came out of the minister's residence in the afternoon with the minister's son Samudra Bose and went to a nearby office of the minister for search operations there. However, that team came back to the residence with the son soon after and continued with the raid and search operations there. While one team of ED personnel were conducting raid and search operations, sources in the knowhow of things said that the minister was facing marathon questioning from the central agency officials about his assets and property.





Yes Bank makes biggest market cap gain among banks in Q4 2023

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : Yes Bank posted the highest percentage increase in market capitalization among Indian banks in the quarter ended December 31, 2023. Market capitalization for the lender rose 24.4 per cent to Rs 616.94 billion from October to December, helping Yes Bank move two slots higher to 14th position in the list of top 20 Indian banks by market cap, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence data & analysis. In terms of market cap percentage growth, Punjab National

Bank was just behind Yes Bank with a quarterly increase of 19.4 per cent to 1.054 trillion in the three months ended December 31, 2023. This saw it gain one spot from a quarter ago, to eighth position on the top 20 list, which had HDFC Bank Ltd. at its top. Overall, 14 of the 20 largest banks in India reported gains in market capitalization in the October-to-December quarter, eight of them with double-digit increases, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence data. The top seven Indian banks retained their market cap ranking

during the quarter, with HDFC Bank Ltd. cementing its lead as the biggest Indian lender. ICICI Bank Ltd. retained its second spot in the market cap ranking, while State Bank of India, the biggest Indian lender by assets, was third by market capitalization. Some state-owned lenders posted declines in their market cap in the quarter. These included UCO Bank with a 8.7 per cent fall and Indian Overseas Bank with a 7.4 per cent drop, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence data.



All kinds of preparations on for Swiggy's IPO: Co-founder

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : Online food delivery platform Swiggy's co-founder and CEO Sriharsha Majety has said that all preparations are underway for its mega Initial Public Offering (IPO), via which it is likely to raise \$1 billion later this year. "We've been preparing for our IPO. We've added independent directors to the board and there are all kinds of preparations that are on," Majety told Moneycontrol.

For its IPO process, the company is likely to have picked seven investment banks, including Kotak Mahindra Capital, Citi and JPMorgan, Bofa Securities, Jefferies, among others. Swiggy is getting ready to go public after its competitor Zomato went public in 2021. According to Majety, Zomato's listing has helped Swiggy gain a better understanding of retail investors and how they perceive the food delivery market, the report mentioned. "There is no denying that it (Zomato being listed) makes life easier for us. There's much to learn in terms of how one manages communication as a public company, how one manages guidance as a public company, what gets more scrutiny and what doesn't," Majety was quoted as saying.

As Nifty crosses milestone of 22K points, brokerages advise caution

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : As the Nifty hit an all-time high of 22,000 points, brokerages have advised caution and suggested profit booking in small-cap space. Pranav Haridasan, MD and CEO at Axis Securities said the IT sector has led the Nifty rally this month and has spiked significantly in the last two trading sessions because of decent results backed by cheaper valuations. "However, the recent upswing warrants a certain degree of caution as, many times, such sharp rallies do not sustain. Thus, we believe that the near-term view will be cautious and suggest profit booking in areas of exuberance, especially in the small-cap space," Haridasan said. Paras Matalia, Fund Manager, SAMCO Mutual Fund said, "The setup for 2023 was very powerful as its previous calendar year witnessed only 10 new 52 week highs, while for 2024, its previous calendar year saw a staggering 29 new 52 week highs. Today markets opened at new life time highs marking the second new life time high in just 15 days of calendar year 2024. This indicates that it is like a mature adult bull market rather than a young and raging one."



Global economic prospects remain subdued, says Chief Economists Outlook

Davos Klosters, Jan 16 (IANS) : Global economic prospects remain subdued and fraught with uncertainty, the latest Chief Economists Outlook released on Tuesday said. The predictions come as the global economy continues to grapple with headwinds from tight financial conditions, geopolitical rifts and rapid advances in Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI). More than half of the chief economists (56 per cent) expect the global economy to weaken this year, while 43 per cent foresee unchanged or stronger conditions. A majority also believes labour markets (77 per cent) and financial conditions (70 per cent) will loosen over the coming year. Although the expectations for high inflation have been pared back in all regions, growth outlooks vary widely and no region is slated for very strong growth in 2024. "The latest Chief Economists Outlook highlights the precarious nature of the current economic environment," said Saadia Zahidi, Managing Director, World Economic Forum.



India's merchandise exports rose 1% in Dec 2023 amid global slowdown

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : India's merchandise exports registered a 0.96 per cent growth in December 2023 at \$38.45 billion compared to \$38.08 billion in the same month of the preceding year 2022 while imports fell during the month, according to official figures released by the Commerce Ministry on Tuesday. Commerce Secretary Sunil Barthwal said that despite a global slowdown, the country is "in the positive zone". The overall trade deficit narrowed during the month to \$5.17 billion during the

month from \$7.75 billion in December 2022. Major contributors to export growth in December 2023 include engineering goods, iron ore, gems & jewellery, electronic goods and drugs & pharmaceuticals. Engineering goods exports recorded an increase of 10.19 per cent at \$10.04 billion in December, gems and jewellery exports went up by 14.07 per cent to \$2.90 billion while electronic goods exports registered an increase of 14.41 per cent. Exports of drugs and pharmaceutical products rose 9.3 per cent during the month to \$2.47 billion. This is also the highest monthly exports for these four commodity groups during the current financial year so far.

FASTags without KYC link to be deactivated after Jan 31: NHA

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The National Highways Authority of India (NHA) on Tuesday said that FASTags with incomplete KYC will be deactivated or blacklisted by banks after January 31, as part of its move to enhance efficiency of the electronic toll collection system and provide seamless movement at the toll plazas. The NHA has taken this initiative after the recent reports of multiple FASTags being issued for a particular vehicle and FASTags being issued without KYC in violation of the Reserve Bank of India's (RBI) mandate. The NHA directive has been issued under the 'One Vehicle, One FASTag' that aims to discourage user behaviour of using single FASTag for multiple vehicles or linking multiple FASTags to a particular vehicle. To avoid inconvenience, users must ensure that KYC of their latest FASTag is completed. Only the latest FASTag account shall remain active, the NHA statement said. For further assistance or queries, FASTag users can reach out to nearest toll plazas or toll-free customer care number of their respective issuer banks.



RBI releases draft framework for Fintech sector self-regulatory organisations



Mumbai, Jan 16 (IANS) : The RBI on Tuesday released a 'draft framework for recognising Self-Regulatory Organisations (SRO) for FinTech Sector', laying down the characteristics of a FinTech SRO, and includes the required functions and governance stan-

dards. FinTechs are significantly reshaping the landscape of financial services by streamlining processes, improving accessibility, and reducing costs. Achieving a healthy balance between facilitating innovation by the industry on the one hand, and meeting regulatory priorities in a manner that protects consumers and contains risk, on the other, is crucial to optimising the contribution of the FinTech sector, the RBI said. "Self-regulation within the FinTech sector is a preferred ap-

proach for achieving the desired balance," the central bank stated. According to the RBI draft framework, the SRO-FT would derive its strength from its membership, ensuring that it is truly representative of the FinTech sector. Through comprehensive membership agreements that encompass a broad spectrum of industry players, the SRO-FT should gain the legitimacy and credibility to not only frame baseline standards and rules of conduct codes, but also to effectively monitor and enforce them. The SRO-FT must be looked up to and accepted by the industry as the key body for setting market standards, defining rules of conduct and ensuring voluntary adoption of the common framework by its members, the RBI said.

WhatsApp's new feature lets you share polls in channels on iOS

San Francisco, Jan 16 (IANS) : Meta-owned WhatsApp is reportedly rolling out a new feature to some beta testers that will let users share polls in channels on iOS. As shown in the screenshot shared by WABetaInfo, some beta testers can explore a new poll option right within their own channels. The channel owner can see if this feature is enabled for their account by opening the chat attachment menu within their channel. "While creating a poll, channel owners can also restrict it to a single choice by disabling the multiple answers option, providing a flexible voting experience for channel followers," the report said.



According to the report, this feature ensures the protection and confidentiality of poll votes, assuring that the choices of channel followers remain secure and anonymous during polling. All participants will only be able to see the total number of votes without knowing who specifically contributed to the poll.



Punjab police nab key operative of Pak-based terrorist Rinda from Rajasthan

Chandigarh, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Punjab Police's Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF), in a joint operation with Central agencies, has arrested a key operative of Pakistan-based terrorist Harvinder Singh, alias Rinda, and US-based Harpreet Singh, alias Happy Passia, from Rajasthan, Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav said on Tuesday.

The arrested accused, Kailash Khichan, was wanted in the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) case registered in Fazilka in September 2023.

The accused has a criminal history with a number of criminal cases pertaining to extortion, the NDPS Act and the Arms Act registered against him in Punjab and Rajasthan. DGP Yadav said following the name of Khichan fig-

uring in various terrorist modules busted by Punjab Police in recent past, teams of the AGTF headed by ADGP Promod Ban under the supervision of AIG Sandeep Goel and led by DSP Bikramjit Singh Brar managed to track the location of the accused in Rajasthan and arrested him from Lohawat village in Phalodi district. "Police teams have also recovered one .30 calibre Chinese pistol along with eight cartridges from the possession of the accused Khichan," he said.

The DGP said preliminary investigations have revealed that the accused Khichan, on the directions of terrorist Rinda, was supplying weapons to the associates of terrorist outfit Babbar Khalistan International (BKI) to carry out crimes in the state.

Debris of IAF plane that went missing in 2016 with 29 onboard found on sea bed

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The debris of an Indian Air Force (IAF) plane with 29 personnel onboard that went missing in 2016 while flying across the Bay of Bengal have been found by a search and rescue team on the sea bed after seven years, an official said on Tuesday. An IAF official said that the debris of the ill-fated An-32 aircraft were spotted on the sea bed around 310 km off the Chennai coast. The plane went missing over the Bay of Bengal on July 22, 2016 during a mission. A large-scale

search and rescue operations by aircraft and ships that was launched then could not locate any missing personnel or the aircraft debris. The National Institute of Ocean Technology, which functions under the Ministry of Earth Sciences, recently deployed an Autonomous Underwater Vehicle with deep sea exploration capability at the last known location of the missing An-32. The Ministry of Defence said the search operation were conducted at a depth of 3,400 metres using multiple payloads, including a multi-beam SONAR (Sound Navigation and Ranging), synthetic aperture SONAR and high

resolution photography. Analysis of search images had indicated the presence of debris of a crashed aircraft on the sea bed approximately 140 nautical miles (approximately 310 km) from the Chennai coast. The IAF said that the search images were examined and found to be conforming with an An-32 aircraft. This discovery at the probable crash site, with no other recorded history of any other missing aircraft report in the same area, points to the debris as possibly belonging to the crashed IAF An-32 (K-2743) said.



INDIA bloc will finalise seat sharing on time : Tejashwi Yadav

Patna, Jan 16 (IANS) : Bihar Deputy Chief Minister Tejashwi Yadav on Tuesday said that the seat sharing formula between INDIA bloc alliance partners will be finalised on time in Bihar. "Don't worry about the seat sharing arrangement. It will be finalised on time. The seats will be shared between the alliance partners. There is no need to discuss it in the media. When the time comes, the media will be informed about it," the Deputy Chief Minister told media persons.

Earlier, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar has also said that the seat sharing arrangement will take place soon.

The JD-U leaders KC Tyagi, Vijay Kumar Chaudhary, Ashok Chaudhary, Bijendra Yadav have been raising voice against the delay in the seat sharing arrangement.



Himachal to engage guest teachers to enhance educational standards

Shimla, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Himachal Pradesh Cabinet, presided over by Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu, on Tuesday gave in-principle approval to engage annual-period based guest teachers in the Departments of Elementary and Higher Education to enhance the educational standards.

The Cabinet also decided to fill 40 posts of Junior Engineers (Civil) and 25 posts of Junior Technicians (Work Inspectors) in the Public Works Department, 20 posts of Work Inspectors in the Jal Shakti Vibhag, seven posts of different categories in Revenue Training Institute in Jogindernagar and five posts in the Sainik Welfare Department.

It also approved to upgrade 50 bedded Civil Hospital in Sujampur in Hamirpur district to 100 bedded along with creation and filling 35 posts of different categories.

The Cabinet decided to increase the marriageable age of girls from 18 years to 21 years and carry out necessary amendments in the respective Acts and rules.

It also decided to give its nod to sign a memorandum of understanding for consultancy services with the National Dairy Development Board for establishment of automated 1.50 lakh litre per day (LLDP), expandable up to 3 LLDP.

CPI(M) veteran EMS Namboodiripad wanted Babri Masjid to be demolished: Congress

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 16 (IANS) : KPCC president and Congress Lok Sabha member K. Sudhakaran on Tuesday said the Ayodhya issue started to "worsen" way back in 1987 when the then top CPI(M) veteran EMS Namboodiripad had opined that "the Babri Masjid should be demolished to solve the issue". "In 1989, the VP Singh government was propped up by the CPI(M) and the BJP and it was the cause of the Ayodhya issue to further worsen. The very fact the CPI(M) has not send their nominee to the INDIA bloc shows the clandestine relation they have with the BJP and this is the reason why despite five central agencies probing, no FIR was registered against Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan and the SNC Lavalin case has been adjourned 37 times," said Sudhakaran. Sudhakaran was reacting to the comment of the CPI(M) that it was due to their pressure that the Congress decided to keep away from the 'pran pratishtha' of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya.



SC refuses to entertain plea seeking immediate implementation of Women Reservation Bill

New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to entertain a plea filed by an advocate seeking implementation of the Women Reservation Bill before the 2024 Lok Sabha polls on the basis of existing census data. A bench presided over by Justice Sanjiv Khanna asked the petitioner -- Yogamaya MG -- to instead file an impleadment application in the pending batch of petitions raising the same issue. The bench, also comprising Justice Dipankar Datta, allowed the petitioner to withdraw her public interest litigation (PIL) saying that it does not want multiplicity of litigation in the matter. It may be recalled that the top court is already seized of a PIL filed by Congress leader Jaya Thakur seek-

ing immediate implementation of Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam Bill 2023 which was passed in September last year in a special session of Parliament and mandates a 33 per cent reservation for women in the Lok Sabha and all state Assemblies, including Delhi. The women reservation law does not intend to alter the composition of the present Lok Sabha or existing Legislative Assemblies, but will apply once they are freshly constituted on completion of their respective tenure or on being dissolved for any other cause.

Drugs valued at Rs 68.41cr seized in Mizoram, three held

Aizawl, Jan 16 (IANS) : Drugs valued at Rs 68.41 crore were seized and three drug peddlers were arrested in two separate operations in Mizoram by the Assam Rifles, officials said on Tuesday.

The officials said that acting on specific information the Assam Rifles troopers raided Bualpui village in Siaha district and seized 225 gram of heroin, valued at Rs 1.75 crore. They said that two drug peddlers were arrested in connection with the seizure. In another operation, the para-military forces seized 20 packets of highly addictive methamphetamine tablets valued at Rs 66.66 crore and weighing 22.2 kg, from the Zokhawthar-Melbuk Road in Champhai district. The officials said that the drugs were handed over to the Excise and Narcotics Department for further legal proceedings.

"A person was also apprehended in connection with the seizure," the officials said. They said that these drugs were smuggled from Myanmar, which shares a 510 km unfenced border with Mizoram.

Those who fail to ensure Cong win in LS will lose posts: K'taka Minister

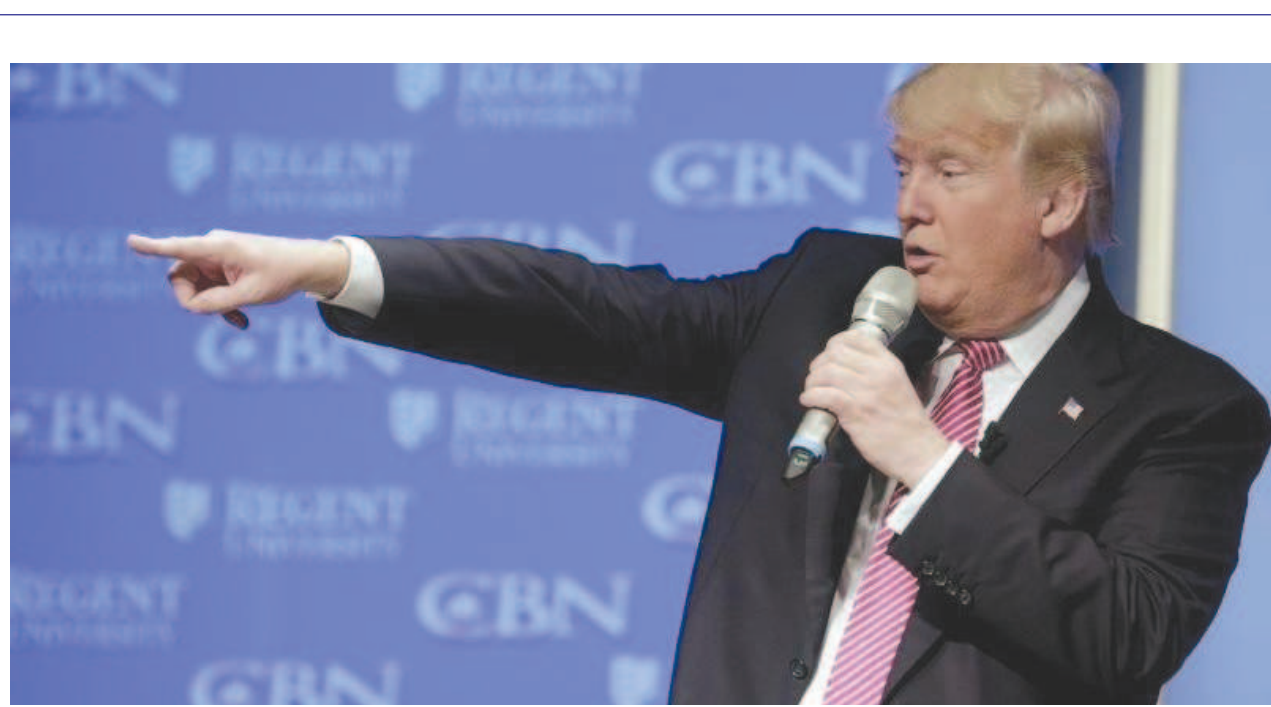
Bengaluru, Jan 16 (IANS): Karnataka Home Minister Dr. G. Parameshwara on Tuesday said the ministers who fail to ensure Congress' win in the Lok Sabha seats in the state will lose their posts. Parameshwara said the warning has come from the high command and the ministers have to deliver otherwise "they will be sacked". Speaking to reporters here, Parameshwara said, "Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala is arriving in the state in a day or two. The discussion about the candidates and ministers contesting Parliamentary elections has not come up yet. "We have been asked to take responsibility and carry out the campaigning. "Warning of sacking from the posts has also been given. The high command

had also stated that if the party gets defeated in seats where it can win easily, it will be assumed that the work is not done. The high command had also stated to take their warnings seriously or they will face consequences," the minister said. "All of us were called by the AICC President for the preparations of Lok Sabha elections. Leaders from all states were invited. There are five clusters in the country and Karnataka is in the cluster one. Earlier, observers were appointed and now coordinators are put in place. The war room is now being renamed as the convention centre. Senior leader Shashikanth Senthil has been made the head of coordination," he stated. Parameshwara said that the high command has maintained that in the last Lok Sabha elections.



Lebanese PM urges calm on Israel-Lebanon border during meeting US envoy

Beirut, Jan 16 (IANS) : Lebanese Prime Minister Najib Mikati has urged an end to Israeli attacks on southern Lebanon during discussions with US envoy Amos Hochstein. "We want peace and stability through adherence to international resolutions," Mikati told the Hochstein, who visited Lebanon on Tuesday to address the escalating tensions between Hezbollah and Israel, according to a statement by the Lebanese Council of Ministers. For his part, Hochstein highlighted the need to calm the situation in southern Lebanon and proposed exploring temporary compromises to prevent further escalation, the statement said. Hochstein also met with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri and other officials on the current situation along the Lebanon-Israel borders as well as the conflict in Gaza, Xinhua news agency reported. Confrontations on the borders continued to intensify on Tuesday.



Trump's civil fraud trial concludes after bomb threat to presiding judge

New York, Jan 16 (IANS) : Former US President Donald Trump's civil fraud trial in New York has concluded after a bomb threat was made to the presiding judge of the hearing. Police in the Nassau County responded to a bomb threat to the home of Manhattan Supreme Court Judge Arthur Engoron on Long Island on Tuesday reports Xinhua news agency. On the heels of swatting calls targeting the homes of Department of Justice Special Counsel Jack Smith and judge Tanya Chutkan, who presides over a criminal case against Trump, the latest incident didn't interrupt the trial

proceeding on Tuesday. Trump was allowed to speak in a courtroom for about five minutes before the conclusion of closing arguments from his side at 1 p.m. in the civil fraud case that strikes at the heart of the Trump Organization. On Wednesday however, the judge blocked the former President from making his own closing argument. Calling himself "an innocent man", Trump said on Tuesday the trial was a political witch hunt and he should be compensated for reputation damage rather than to be fined.



Yemen's Houthis launch fresh missile attack on ship in Gulf of Aden: US Navy

Sanaa, Jan 16 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group has launched a new attack on a cargo ship in the Gulf of Aden, using a ballistic missile, the US Central Command wrote on social media platform X. "At around 2 a.m. local time, the Iranian-backed Houthis fired an anti-ship ballistic missile from Houthi-controlled areas in Yemen into international shipping lanes in the Gulf of Aden. One commercial vessel reported visually observing the missile impact the water," the post said on Tuesday. So far, there were no injuries or damage reported, it said, adding that the attack is the 27th by the Houthis on international shipping since November 19, 2023, Xinhua news agency reported. The Houthi group has made no comment yet. The fresh attack occurred a few hours after the UN Security Council adopted a new resolution to condemn the Houthi attacks on the international shipping lines, demanding the group to immediately cease all such attacks, which violate international law.



Biden says strikes on Yemen's capital in retaliation to Houthi attacks in Red Sea

Washington, Jan 16 (IANS) : President Joe Biden has said that he ordered the strikes "in direct response to unprecedented Houthi attacks against international maritime vessels in the Red Sea" as quoted by media reports. A US-led coalition struck Iran-aligned Houthi

militants in Yemen on Tuesday, a dramatic escalation after the group ignored warnings from the Biden administration and other governments to stop attacking commercial vessels in the Red Sea, CNN reported. In a statement on Tuesday, President Biden characterised the strikes as a necessary response to the

pattern of violence that has affected several countries, saying they were directed at "a number of targets" used by the Houthis to launch their attacks. He did not disclose whether anyone had been killed in the operation. "These attacks have endangered US personnel, civilian mariners, and our partners, jeopardised trade, and threatened freedom of navigation," he said as quoted by CNN report. Biden added that he will "not hesitate to direct further measures to protect our people and the free flow of international commerce as necessary". Senior US officials have blamed Iran for having "aided and abetted" the crisis in the Red Sea, saying the Houthis would be incapable of threatening the shipping route if not for Tehran's technological and intelligence support. "Today, at my direction, US military forces--together with the UK and with support from Australia, Bahrain, Canada, and the Netherlands--successfully conducted strikes

against a number of targets in Yemen used by Houthi rebels to endanger freedom of navigation in one of the world's most vital waterways," President Biden said in a statement released by the White House as quoted by CNN report. The strikes were from fighter jets and Tomahawk missiles. More than a dozen Houthi targets were fired upon by missiles fired from air, surface, and sub platforms and were chosen for their ability to degrade the Houthis' continued attacks on vessels in the Red Sea, a US official told CNN. They included radar systems, drone storage and launch sites, ballistic missile storage and launch sites, and cruise missile storage and launch sites. The strikes are a sign of the growing international alarm over the threat to one of the world's most critical waterways.



Russia to use nuclear weapons if attacked by Western missiles: Medvedev

Moscow, Jan 16 (IANS) : Russia could resort to the use of nuclear weapons if its launchers are attacked by Western missiles, Deputy Chairman of the Russian Security Council Dmitry Medvedev said. Medvedev made the remarks on Tuesday in a Telegram post in response to recent proposals by the Ukrainian side to use US-supplied long-range missiles to destroy Russian launchers on Russian territory,

Xinhua news agency reported. He added that this wouldn't be a right to self-defence, but a direct and obvious basis for Russia to use nuclear weapons against such a state. He said this move would be in accordance with Russia's nuclear doctrine, which stipulates the right to nuclear weapons in response to "aggression against the Russian Federation with conventional weapons when the very existence of the state is threatened".



NZ health body criticises govt playing down smoking harm

Wellington, Jan 16 (IANS) : New Zealand's Health Coalition Aotearoa (HCA) on Tuesday criticised the government's preparation to repeal new smoke-free measures that would rapidly save thousands of lives. In a statement, the HCA said it was disappointed to see the Action on Smoking and Health chair and director among those defending the repeal by mini-

mizing smoking harm, particularly to Maori and Pacific peoples, promoting vaping as the main tobacco control strategy, and suggesting a smoke-free generation has already been achieved, Xinhua news agency reported. The most recent New Zealand Health Survey found that daily smoking rates had decreased to 6.8 per cent, from 8.3 per cent the previous year.

Combat Antisemitism Movement comes out against South Africa's decision to move ICJ

Tel Aviv, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Combat Antisemitism Movement (CAM) has attacked the decision by South Africa to take Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on the charges of alleged genocide in Gaza, with proceedings starting on Tuesday. The CAM in a statement said, "In an attempt to score domestic political points and ingratiate itself with some of the vilest and repressive regimes on earth, South Africa has taken Israel to the ICJ." It also added that unfortunately, South Africa has a deeply problematic history of utilising international institutions for narrow political purposes to attack the Jewish people.



Right-wing AfD party election leads survey in 3 German states

Berlin, Jan 16 (IANS) : The right-wing Alternative for Germany (AfD) party in leading a survey conducted for the elections in three eastern German states in September. In Saxony, the AfD, which has so far never been part of a state government in Germany, received 34 per cent of the vote, reports Xinhua news agency. Meanwhile, in Thuringia it won 36 per cent, and in Brandenburg 32 per cent, according to the RTL/ntv trend barometer conducted by the Forsa Institute. While the lead over the first runner-up in Saxony, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), is still comparatively small at 4 percentage points, it is clear in the other two states. In Thuringia, the party was 16 points ahead of the CDU, and in Brandenburg 10 points ahead

of Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democratic Party (SPD). Alongside its demand to limit migration, the AfD favours rapprochement with Russia. The party advocates peace negotiations, instead of Western arms deliveries to Ukraine and economic sanctions against Russia. The Ukraine-Russia war will "not be ended by force of arms", AfD leader Alice Weidel had said. Instead of further escalation towards a "third world war", the international community should "work more intensively for peace negotiations", she said. Although all other parties in Germany are isolating the AfD due to accusations of right-wing extremism, it already won its first elections at the local level in 2023. In addition, in the last state elections in Bavaria and Hesse, the party achieved record results of 14.6 and 18.4 per cent, respectively.



Srinagar freezes at minus 4 as cold dry spell continues in J&K

Srinagar, Jan 16 (IANS) : Intense dry cold froze Srinagar at minus 4 and Jammu had a minimum temperature of 3.7 degrees Celsius on Tuesday. Jammu recorded the lowest minimum temperature of the season at 3.7 on Friday while it also recorded the lowest maximum temperature at 8.8 on Tuesday. Srinagar had minus 4, Gulmarg minus 3.2 and Pahalgam minus 5.3 as the minimum temperature. In Ladakh region, Leh town had minus 11.2, Kargil minus 9.2 and Drass minus 11.5 as the minimum temperature. Jammu city had 3.7, Katra 6.2, Batote 4.5, Bhaderwah 1.3 and Banihal minus 0.4 as the minimum temperature. The 40-day long period of harsh winter cold started here on December 21 and will end on January 30. So far, this period, which normally witnessed the maximum snowfall, has remained dry in Kashmir so far. The weather outlook is also very disappointing as any major snowfall is unlikely to occur till January 25, said the Meteorological Department.

Seat-sharing in Bihar will be finalised on time, says Nitish

Patna, Jan 16 (IANS) : Bihar Chief Minister and JD-U chief Nitish Kumar on Tuesday said that the seat-sharing formula within the INDIA bloc in the state will be finalised on time. Asked about the seat sharing formula, he said: "Don't worry about it. The seat-sharing formula will be finalised at the right time. It will happen soon." With the Lok Sabha election is around the corner, JD-U leaders, in particular, are vocal on the issue. Leaders like K.C. Tyagi, Bijendra Yadav and Vijay Kumar Chaudhary are blaming the Congress for delaying discussions on the seat-sharing formula in Bihar. The JD-U has asserted that they have 16 MPs in the Lok Sabha and will contest the same number of seats in the Lok Sabha election 2024.



UP Board answer sheets to be numbered, stitched to check tampering

Prayagraj, Jan 16 (IANS) : In yet another move to check tampering of answer sheets and use of unfair means in UP Board high school and intermediate exams scheduled from February 22, the Board has sent out answer sheets that have numbers on them and are stitched together with a unique seam. Officials said numbering of pages will do away with the possibility of answer sheets being replaced with identical looking forged copies and the unique seam will help in identifying whether the sheets have been tampered with. Answer sheets have started reaching all the districts for the exams. Officials said for the first time, numbering has been done on inner pages of 'A' answer book (page number 1, 2, 3...) too. This will eliminate the possibility of swapping of internal pages. Besides, answer books stitched with thread have been arranged for all districts, so that pages cannot be changed by removing the stapler pin.

True love between adolescents can't be controlled through rigor of law: Delhi HC



New Delhi, Jan 16 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court has quashed a kidnapping and rape case against a man who had eloped with a girl nine years ago when she was a minor, holding that "true love" between adolescents cannot be controlled through the rigor of the law or state action. A bench of Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma observed the dilemma faced by courts in justifying state or police action against an adolescent couple who married each other, were leading a peaceful life, and raising a family while obeying the law. The court stressed the delicate balance that constitutional courts must strike between the strict application of the law and the repercussions of such judgement on society and individuals. It noted that the cases like the present one involve considering the impact of judgement on the individuals before the court and society as a whole. In this particular case, the court quashed the FIR lodged against the man for kidnapping and raping the girl, who claimed to be a major at the time of the incident. It stated that if the FIR is not quashed, it would affect the future of the couple's two daughters, leading to the failure of effective and real justice.

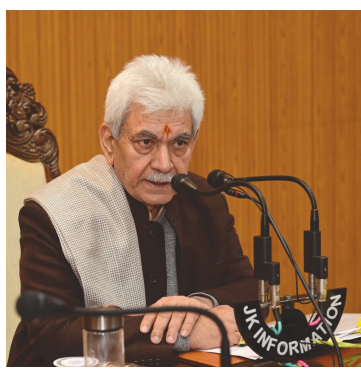
'Gujarat model' has ruined the country, says Congress leader

Jaipur, Jan 16 (IANS) : Gujarat Congress President, Govind Singh Dotasra, has targetted the BJP-led state government and said that the Gujarat model has ruined the country. "What is the Gujarat model with Bilkis Bano? Gujarat model is not a model, it is a model of ruining the country, it is a phrase. The entire country is being ruined by this phrase. Rajasthan will not be allowed to become the 'Gujarat model'. Rajasthan will remain Rajasthan, Rajasthan will have its own model. The officers, politicians, people and intellectuals of Rajasthan are all capable. Rajasthan does not need the Gujarat model," said Dotasra, while talking to the media at the state Congress headquarters on Tuesday. "The Rajasthan government doesn't know where to start and where to end? Law and order is fragmented. The incidents of rape against women are increasing by the day. The schemes of the Congress government have been halted. Work orders for all the development works were stopped and money was stopped. No one is working. No Minister is working," he added. The State Gujarat Chief said: "I have told the Chief Minister to roam around

Rajasthan and say only one thing that SIT has been formed. Millions of decisions still have to be taken. SIT is one decision among them. Now move ahead with SIT. We were accusing people that the government is not able to catch the mafia. Catch them and show them. Get justice to the people. The name of Indira Rasoi was changed, but it would have been better if its arrangements were made better. Instead of working, Ministers are giving various types of statements. Some Ministers are saying that the Health Ministry has not been functioning, some Ministers are saying produce more children. From the statements of



the Ministers it seems that they are speaking out of frustration." "Congress will contest on 25 seats, no one should have any doubt. Even if opposition INDIA bloc forms an alliance on seats, it is Congress that is still fighting. The party High Command will decide accordingly and the decision whether to fight alone or in alliance will be taken in Rajasthan also," he added.



J&K Lt Gov reviews development, security scenario in Jammu

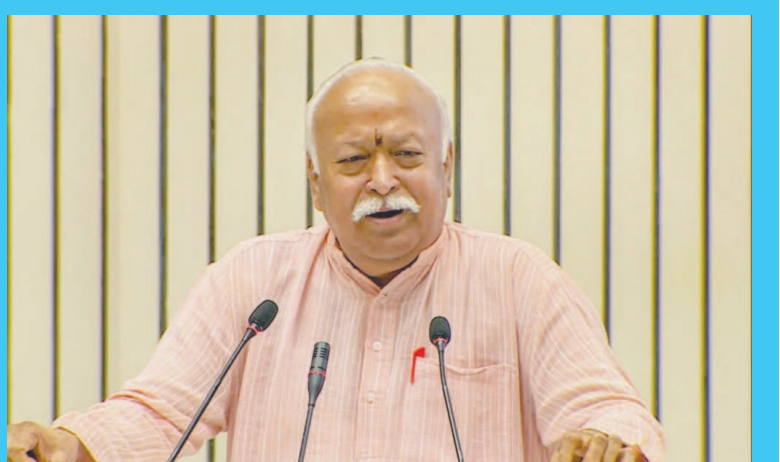
Jammu, Jan 16 (IANS) : Jammu and Kashmir Lt Governor Manoj Sinha on Tuesday chaired a meeting with senior officers to discuss various issues concerning development and security in the Jammu division. "The meeting emphasised the need for a comprehensive strategy for crackdown against drug smugglers, drug hot-spots, and cross-border smuggling," an official statement said. The Lt Governor also took appraisal of the status of the key infrastructure projects and the steps taken by the district administrations to facilitate industries, saturation of government schemes, implementation of Holistic Agriculture Development Programme, and promotion of tourism.

Akali Dal reserves 33% seats for women in Assembly, Lok Sabha polls

Chandigarh, Jan 16 (IANS) : Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) President Sukhbir Badal on Tuesday announced that the party would give 50 per cent seats to women in panchayat and local body elections, besides reserving 33 per cent seats for women in the state Assembly and Lok Sabha elections. Addressing the first all-women conference at the Maghi Mela in Muktsar Sahib, he said, "The SAD is also committed to giving a boost to all social welfare

initiatives concerning womenfolk once we come to power in the state." He said the 'Shagun' scheme, which was discontinued by the AAP Government, would be revived. "We will also give lentils under the 'Aata-daal' scheme which has been severely curtailed, besides increasing the old-age pension to Rs 2,500 per month," he said. Badal also lauded the overwhelming response to the women's conference organised by the Istri

Alkali Dal under the leadership of Hargobind Kaur. He said the manner in which women had congregated to the conference proved the high esteem in which womenfolk hold the SAD. He appealed to the women as the heirs of Mata Bhag Kaur to unite under the banner of the party to strengthen it even further. Asserting that Punjabis had been betrayed both by the Congress and AAP, Badal said, "The Congress promised to waive off farmer loans but did nothing."



RSS chief Bhagwat in Haryana to strengthen organisation

Chandigarh, Jan 16 (IANS) : Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) chief Mohan Bhagwat on Tuesday reached Haryana's Jind on a three-day tour to strengthen the organisation. According to sources, the RSS chief will meet Sangh campaigners to discuss strategies ahead of the Lok Sabha and Assembly expected to be held in May and October,

respectively. Bhagwat will participate in the three-day programme at Gopal Vidya Mandir Senior Secondary School where he's staying. Security arrangements have been tightened across Jind on his arrival. There is a plan to establish 1,200 new RSS branches about which brainstorming will be done with activists.



Gaza death toll rises to 23,469 amid unabated fighting

Gaza, Jan 16 (IANS) : Amid the unabated fighting between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip, the death toll in the besieged enclave increased to 23,469 on Tuesday, the Palestinian Health Ministry said. According to the Ministry, at least 112 Palestinians were killed in the last 24 hours, contributing to the overall death toll, while 194 people were also injured. Of the total casualties, some 70 per cent are said to be women and children, the Ministry said in its latest situation update. Since the war erupted in Gaza on October 7, 2023, a total of 59,604 people have been injured. Minis-

try spokesperson Ashraf al-Qedra said 6,200 people among the overall injured were in urgent need to receive treatment outside Gaza. "The situation in hospitals in the southern Gaza Strip is extremely catastrophic as a result of overcrowding with the wounded and tens of thousands of displaced people," he noted. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), 15 out of Gaza's 36 hospitals are partially functional. Hospitals are facing challenges such as a shortage of medical staff, including specialised surgeons, neurosurgeons, and intensive care staff, as well as a lack of medical

supplies, and have an urgent need for fuel, food, and drinking water. The nine partially functional hospitals in the south are operating at three times their capacity, while facing critical shortages of basic supplies and fuel. According to the Health Ministry, occupancy rates are reaching 206 per cent in inpatient departments and 250 per cent in intensive care units.



I come from a country where toxic air is a big issue: India-born UK mayoral candidate

London, Jan 16 (IANS) : An India-born investment banker, standing as an independent in the 2024 London Mayoral election, has said that he comes from a country where toxic air is a big issue, and wants things to be "greener and more effective" in the British capital. Tarun Ghulati told The Standard newspaper that he was entering the race, due to be held on May 2 this year, to "get London moving again" as the capital has "lost its mojo". "I certainly come from a country where toxic air is a big issue and I believe we should work towards making things greener and more effective," Ghulati, who expects to be polling ahead of the

Liberal Democrat and Green candidates within six weeks, told The Standard. Having lived in London for more than 20 years, the 63-year-old said he wants to completely scrap the Ultra low emission zone (ULEZ), remove the congestion charge on weekends and abolish low traffic neighbourhoods. According to Ghulati, hindrances to cars, such as road-blocks in low traffic neighbourhoods, were in fact contributing to pollution by causing vehicles to stand still and emit fumes. Calling ULEZ unfair, he said

wealthy Londoners can easily afford the 12.50-pound daily charge for non-compliant vehicles, while those on lower incomes are deterred from using their cars. His other priorities include increasing police presence on the street and building more police stations in areas where there is a high crime rate. The 2024 London mayoral election is scheduled to be held on May 2, and will take place simultaneously with elections to the London Assembly and local elections across England and Wales. Sadiq Khan, who has been the Mayor of London since 2016, is seeking re-election as the Labour candidate. A total of 12 candidates have reportedly declared that they will be running for the job, which includes Conservative Susan Hill, Liberal Democrat Rob Blackie, Reform UK's Howard Cox, Green Party's Zoe Garbett and Social Democratic Party's Amy Gallagher. While Mayoral elections are traditionally held every four years, voting was last held in 2021 instead of 2020 because of the Covid-19 pandemic. It will be the first time the election will use the first-past-the-post system.

US aviation watchdog to probe Boeing's quality control

Washington, Jan 16 (IANS) : The US Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has formally notified Boeing in a letter that it is conducting an investigation into the American aircraft maker's quality control after the January 5 Alaska Airlines in-flight blowout incident. In a statement released on Tuesday, the aviation watchdog said the investigation will "determine if Boeing failed to ensure completed products conformed to its approved design and were in a condition for safe operation in compliance with FAA regulations", reports Xinhua news agency. The investigation is the result of the incident on a Boeing Model 737-9 Max where it lost a "plug" type passenger door and additional discrepancies, the statement said. "Boeing's manufacturing practices need to comply with the high safety standards they're legally accountable to meet.



Philippine senator slams US military's fuel transfer

Manila, Jan 16 (IANS) : Philippine Senator Imee Marcos has demanded an explanation from the government and military for the shipment of millions of gallons of fuel by the US Navy to Subic Bay in the Southeast Asian country. In a statement, citing data from several international shipping trackers, Marcos

said the oil cargo was loaded at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii on the US-registered tanker Yosemite Trader on December 20, 2023 and remained some 50 km west of Subic Bay as of Tuesday morning, reports Xinhua news agency. The US Embassy in the Philippines on Thursday confirmed that the American military transferred fuel to Subic Bay from the

military storage facility at Red Hill, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. Marcos, who chairs the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, criticized the "inexplicable silence" of both the Philippine and US governments before the shipment, accusing the government and the US of depriving the Filipino people of the right to know.

Turkey inflation picks pace, denting consumer confidence

Ankara, Jan 16 (IANS) : Despite the economic revamp, inflation in Turkey remained stubbornly high, and many consumers said their living standards continue to decline. In December 2023, inflation in Turkey rose to 64.8 per cent on an annual basis, an acceleration from 62 per cent in November, reports Xinhua news agency. Inflation has been back on the rise since last summer, with market watchers and the government saying that this cycle should hit its peak by mid-2024, to 70 per cent, before decelerating to around 40 per cent at the end of the year. The country's central bank made a sharp pivot in June when it be-

gan hiking interest rates under a new economic team. The rates have since been lifted from 8.5 per cent to 42.5 per cent. With a series of other recovery measures, there seems to be light ahead for the national economy, observers believe, but for the time being, ordinary citizens are continuing to feel the pinch of rising prices of most goods, especially food. Foodstuff prices have soared by 72 per cent in a year, according to the Turkish Statistical Institute, pushing consumers to purchase the bare minimum. To compensate for the skyrocketing inflation, the government has decided to raise the minimum wage by almost half to 17,002 liras (\$570) per month this year.



Polish President to pardon jailed ex-Ministers for 2nd time

Warsaw, Jan 16 (IANS) : Polish President Andrzej Duda said he will pardon for a second time, the senior officials that were detailed and jailed earlier this week after they were convicted of abuse of power. In March 2015, Mariusz Kaminski and his deputy Maciej Wasik were sentenced to three years in prison for masterminding an anti-corruption provocation in 2007, when they were heading the country's Central Anti-Corruption Bureau, reports Xinhua news agency. In November 2015 after the

Law and Justice (PiS) party came to power, Duda pardoned them both, allowing Kaminski to become Interior Minister, reports Xinhua news agency. But in June 2023, the case returned to the docket, and in December, Kaminski and Wasik were sentenced to two years in prison in the same case. After meeting Kaminski's and Wasik's wives on Tuesday, Duda said that at their request, he had decided to initiate pardon proceedings for both PiS politicians. He also said he had pardoned both men in a "textbook way" in 2015, which "remains effective".



The high-profile arrest on Tuesday, which according to Polish media reports took place in the presidential palace, is seen as an escalation of the standoff between the country's new government and its national conservative predecessor PiS, of which Duda is an ally. The new government led by Prime Minister Donald Tusk dismissed the heads of three

state media outlets after coming into power in October 2023, which angered the conservatives and triggered an exchange between Duda and Tusk over the rule of law.

Mexico has enough oil reserves for next 18 years: President

Mexico City, Jan 16 (IANS) : Mexico has enough oil reserves to meet demand for the next 18 years thanks to the oil exploration work spearheaded by his administration, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador said. "I can report that we have sufficient oil reserves for our administration and for the coming three administrations or three six-year terms, we will not suffer from a lack of oil," he added on Tuesday at his usual daily press conference.



Australia confirms support to US-UK airstrikes against Houthi sites in Yemen

Canberra, Jan 16 (IANS) : Australia on Tuesday confirmed its support to the US and UK airstrikes targeting sites belonging to the Houthi rebels in Yemen, in response to the Iran-backed militia's continued attacks against commercial shipping in the Red Sea. Addressing reporters here, Defence Minister Richard Marles said that Australian personnel were present in operational headquarters during the strikes but stopped short of elaborating on the nature of their involvement, reports Xinhua news agency.

Prabhas to star in 'The Raja Saab' directed by Maruthi

Southern star Prabhas will be seen in the upcoming film 'The Raja Saab,' a spellbinding romantic horror entertainer by director Maruthi. Maruthi said: "The Raja Saab' stands as one of my most ambitious projects to date. Collaborating with Prabhas and People Media Factory is both an honour

and exciting for me as a filmmaker. "We are geared up to offer our audiences a grand horror experience. Having Prabhas on board is particularly special as his electrifying screen presence infused with our horror narrative is sure to leave audiences amazed." The film's music is being orchestrated by National Award-winning music composer Thaman S, who is regarded as one of the most prominent and gifted musical talents in Telugu and Tamil cinema. He's best known for his work in the 2020 musical hit 'Ala Vaikuntapuramulo' and the viral 'Hungry Cheetah' song from 'OG' in addition to more.



Ram Charan, wife Upasana, Varun Tej & Lavanya celebrate Sankranti with mega family

Star Ram Charan and Upasana Konidela celebrated this Sankranti with grandeur in Bangaluru, creating unforgettable moments with their extended family and close friends. The mega family of the industry came together to celebrate Sankranti. The festivities were captured in a heartwarming family photo shared by Upasana on her Instagram account.

The picture showcased the mega family, including the newest member, their newborn daughter Klin Kaara, and their canine companion Rhyme. The joyous occasion was also graced by the presence of the newlyweds Varun Tej and Lavanya. Upasana offered a virtual glimpse into the festivities with a series of posts on her social media, treating fans to a visual feast of the celebration. Expressing her gratitude, Upasana captioned one of the posts: "Happy Happy Sankranti. My heart and belly are full. Thank you Athamma and Mamaya for bringing us all together."



Salman Khan : ?My only job is to entertain people

Bollywood superstar Salman Khan said that as an actor, his biggest and only job is to entertain people thoroughly. Salman's latest release 'Tiger 3' is now streaming on a digital platform. Talking about the same, he said: "The Tiger franchise has got unanimous love right from the first film be it the-

atrically, on satellite or on streaming!" "So, it feels amazing to see how the third instalment of Tiger 3 was first a hit in theatres and now on streaming." He added: "I'm in close contact with my audience through my social media and I can see the outpouring of love now that Tiger 3 has dropped on OTT."

'HanuMan' strikes a chord: Hindi dialogues win hearts across the nation

In the heart of the Hindi belt, an unlikely revolution is taking place, and its name is 'HanuMan'. Prasanth Varma's ambitious venture has not only marked the dawn of India's first home-grown superhero film, but has also resonated profoundly with audiences in Uttar Pradesh, Delhi, Punjab, Rajasthan and Bihar. As the film released this past Friday, heralding Varma's cinematic universe, the film found takers from unusual sectors where the makers were not expecting to make a mark. 'HanuMan' introduces us to an ordinary man discovering extraordinary abilities, thrusting

himself into a riveting battle of good versus evil. What sets this film apart is not only its unconventional narrative, but also the stellar Hindi dialogues that elevate the experience. These punchy and memorable lines, resonating with the audience, have become whistle-worthy moments, giving the film a unique edge. The film's climax has the kind of feel that's taking audiences back to the big-budget tentpole films. The carefully crafted Hindi dialogues, ensuring an authentic and immersive experience for audiences, have captured the enigma of Lord Hanuman, which is what is infused in the film's Hindi version. The film's dedication to capturing the spirit is evident in every line.



Adivi Sesh shares BTS picture with scars from sets of 'G2'

Actor Adivi Sesh -- who is known for his film 'Major' -- has shared a behind the scenes (BTS) look from his upcoming film 'G2'. The actor took to his X and shared a striking mirror selfie showcasing scars on his face. He wrote in the caption, "Shoot life 2 days ago". Following the tremendous success of 'Goodachari' Adivi Sesh is busy

with the sequel of the film. The BTS image has set the stage for heightened suspense and thrills, hinting at a new and riveting avatar for the versatile actor. Adivi Sesh began the shoot of his next action spy thriller 'Goodachari 2' (G2) in Hyderabad, last month. The movie, which also features Banita Sandhu as the leading lady, is a spy thriller, which is the next instalment in the successful 'Goodachari' franchise.



Thalapathy Vijay is all smiles with his squad in new 'The Greatest Of All Time' poster

Tamil superstar Thalapathy Vijay is joining forces with Prabhu Deva, Mic Mohan, and Prashanth for the upcoming film 'The Greatest Of All Time'. On Monday, the makers unveiled a new poster from the film on the occasion of Pongal. It features Thalapathy Vijay, Prabhu Deva, Mic Mohan, and Prashanth, dressed in military outfits, walking away from presumably a war zone. The poster also showcases a truck being blown up behind them, as

well as an army aircraft. 'The Greatest Of All Time' has been directed by Venkat Prabhu. It marks the first collaboration between Thalapathy Vijay and Venkat Prabhu. Thalapathy Vijay will be seen in a dual role in the film, which as per speculations are father and son. Earlier last year, the actor and director were seen heading to Los Angeles, California. The film is produced by Archana Kalpathi and Kalpathi S. Aghoram under the banner of AGS Entertainment.



Bobby Deol: Wish I was this mature when I was playing the character in 'Kareeb'

Bollywood star Bobby Deol has stolen the limelight with his performance in projects such as 'Ashram', 'Class of '83' and 'Animal'. He is loving his villain era and feels he should have had the maturity that he has now during the 1990s when he did films such as 'Kareeb'. Asked if he loves his villain era

or the 90s chocolate boy time, Bobby in a chat with IANS said: "As an actor I would pick now I feel as an actor I have learnt more... I was immature at that time (1990s)..." Talking about a special film "Kareeb", which released in 1998 and was directed by Vidhu Vinod Chopra, Bobby wishes he had the



kind of "maturity" he has now to play the character of Birju in the film. "I wish I was this mature when I was playing the character in Kareeb, maybe I would have done a better job as an actor but that's how the character was in 'Kareeb'. He was naive and was innocent."