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Glenn Maxwell set to quit Melbourne Stars captaincy role

Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decided to relinquish the captaincy of the Melbourne Stars. The announcement comes in the wake of the Stars' failure to secure a spot in the finals for... **12**



LIC of India introduced new plan "LIC's Jeevan Dhara II (Plan 872)

Chairperson, Shri Siddhartha Mohanty, Life Insurance Corporation of India launched a new plan, LIC's Jeevan Dhara II which will be available for sale from 22.01.2024. LIC's Jeevan.. **02**



Reliance Retail delivers gross revenue of Rs 83,063cr for 3Q FY24

Reliance Retail delivered gross revenue of Rs 83,063 crore for 3Q FY24, a growth of 22.8 per cent Y-o-Y led by Grocery, Fashion & Lifestyle and Consumer Electronics businesses. **07**



CM Revanth discusses ambitious plans for River Musi rejuvenation

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Thursday visited London as part of his tour and held a three-hours long dis-

ussion with officials and experts of the principal water body governing body of river Thames - the Port of London Authority. **Continued on pg 02**



India has three times more women pilots than world's average : PM Modi

Bengaluru, Jan 19 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday said that India has three times more women pilots than the world's average. "Among the Indian pilots, 15 per cent are women. This is three times more than the world average," Prime Minister Narendra Modi said while speaking at the launch of the Boeing Sukanya Programme. He also inaugurated the Boeing India Engineering and Technology Centre (BIETC), the largest facility outside the US. "India is leading the world as far as women pilots are concerned," Modi said.

He said that it is the government's resolve to encourage the participation of women in every sector of the country. "You have seen our conviction during the G20 summit. We have told the world that the time has come for women-led development. We are trying to create new opportunities for women in the aviation and aerospace sectors," Modi said. He said that through the Boeing Sukanya programme, the participation of women in the aviation sector will improve further. **Continued on pg 02**

Govt to set up Construction University : Komatireddy

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : Minister for Roads and Buildings Komatireddy Venkat Reddy has informed that the State government will set up a construction university soon for improving skills among the unemployed youth. The Minister along with Chief Secretary Santhi Kumari participated in the executive body meeting of National Academy of Construction here on Friday. Speaking on the occasion, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy alleged that rule of law did not work anywhere during the previous BRS government.



BRS doesn't win more than two or three Lok Sabha seats

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : Minister for Tourism Jupalli Krishna Rao said that the BRS party would not win more than two or three seats in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan here on Friday, Jupalli Krishna Rao said that the BRS party was not in a position to face the ensuing Lok Sabha elections and candidates were afraid to contest from BRS party.



The Minister of State for Home Affairs, Shri Nityanand Rai visits an exhibition during the 19th Raising Day Ceremony of National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) at Vigyan Bhawan, in New Delhi on January 19, 2024.



Srivari Laddu prasadam ready for Ayodhya

Tirumala, Jan19 : Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanams (TTD) has set ready to dispatch one lakh Laddus weighing 25 gms for distributing Laddus as Srivari Prasadam at Ayodhya on the occasion of Vighraha pratista at Sri Ram Diram on January 22. Nearly 350 Srivari Sevakulu were engaged in this divine activity at Seva Sadan -1 in Tirumala for packing two laddus in each packet in 350 boxes with each box having a capacity to carry 150 packets.



BJP, Congress are hand-in-glove with each other: KTR

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : BRS working president KT Rama Rao asked party leaders to expose the false promises made by Congress ahead of Telangana Assembly elections. He accused both BJP and Congress of having a clandestine understanding and hence, not holding each other accountable for their mistakes. Addressing the Lok Sabha elections preparatory meeting on Medak Parliamentary con-

stituency at Telangana Bhavan on Friday, Rama Rao questioned the sudden cooperation by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy with Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani. He pointed out that even as Congress leader Rahul Gandhi accused both Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Adani as the same, Revanth Reddy is entering into business agreements with the latter at Davos. **Continued on pg 02**



Declare holiday on Jan. 22, urges Bandi Sanjay

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : BJP national general secretary and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar has urged the State government to declare January 22, as a holiday as the consecration ceremony of the Ram temple in Ayodhya is being held on that day. He said the declaration of the holiday would allow everyone to be a part of the sacred divine work. Bandi Sanjay Kumar visited Illandakunta in Huzurabad constituency and visited the Sitaramachandra Swamy Temple. The temple priests blessed Bandi Sanjay on the occasion. Later, Sanjay cleaned the surroundings of the temple with a broom and a shovel. Along with Bandi Sanjay, BJP district president Krishna Reddy and other party workers took a broom and removed shrubs and bushes from the temple. The garbage was swept away by them. Speaking to the media on the occasion, Bandi Sanjay said, "As per the call of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and national president JP Nadda, we are cleaning the temples. As part of this, I am happy to clean the surroundings of Illandakunta Seetharamachandra Swamy temple today.



World recognised Indian Model of Development: Minister

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : Union Minister for Education & Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Dharmendra Pradhan has said Ancient India was the land for innovations and today, modern India, acting as Vishwa Mitra, is leveraging technology to bridge the gaps and reach new heights. Destined to be Viksit Bharat by 2047, India aims to make research, innovation and entrepreneurship the key drivers of its transformation. Delivering his keynote address at the inauguration of the second edition of Inventive, R&D Innovation Fair of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) at IIT Hyderabad, he said under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, India has taken a 'Giant Leap in Innovation and Entrepreneurship'. **Continued on pg 02**

BJP, Congress are hand-in-glove with each other: KTR

Continued From pg 01

“The true colours of the Congress and BJP leaders are getting exposed after the elections. Otherwise, Adani who did not set foot in Telangana as long as K Chandrashekar Rao was the Chief Minister.

LIC of India introduced new plan “LIC’s Jeevan Dhara II (Plan 872)

Hyderabad, Jan 19 (TIM Bureau) : Chairperson, Shri Siddhartha Mohanty, Life Insurance Corporation of India launched a new plan, LIC’s Jeevan Dhara II which will be available for sale from 22.01.2024. LIC’s Jeevan Dhara-II is an Individual, Savings, Deferred Annuity Plan.. The Unique Identification Number (UIN) for LIC’s Jeevan Dhara-II is UIN: 512N364V01. Benefits are payable under an in-force policy

on Survival/Death of the Annuitant(s) under applicable Annuity Options selected. Please refer to the full Product Prospectus and Sales Brochure for details or visit our website www.licindia.in. This Plan can be purchased Offline through agents / other intermediaries as well as Online directly through website www.licindia.in.



BOI MADHAPUR BRANCH
D.No.1-98/11/3, Ground Floor, Plot No.38, Arunodaya Colony, Madhapur, Telangana-500081.

POSSESSION NOTICE
[See rule-8(1)] (for Immovable property)

Whereas, The undersigned being the authorized officer of the Bank Of India, Madhapur Branch under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a demand notice dated 31-10-2023 calling upon the borrower Mrs. Mula Vasundhara Radhika, to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being Rs.150.57 Lakhs (Rupees One Crore Fifty Lakh and Fifty Seven Thousand Only) in addition to Interest further charged from Date of NPA i.e., 28-10-2023 along with charges incurred within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under sub-section (4) of section 13 of Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this 11th day of January of the year 2024.

The borrower in particular and the public in general is hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of the Bank of India, Madhapur Branch for an amount Rs.150.57 Lakhs and interest thereon from Date of NPA i.e., 28-10-2023 along with charges.

The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES

- Schedule of Property-A:** All that the undivided share of land admeasuring about 55 sq.yards out of total extent of 2000 square yards situated at Plot No.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District. Bounded by: On the North by: Neighbours Land, On the South by: 40 feet wide Road, On the East by: Plot No.73 & 74, On the West by: Plot No.70.
- Schedule of Property-B:** All that part and parcel of the Residential Flat No.506 on Fifth Floor, admeasuring about 1615 sq.ft including common area along with two cars parking space on cellar or still floor in the property by the name and style of "Shanta Sriram Supreme Residency" in Plot Nos.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District, Telangana State. Bounded: On the North by: Lift and open to sky, On the South by: Open to sky, On the East by: Open to Sky, On the West by: Corridor and open to sky.
- Schedule of Property-A:** All that the undivided share of land admeasuring about 55 sq.yards out of total extent of 2000 square yards situated at Plot No.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District. Bounded by: On the North by: Neighbours Land, On the South by: 40 feet wide road, On the East by: Plot No.73 & 74, On the West by: Plot No.70.
- Schedule of Property-B:** All that part and parcel of the Residential Flat No.305 on Third Floor, admeasuring about 1615 sq.ft including common area along with two cars parking space on cellar or still floor in the property by the name and style of "Shanta Sriram Supreme Residency" in Plot Nos.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District, Telangana State. Bounded: On the North by: Open to sky, On the South by: Lift and Open to sky, On the East by: Open to Sky, On the West by: Corridor.
- Schedule of Property-A:** All that the undivided share of land admeasuring about 55 sq.yards out of total extent of 2000 square yards situated at Plot No.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District. Bounded by: On the North by: Neighbours Land, On the South by: 40 feet wide Road, On the East by: Plot No.73 & 74, On the West by: Plot No.70.
- Schedule of Property-B:** All that part and parcel of the property consisting of Flat No.104 on First Floor, admeasuring about 1615 sq.ft including common area along with two cars parking space on cellar or still floor in the property by the name and style of "Shanta Sriram Supreme Residency" in Plot Nos.71 & 72 in Sy.Nos.32, 33, 34 and 35 situated at Kondapur Village, Serilingampally Mandal, Rangareddy District, Telangana State. Bounded: On the North by: Open to sky, On the South by: Open to sky, On the East by: Open to Sky, On the West by: Corridor and open to sky.

Place: Hyderabad, Date: 11.01.2024 Sd/- Authorised Officer, Bank of India

- Minimum Age at Entry is 20 years (last birthday) for Annuitant/Primary/Secondary Annuitant and Maximum Age at Entry is 80,70,65 years minus deferment period depending upon the annuity option chosen .
- The annuity is guaranteed from inception and 11 annuity options are available to prospective policyholders.
- There is higher annuity rates at higher ages.
- Life cover is available during deferment period.
- There is flexibility to choose from:
 - (i) Higher Premium and Single Premium.
 - (ii) Single Life Annuity and Joint Life Annuity.
 - (iii) Available Deferment Period [from 5 years to 15 years (in case of Regular Premium) and from 1 year to 15 years (in case of Single Premium)] i.e. when to start annuity payments as per your requirements.
 - (iv) Mode of Annuity payments (yearly, half-yearly, quarterly and monthly). Annuity Option once chosen cannot be altered.
 - There is incentive for High Premium /Purchase price/ for Online Sale by way of increase in the an-

nuity rate/ for existing Policyholders/Nominee/Beneficiary of the Corporation. There is an option to increase the Annuity (Top-up annuity) under the policy by paying additional premium as a Single Premium and at any time during the deferment period only and while the policy is in-force. Option to take death claim proceeds as Lump-sum, in the form of Annuitisation or in instalments. Liquidity Option i.e. option to

receive a lump-sum amount in return of reduction in annuity payments and other benefits available under annuity options with Return of Premium/ Purchase Price. Loan facility shall be available during or after the deferment period under annuity options with Return of Premium/ Purchase Price. The Plan is a Non-Linked, Non-Participating Plan. 19.01.2024 – PANINDIA

CM Revanth discusses ambitious plans for River Musi rejuvenation

Continued From pg 01
The Chief Minister spoke of his vision for rejuvenating river Musi, and of the principal reason for visiting London - of learning about the management of river Thames, understanding and gathering insights from its management and collating best practices.

Sian Foster, Director of Corporate Affairs, and Raj Kehal-Livi, Head, Stakeholder Engagement, Port of London Authority, presented a comprehensive history of the developmental activities along River Thames, natural challenges and engineering response and solutions, stakeholder management, investments and revenue management, and best practices evolved over decades. “Most cities on earth have developed historically besides rivers, lakes or the ocean. Water bodies are life-sustaining forces powering and enabling urban human habitats. Hyderabad developed along river Musi, but it is unique in being centered around Hussainsagar lake, and is fostered by other major water bodies like Osmansagar. Once we reinvigorate and bring back Musi to its fullest force, Hyderabad will be powered by both a river and lakes,” explained the Chief Minister. Finding alignments with CM’s vision with the vision 2050 of London authorities, Ms Kehal-Livi and Ms Foster said, “we are ensuring highest levels of sustainability for the river, even as we develop and optimise the developments

along the banks. Finding optimal revenue models to ensure maximum benefits for people and local communities, and best-in-class project management for various projects underway and to be taken up in future is our continual focus.” The apex body authorises assured all support to Hyderabad in all its efforts to rejuvenate river Musi. A more detailed outline of various potential partnership points was discussed. Both sides agreed to have more discussions and engagements in future and to collaborate on a posse of specific projects. Principal Secretary to CM V Sheshadri, Principal Secretary to MA&UD Dana Kishore, CM special secretary B Ajit Reddy, HMDA Joint Commissioner & MD MRDCL Amrapali, Special secretary Investments & Promotions E Vishnu Vardhan Reddy, SE MRDCL Venkatramana participated in the programme.

India has three times more women pilots than world's average : PM Modi

Continued From pg 01
“The dreams of daughters who are poor and living in remote areas of becoming pilots will come true,” Modi said. He said that many government schools in the country will receive career coaching and development facilities. “Few months ago, you witnessed how India’s Chandrayaan reached where no country has reached. This success has boosted the scientific temper of Indian youth,” Modi said. He said that India is also a hub of STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) education. He said that girls, in large numbers, are studying science, technology, engineering, and mathematics. “One of the global leaders asked me whether Indian girls study and like STEM subjects. I explained to him that in our country, female students in these streams are more than boys. It was a surprise for him,” PM Modi recalled. He said that in the last decade, India’s aviation market has com-

pletely transformed and every stakeholder in the Indian aerospace industry is upbeat. “From manufacturing to services, each stakeholder is exploring new avenues. India has become the third-largest domestic aviation market in the world,” he said. He said that in the last decade, the number of domestic travellers in aviation has more than doubled and schemes like Udaan have played an important role in this. He said that India is becoming one of the well-connected markets in the world. “In 2014, there were close to 70 airports in India. Today, there are about 150 operational airports in the country. We not only built new airports but also increased their efficiency by many folds,” he said. He said that due to the increase in India’s market capacity, the air cargo sector has also received a boost. “The products of India are reaching international markets easily. The rapidly growing aviation sector is contributing towards India’s overall progress and employment generation,” he said.

BEFORE THE HONOURABLE DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL-II
1st Floor, Triveni Complex, Abids, AT : Hyderabad

O.A No:252 / 2023

Axis Bank Ltd. Applicant
And
Ms. Saboo Cars Private Limited ... Defendant

SUMMONS BY WAY OF PAPER PUBLICATION

To
1.Ms. Saboo Cars Private Limited Represented by its Managing Director Rail Kalyan, 12-8-452/453/5 Modi Compound Opp: Mettuguda - Hyderabad, Telangana -500017 Also At: Saboo Cars Private Limited Represented by its Managing Director Plot: 9/3, IDA, Nacharam , OPP HP Petroleum Bunk, Nacharam, Hyderabad, Telangana - 500076. ... Defendants

Please take the summons in the above OA.No.252/2023 filed by the Applicant for Recovery of money of Rs.1,32,437.37 Ps against you. The Hon'ble Tribunal ordered summons to you by way of paper publication in "Vaartha" Telugu Daily newspaper and posted the matter to 19-02-2024. In accordance with sub-section (4) of section 19 of the Act, you, the defendants are directed as under:

- To show cause within thirty days of the service of summons as to why relief prayed for should not be granted.
- To disclose particulars of properties or assets other than properties and assets specified by the applicant under serial number 3A of the original applications.
- You are restrained from dealing with or disposing of secured assets or such other pending hearing disposal of the application for attachment of properties;
- You shall not transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise, except in the ordinary course of his business any of the assets over which security interest is created and / or other assets and properties specified or disclosed under serial number 3A of the original application without the prior approval of the Tribunal;
- You shall be liable to account for the sale proceeds realized by sale of secured assets or other assets properties in the ordinary course of business and deposit such sale proceeds in the account maintained with the bank or financial institution holding security interest over such assets.

You are hereby required to show cause on 19-02-2024 at 10.30 a.m. at Debts Recovery Tribunal-II 1st Floor Triveni Complex, Abids, Hyderabad - 500001, in persons or by an Advocate duly instructed as to why the relief prayed for should not be granted. Take notice that in case of default, the application will be heard and determined in your absence. Given under my hand and the seal of this Tribunal on this day of 11-01-2024 (By order of the Court) Sd/- Asst. Registrar Debts Recovery Tribunal-II Hyderabad

Public Notice For E-Auction For Sale Of Immovable Properties

Sale of Immovable property mortgaged to IIFL Home Finance Limited (Formerly known as India Infoline Housing Finance Ltd.) (IIFL-HFL) Corporate Office at Plot No. 98, UdyogVihar Phase-1, Gurgaon-122015 (Haryana) and Branch Office at Door No.17-378, 1st Floor, Subhadar Street, Opp Studio 14, Chittoor - 517001 under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002(hereinafter "Act"). Whereas the Authorized Officer ("AO") of IIFL-HFL had taken the possession of the following property/ies pursuant to the notice issued U/S 13(2) of the Act in the following loan accounts/prospect nos. with a right to sell the same on "AS IS WHERE IS, AS IS WHAT IS BASIS and WITHOUT RECOURSE BASIS" for realization of IIFL-HFL's dues. The Sale will be done by the undersigned through e-auction platform provided at the website: www.iiflhome.com

Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s)	Demand Notice Date and Amount	Description of the Immovable property/ Secured Asset	Date of Physical Possession	Reserve Price
1. Mr. K Chiranjeevi 2.Mrs.K Mallika	15-Oct-2022 Rs. 24,62,965/- (Rupees Twenty Four Lakh Sixty Two Thousand Nine Hundred Sixty Five Only)	All that part and parcel of the property Survey No. 499-1, admeasuring 1166 sq. ft. , 76 Kattamanchi, Municipal Door No. 6-122, Old Door No.23-651 , (As Per Site Number 23-10/2) Chittoor Municipal Corporation, Chittoor, Pincode:-517001, Andhra Pradesh, India (Carpet area 432 sq. ft. and built up area 540 sq. ft.)	28-Dec-2023	Rs. 19,24,000/- (Rupees Nineteen Lakh Twenty Four Thousand Only)
(Prospect No 900104, 952077)	Bid Increase Amount Rs. 25000/- (Rupees Twenty Five Thousand Only)		Total Outstanding As On Date 03-Jan-2024 Rs.28,59,986/- (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakh Fifty Nine Thousand Nine Hundred Eighty Six Only)	Earnest Money Deposit (EMD) Rs. 1,92,400/- (Rupees One Lakh Ninety Two Thousand Four Hundred Only)

TERMS AND CONDITIONS:

- For participating in e-auction, Intending bidders required to register their details with the Service Provider https://www.iiflhome.com well in advance and has to create the login account, login ID and password. Intending bidders have to submit / send their "Tender FORM" along with the payment details towards EMD, copy of the KYC and PAN card at the above mentioned Branch Office.
- The bidders shall improve their offer in multiple of amount mentioned under the column "Bid Increase Amount". In case bid is placed in the last 5 minutes of the closing time of the auction, the closing time will automatically get extended for 5 minutes.
- The successful bidder should deposit 25% of the bid amount (after adjusting EMD) within 24 hours of the acceptance of bid price by the AO and the balance 75% of the bid amount within 15 days from the date of confirmation of sale by the secured creditor. All deposit and payment shall be in the prescribed mode of payment.
- The purchaser has to bear the cess, applicable stamp duty, fees, and any other statutory dues or other dues like municipal tax, electricity charges, land and all other incidental costs, charges including all taxes and rates outgoings relating to the property.
- The successful bidder shall be responsible for any loss of property under the circumstances.
- Notice is hereby given to above said borrowers to collect the household articles which were lying in the secured asset at the time of taking physical possession within 7 days, otherwise IIFL-HFL shall not be responsible for any loss of property under the circumstances.
- For any query related to Property details, Inspection of Property and Online bid etc. call IIFL HFL toll free no. 1800 2672 499 from 09:30 hrs to 18:00 hrs between Monday to Friday or write to email:- auction.hi@iifl.com
- Notice is hereby given to above said borrowers to collect the household articles which were lying in the secured asset at the time of taking physical possession within 7 days, otherwise IIFL-HFL shall not be responsible for any loss of property under the circumstances.
- Further the notice is hereby given to the Borrowers, that in case they fail to collect the above said articles same shall be sold in accordance with Law. In case of default in payment at any stage in the auction process, the closing time of the sale stipulated time, the sale will be cancelled and the amount already paid will be forfeited (including EMD) and the property will be again put up for sale.
- AO reserves the rights to postpone/cancel or vary the terms and condition of tender/auction without assigning any reason therefor. In case of any dispute in tender/auction, the decision of AO of IIFL-HFL will be final.

STATUTORY 30 DAYS SALE NOTICE UNDER RULE 8 (b) OF THE SARFAESI ACT, 2002

The Borrower are hereby notified to pay the sum as mentioned above along with upto dated interest and ancillary expenses before the date of Tender/Auction, failing which the property will be auctioned/sold and balance dues if any will be recovered with interest and cost.

Place:- Chittoor , Date: 20-Jan-2024 Sd/- Authorised Officer, IIFL Home Finance Limited.

World recognised Indian Model of Development : Minister

Continued From pg 01
The world has now recognised the Indian Model of Development, which is rooted, futuristic and focused on sustainable development. “Our strength lies in recognizing the dynamics of both market and welfare economy. For this purpose, policymaking has shifted to the ‘Manufacturing Sector’ outlining strategies and focus areas that need attention. The goal is to make India, a manufacturing hub which would contribute at least 25% to the country’s GDP as compared to 17% currently. The government has focused on augmenting the manufacturing sector through important policy changes, such as ‘Make In India’, ‘ Invest in India’, PLI Scheme, and FDI liberalisation. These initiatives will act as a catalyst in India becoming the Third largest economy in the future and achieve the target of being a Five Trillion Dollar economy. He called upon young innovators to seize the India moment for realising the goal of Viksit Bharat”, he added. Pradhan also said Innovation would be the determinant for the India growth story in the future. “Our start-ups and human capital are changing the rules of the game. The recent passage of resolution by the US Congress extolling the contribution of IITians in enrichment of

American society is a commendable example of ‘Brand India”, he said. He also said the Digital Public Infrastructure domain today, acted as an enabler with 46% of global digital transactions being done in India, thereby, India becoming an incubator of Innovation. The start-up culture had taken firm roots with the numbers having risen manifold to 1.2 lakh more than 300 times rise in nine years. A critical achievement was the presence of 100+ unicorns making India, the Third largest start-up ecosystem in the world”. As a consequence, India’s global ranking in the Global Innovation Index rose to 40th globally in 132 economies from a rank of 81 in 2015.

Amit Shah pays homage to 'bravehearts' of Assam Rifles

Shillong, Jan 19 (IANS) : Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Friday visited the Headquarters Directorate General of the Assam Rifles in Shillong and paid tributes to the "Bravehearts" for their sacrifices. According to an official statement mentioned, Shah was given a windshield tour of the well laid out garrison located in the city’s Laitkor area. He also laid a wreath at the War Memorial. In a post on X, the Union Minister said: "The sacrifices made by the Bravehearts of Assam Rifles for the security of our nation are unparalleled. Laid a wreath at the War Memorial at Headquarters Directorate General Assam Rifles and paid homage to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the line of duty."

Country experiencing 'Ram Rajya' under PM Modi's leadership: Tripura CM

Agartala, Jan 19 (IANS) : Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Friday asserted that the country is currently experiencing 'Ram Rajya' under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Speaking to the media after participating in a cleanliness drive at the Kali temple in the Ker Chowmuni area of Agartala, Saha praised Prime Minister Modi for "bringing transparency to governance and ensuring all-around development" through the 'Sabka Saath Sabka Vikas' initiative. The Chief Minister said that the benefits of "this development reach even the poorest of the poor", emphasising that such progress is only possible in the

envisioned 'Ram Rajya'. He further attributed the upcoming Pran Pratishtha ceremony in the newly built Ram temple in Ayodhya on January 22 to Prime Minister Modi's efforts. The ongoing cleanliness drive of temples in Agartala was initiated on December 14 ahead of the Pran Pratishtha ceremony. Alongside Chief Minister Saha, Agartala Municipal Corporation Mayor Dipak Majumder and local councillors participated in the temple cleaning programme organised by the BJP Mandal committee of the Town Bordwali constituency, from where the Chief Minister has been elected twice.



K'taka youth arrested for making insulting videos against CM, DyCM

Dakshina Kannada, Jan 19 (IANS) : Karnataka Police on Friday said that it arrested a youth on charges of making insulting videos against Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar and posting the footage on social media. The arrested person has been identified as Anil Kumar, a resident of Surathkal town. Originally from Uttara Kannada district, he worked as a cab driver. The accused was not able to add his name as the beneficiary to the ration card to avail various government benefit schemes. Outraged at this, Kumar made the videos abusing Siddaramaiah and Shivakumar in Kannada and Tulu languages.

Bengal LoP approaches Calcutta HC seeking postponement of Jan 22 Trinamool rally

Kolkata, Jan 19 (IANS) : Leader of Opposition (LoP) in the West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari on Friday approached the Calcutta High Court seeking a postponement of a Trinamool Congress rally on January 22. In his petition, Adhikari also sought the intervention of the High Court for deployment of armed forces personnel across the state to maintain law and order on the day that coincides with the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya. The LoP argued that there were instances of violence in

West Bengal during different religious festivals and keeping that in mind such precautions are necessary. The division bench led by Justice Harish Tandon has admitted Adhikari's petition and a hearing is expected on Thursday. On Friday, Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee announced the "Harmony Rally" in Kolkata on January 22 with an aim to spread the message of unity among all religions. "The 'Harmony Rally' is not a counter to any other event. I have great respect for the monks and saints.



CBI raids ECR office, detains senior officer on corruption charges

Patna, Jan 19 (IANS) : The CBI has conducted raids at the East Central Railway (ECR) Hajipur zone and detained a senior officer, said sources on Wednesday. The raid was conducted at the zonal office of Hajipur around 5 p.m. on Friday where some documents were seized. The CBI team stayed there till 9 p.m. and scanned several documents. The sleuths also detained a senior officer and took him to the Patna head office. Sources have said that the CBI sleuths also conducted raids on the residences of the officer in Patna and Muzaffarpur districts. The officer was facing charges of taking bribes to manage tenders. An officer of ECR confirmed the development. However, he said that the reason for the raid was not ascertained yet.

Delhi HC seeks Chief Secy, Finance Secy's appearance on petitions over deteriorating drainage system



New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court on Friday called upon the Chief Secretary and Finance Secretary of the city government to appear virtually and elucidate their strategy for addressing water-logging in the national capital. In the previous hearing, the court of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P.S. Arora had expressed dismay at the collapse of the drainage system, stressing the severity of the situation. Highlighting the issue during a hearing on suo motu petitions addressing water-logging problems and rainwater harvesting in Delhi, the bench had pointed

out instances of flooding in newly constructed areas. On Friday, the court stressed the need for an explanation on whether a drainage master plan has been formulated to combat the challenges posed by heavy monsoon rains. Observing that numerous residential areas experience sewage backflow during monsoons and noting the lack of segregation between stormwater drains and sewage-carrying drains in Delhi, the court expressed concerns over choked drains filled with silt and inadequately-constructed drainage systems.



K'taka's performance in conviction rate in atrocity cases not satisfactory: Siddaramaiah

Bengaluru, Jan 19 (IANS) : Chief Minister Siddaramaiah said the performance of the state in terms of conviction rate in cases of violence against Dalits is not satisfactory. He was speaking at the annual conference of senior police officers held at the office of the state Director General of Police on Friday. He said, "If the victims are to have

faith in the system, the quality of investigations into cases of atrocities must be improved." The CM gave a clear instruction that a scientifically valid charge sheet should be submitted. "Put a complete stop to cases of violence against women and children. Punishment should be increased. Otherwise, the blame will be on the DCPs themselves for this failure," the CM warned.

Ayodhya mosque construction may begin in May

Lucknow, Jan 19 (IANS) : The construction of the proposed mosque in Ayodhya on land given in lieu of demolished Babri mosque is expected to begin in May. Zufar Farooqui, the chief trustee of the Indo Islamic Cultural Foundation (IICF) Trust which is tasked with building the mosque in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village, said the work is scheduled to begin in May for which the preparations are underway. "The Foundation's website is under construction and is

likely to be operational by February. Following its launch, the website will serve as a platform for collecting funds for the mosque through convenient means such as QR codes," Farooqui added. "The delay in construction is attributed to the meticulous preparation of the new plans, including those for the mosque and an accompanying hospital, library etc. These comprehensive designs will be submitted to the Ayodhya Development Authority in February, signifying a critical step in the project's progression. "After that, the next step for con-



struction of the mosque would be taken. But the stone-laying ceremony will only be possible after the funds for the mosque are collected and a map of the mosque is passed. "The mosque is set to be

constructed in Ayodhya's Dhannipur village with plans for it to span over 40,000 square feet, a considerable expansion from the initially proposed 15,000 square feet.

PMLA case : Delhi court grants interim bail to Supertech Chairman for 30 days

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : A Delhi court on Friday granted interim bail for 30 days to Supertech Group Chairman R.K. Arora, arrested in a case under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA) registered by the Enforcement Directorate. Additional Sessions Judge Devender Kumar Jangala pronounced the order after having it reserved on Friday. Arora had moved the court on January 10 seeking three months' interim bail, citing health issues. He had informed the court that he has lost around 10 kg since his arrest and needs urgent medical assistance. On Tuesday, the judge granted him relief on a personal bail bond of Rs one lakh and a surety of Rs two lakh. Arora's plea said that he was referred to the state-run Dr Ram Manohar Lohia Hospital by jail authorities, where he underwent examinations and received prescriptions. Despite medical attention, the

doctors at the hospital noted a lack of improvement in Arora's health. The plea argued for his immediate release on interim bail to facilitate accurate diagnosis and urgent medical treatment and said that prolonged custody could jeopardise Arora's health, leading to intolerable consequences for him and his family. The plea also underscored the disparity between medical facilities in prisons and those available in private hospitals, stating that jail facilities are inadequate for monitoring the health of an individual suffering from multiple serious ailments. In October last year, the court had refused to grant default bail to Arora. Arora had sought bail on ground that the financial probe agency had filed an incomplete charge sheet against him. He claimed that the ED had filed an incomplete charge sheet just to defeat his "statutory right" to get default bail in case the probe agency fails to file a charge sheet within the statutorily period granted by the law to complete the investigation from the arrest of an accused. On September 26, the



judge had taken cognisance of the charge sheet against Arora and dismissed his application, observing that the ED had completed the investigation against the accused. Arrested on June 27 last year after the ED re-attached properties worth Rs 40 crore belonging to him in this matter, Arora had said that he was arrested without being informed about the grounds of arrest. The court, however, rejected his claim, noting that the probe agency complied with the relevant provisions of law. The probe agency had, on August 24, filed the charge sheet against Arora and eight others in the matter. The accused have been accused of defrauding at least 670 home buyers of Rs 164 crore. The prosecution had earlier apprised the court that the

5-yr-old girl raped near construction site in Ahmedabad

Ahmedabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : A five-year-old girl was sexually assaulted near a construction site in the Bhadaj area in Ahmedabad, said police on Friday. The act was discovered when the child, bleeding and distressed, returned to her home. The police have filed an FIR. They are currently interrogating labourers at the site and reviewing CCTV footage to identify the perpetrator of this crime. The police have assured that all efforts are being made to apprehend the culprit and provide necessary support to the traumatized child and her family, officials shared about the ongoing case. The child, who lost her parents a year ago, was in the care of her grandmother, a 50-year-old worker at the construction site.



OPINIONmail



SPACE MISSIONS BY WESTERN COUNTRIES HAVE BECOME TOO EXPENSIVE

Moon mission records suggest that reaching the moon's surface is still not easy. The Vulcan Centaur rocket launched perfectly early Monday, 8th of January, morning from Cape Canaveral. It quickly left the solid rocket boosters behind and set the Peregrine spacecraft on the right path for its important journey to the moon. The successful launch made Tory Bruno, the CEO of United Launch Alliance who made the rocket, very happy. He even shouted "Yee-haw!" because it was the first time the Vulcan rocket flew. However, the happy atmosphere didn't last long. Astrobotic, the creators of Peregrine, discovered that the spacecraft was losing fuel. With not enough fuel left, the possibility of a gentle moon landing quickly dropped to none. Over fifty years have passed since NASA successfully landed astronauts on the moon and safely returned them to Earth. Shouldn't landing on the moon now be easy, or at least not too complicated? Hasn't the rocket technology from the mid-20th century turned into common knowledge in the 21st century? Peregrine is not the only recent setback in lunar missions. Although China and India have successfully landed robots on the moon, Russia's Luna 25 experienced a crash landing last year. This happened almost six decades after the Soviet Union's Luna 9 achieved the first soft landing. Moon landers made by private firms have all failed so far: Israel's Beresheet lander in 2019 and a Japanese lander by ispace last year both crashed. Now, with Peregrine, it's three failed attempts out of three. One major issue, as Jan Wörner, a past head of the European Space Agency, told The Guardian, is about keeping things light. He says, "You're always almost at the point of breaking because everything must be lightweight, or the spacecraft won't work. You can't add a lot of extra safety features."

Almost every spacecraft is unique, like a one-of-a-kind model. Except for a few examples like the Galileo communication satellites, spacecraft are usually custom-built and not mass-produced. Spacecraft are not manufactured in large numbers using the same reliable systems and designs. Once spacecraft are launched into space, they have to operate independently. Wörner points out that if your car breaks down, you can get it fixed, but in space, there's no such option for repairs. He emphasizes that space is a completely different environment. The Galileo satellites are Europe's global navigation system, offering highly accurate, guaranteed global positioning services under civilian control. It includes a constellation of 28 satellites primarily in Medium Earth Orbit, positioned to ensure broad coverage, even in high latitudes. The moon has unique challenges. While it has gravity, about one-sixth of Earth's, it lacks an atmosphere. This combination presents a distinct set of conditions for any lunar mission or exploration. In contrast to Mars, where spacecraft can use parachutes to slow down and land, moon landings rely solely on engine power. This is due to the moon's lack of atmosphere, which makes traditional atmospheric braking methods inapplicable. For smaller probes that typically have just one engine, steering the engine is crucial for controlling their descent to the moon. This is because there's no alternative method to guide their landing due to the lack of atmosphere. To further complicate the engineering, the engine must be modulated, meaning its thrust can be finely controlled and adjusted as necessary. This is essential for precise manoeuvring and landing on the moon. Nico Dettmann, who leads the lunar exploration group at ESA, explained that engines on spacecraft usually ignite to provide a consistent level of thrust. This statement emphasizes the typical operation of spacecraft engines, which are designed to deliver a steady force. To change the thrust during operations adds a lot more complexity." Despite the success of the initial moon landings in the 1960s, it's still difficult to understand why the moon continues to be a challenging destination. This perspective highlights the ongoing complexities and challenges in lunar exploration, even after decades of technological advancements.

(By Girish Linganna)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail



MUMBAI'S AFFORDABLE HOUSING SCHEME IS GIVING A BIG JOLT TO ECOLOGY

Mumbai is facing a severe housing crisis, with a growing population and a dire need for affordable homes. In the midst of this crisis lies approximately 5500 acres of salt pan land, the subject of intense debate between proponents of affordable housing and environmentalists concerned about the city's ecosystem. Environmentalists emphasize the significance of salt pan land for Mumbai's ecosystem, highlighting its role in flood protection and as a habitat for migratory birds. They assert that using this land for housing would jeopardize the delicate balance of the environment and its associated services. Over the years, various governments have grappled with the idea of utilizing salt pan land for affordable housing. While the central government and local authorities have shown interest, the proposals have faced opposition from citizens, environmentalists, and even within the political sphere. The recent plan by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde to develop salt pan land for public use has reignited this longstanding debate. As per a report, Chief Minister Eknath Shinde has directed state officials to explore the potential use of salt pan lands for public purposes. During a meet-

ing, attended by state government and civic officials, as well as Union Urban Development Minister Hardeep Singh Puri via video conference, the Maharashtra Chief Minister emphasized the need to examine the viability of utilizing salt pan lands for public benefit without causing harm to the environment. A significant portion of approximately 5,500 acres of salt pan land fall under the non-development zone.

(IPA Service)

LOWER GLOBAL OIL DEMAND AND PRICE WILL BENEFIT INDIA IN 2024

The new year's best news for India, is that the Saudi Arabia-led Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) is fast losing its grip on the market with a number of countries willing to offer prices even lower than those fixed for Russian crude. Saudi Arabia itself has cut down crude oil prices to boost sales this year. With Russia threatening to overtake Saudi Arabia as the world's largest crude oil exporter, few oil

exporting nations are interested in the routine practice of cutting production to stabilise oil prices. In 2023, Russia was neck and neck with Saudi Arabia in oil export. The Arab country does no longer control the global oil market. Saudi Aramco has already cut down the official selling price of flagship Arab light crude for Asia to their lowest in 27 months. Saudi Arabia has also pruned prices for North America, North West Europe and the Mediterranean. Asia's top five oil importers are China, India, South Korea, Japan



and Taiwan. The Indian government must ensure that domestic oil companies pass on the benefit to end consumers. The falling oil prices may also force Russia to offer more indirect discounts if it wants to retain the export market it gained at the expense of Saudi Arabia since the middle of 2022. Last year, China and India emerged as the two top importers of cheaper Russian crude. The two major Asian oil consumers and

importers accounted for 80 percent of Russian oil exports. Russia has been subjected to a G7 price cap of \$60 per barrel. Taking into account the shipping and insurance costs, the landed price of Russian crude on Indian shores continues to remain high. Also, the payment mode created a controversy between India's public sector oil importers and Russian suppliers.

(IPA Service)



DARJEELING TEA PRODUCTION DECLINED BY NINE PERCENT IN 2023 HITTING EXPORTS

In more than one way, the past year would go down in the annals of the famed Darjeeling tea industry, which though infinitely smaller in terms of production than its counterparts elsewhere in the country and abroad as annushorribilis. Production of tea in the hills of Darjeeling slid a worryingly around 9 per cent to about 6.3 million kg in 2023. The exact production fall will be known when December plucking and manufacture figures are available.

(IPA Service)

MALDIVES CRISIS EXPOSES INDIA'S LACK OF DIPLOMATIC WISDOM, WIDER VISION

In October last year at the Group of 20 summit in New Delhi, Narendra Modi had projected India under his rule as a rising diplomatic powerhouse and elicited sycophantic commentary on its growing confidence. While boasting of his image of a 'Vishwa Guru', Modi often ignores the bare fact that goodwill cannot be built on the basis of solely providing investments and security support. He also conveniently forgot that for the last five years, India's South Asian neighbours have largely felt wide resentment and "quit India" had been the major political issue in Maldives. India's democratic credentials might have been a major factor in bolstering its image among the neighbours, but Modi instead of rushing with his agenda, should have paused and thought how to salvage the situation and win the trust of our neighbours. Without exception, almost all the Indian neighbours nurse hurt feelings, as on one or more occasions they have been rubbed on the wrong side. While India's 'Godi Media' was busy creating the impression that Modi occupies the status of world leader and India was ascendant on the international stage, behind the scenes reality was just the opposite. On September 30, the Maldives' voters dumped the pro-India

incumbent President Ibrahim Mohamed Solih for the pro-China opposition challenger Mohamed Muizzu. This victory exposed India to questions about the state of its ties with neighbours. Anti-India sentiment was building up in the island for some years now. Meeting his supporters at an event in Naifaru in March 2022, former President Abdula Yameen Abdul Gayoom made an anti-India speech. He wore the word "India Quit" on his T Shirt. Resentment prevailed in the political and social circle that "India First" policy was jeopardizing Maldives' autonomy. Though Modi had congratulated Muizzu at his win, it is not clear what measures the External Affairs Ministry undertook to dispel the wrong notion that gripped the people of Maldives.



US-led airstrikes hit Houthi targets in central Yemen: Official

Aden, Jan 19 (IANS) : The US has reportedly conducted a series of fresh airstrikes against Houthi targets in Yemen's central province of Al Bayda. Yasser Jahlan, a local government official, said that the strikes occurred on Friday just several hours after the Houthi group claimed responsibility for a missile attack against a US-owned oil tanker in the Gulf of Aden, Xinhua news agency reported. He said that three strikes hit Houthi military barracks and facilities in the Mukayras district of Al Bayda before dawn on Tuesday. The US Central Command issued

a statement confirming the strikes, stating that "the US Forces struck and destroyed four Houthi anti-ship ballistic missiles prepared to launch from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen". It came after an incident on Monday when a US-owned and operated container ship was hit by a missile launched from Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen.

In the past few hours, the Houthi group has claimed responsibility for a new attack on a Greek-owned, Malta-flagged freighter ZOGRAFIA with multiple missiles in the Red Sea.

Indian-origin lawyer suspended in Singapore for falsely attesting documents

Singapore, Jan 19 (IANS) : An Indian-origin lawyer with more than 25 years of experience in the field has been handed a one-year suspension for false attestation of documents in Singapore. While several documents were not signed in her presence, Kasturibai Manickam falsely attested in 2020 that they were, The Straits Times newspaper reported on Friday. The Law Society of Singapore had argued for 30 months' suspension for Manickam but the Court of Three Judges said this was an instance of a "grave error of judgment" rather than a character defect. There was no dispute that the documents were signed by the

intended signatories, Chief Justice Sundaresh Menon, who was leading the bench, said. He said Manickam's error was to decide to attest that she witnessed the signing of the documents because she knew the parties and thought no harm would ensue.

The court allowed Manickam's suspension to take effect on March 7.

The judges heard that Manickam had acted for two siblings -- Santha Devi V Puthenveetil Kesava Pillay and her brother, Raman Puthenveetil Kesava Pillay -- who were the registered owners of a condominium unit. Manickam's firm, East Asia Law Corporation, had previously acted for the Pillays in several matters prior to the sale of the property.



The Pillays had sold their condominium unit in September 2020 to two individuals, according to the news report.

In the course of acting for the siblings, Manickam prepared six documents for the transaction, which were all signed by Santha Devi.

Between September 7 and November 5, 2020, Manickam signed as a witness to Santha Devi's signature, but did not witness the signing.

Five of the documents -- a transfer instrument, a seller's stamp duty declaration, and a letter of authority for the sale proceeds to be paid to the firm -- were sent to the law firm acting for the purchasers. Santha Devi later lodged a complaint with the Law Society against Manickam, following which a disciplinary tribunal was appointed in May 2022 to investigate the matter.



Two US Navy SEALs missing in operation near Somalia

Washington, Jan 19 (IANS) : The US Central Command (CENTCOM) announced that two Navy SEALs were missing in a recent operation conducted

by the American military near the coast of Somalia to seize what it said were Iranian weapon components being supplied to the Houthi militia in Yemen.



Palestinian death toll in Gaza rises to 24,285

Gaza, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Palestinian death toll from ongoing Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has risen to 24,285, the Gaza-based Health Ministry has said. The ministry in a press statement on Friday said that the Israeli army killed 158 Palestinians and wounded 320 others during the past 24 hours, Xinhua news agency reported.

It added that the ongoing Israel-Hamas conflict has led to the injuries of 61,154 Palestinians since its outbreak on October 7, 2023.

Meanwhile, it noted that a large number of victims were still under the rubble, and ambulance and civil defense crews could not reach them.

The ministry also warned of serious health complications facing patients with chronic illnesses, noting that 350,000 of them have been without medication. It called on international institutions to provide medicines for chronic patients urgently.

UK Conservative Party deputy chairmen resign over Rwanda immigration bill vote

London, Jan 19 (IANS) : Two deputy chairmen of the British ruling Conservative Party have resigned as the lawmakers in the UK voted on amendments to Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's emergency legislation on immigration. Lee Anderson and Brendan Clarke-Smith announced their resignations on Friday evening after voting in favour of an amendment to the legislation, Xinhua news agency reported.

They wrote in a joint letter to the Prime Minister regarding the amendments that "whilst our main wish is to strengthen the legislation, this means that in order to vote for amendments we will therefore need to offer you our resignations". In April 2022, the UK reached a deal with Rwanda, under which illegal immigrants and asylum seekers would be sent to the east African country to have their claims processed there.



Respiratory infections surge in Europe : WHO

Copenhagen, Jan 19 (IANS) : A leading World Health Organization (WHO) official has called for vigilance in the face of rising cases of respiratory diseases in Europe. Hans Henri P. Kluge, the WHO's regional director for Europe, noted a surge in influenza infections and hospitalizations at a press conference on Friday in Copenhagen, and urged health systems to prepare for a likely increase in cases in the coming weeks, Xinhua news agency reported.

The Netherlands is currently grappling with an upswing in respiratory infections, accord-

ing to the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM). Various pathogens, including Covid-19, influenza virus and seasonal coronavirus are "now common" among the population, the RIVM said in its most recent update as of January 10. The number of individuals reporting flu-like symptoms is on the rise, it said. In the past week, 44 out of 100,000 people sought medical attention for such complaints, marking a notable increase from the previous week's 27 per 100,000. Recent data also reveals a surge in influenza virus cases, with almost 35 per cent of samples from individuals reporting flu-like

symptoms testing positive, compared to the previous week's 13 per cent, according to RIVM.

In Italy, hospitals were under intense pressure due to the worst flu wave the country had witnessed in at least 15 years, Italian health professionals warned last Friday. Admissions to emergency rooms increased by 20 per cent to 30 per cent last week, mainly due to serious flu cases, according to the Italian Federation of Health Authorities and Hospitals (FIASO). In another development, the Spanish government reimposed the mandatory use of facemasks in hospitals and health centres as of January 10, following a sharp rise



in COVID-19 and flu infections since the start of the new year. Spain reported a sharp rise in respiratory illnesses, with the infection rate soaring to over 952 cases per 100,000 inhabitants. The peak of infections was set to arrive, Health Minister Monica Garcia warned last week. At a press conference in Copenhagen Friday, Kluge said that vulnerable populations must be kept up-to-date with their Covid-19 and influenza vaccinations. He also underlined the critical success of Covid-19 vaccines since their introduction in December 2020.



Trump, columnist Jean Carrol face off in defamation trial

Washington, Jan 19 (IANS) : Fresh from his victory in the Iowa caucuses, former US President Donald Trump attended the first day of a \$10 million defamation

trial filed by columnist E. Jean Carroll for sexually abusing and making defamatory statements against her. Jean Carroll (79) had accused Trump of raping her in a

Manhattan department store dressing room in the mid-1990s, and then branding the incident a hoax in an October 2022 post on his Truth Social platform.

The trial that began on Friday is to determine whether Trump harmed her with the defamatory statements and if so, how much money he must pay her in compensation, the BBC reported.

Last May, a different jury trial found that Trump had sexually assaulted and defamed Carroll. The findings of that case are considered relevant in the new trial. At Tuesday's hearing, Trump, who was seated a few rows behind Jean Carroll, stared at the columnist

who he claims he had "never met, saw, or touched... and knows absolutely nothing about". On her part, Carroll did not appear to look at him and faced towards the bench for nearly all of the proceedings, allowing Trump only a view of her back.

Trump also remained quiet. One of Carroll's attorneys, Shawn Crowley said the jury will need to consider "how much money Donald Trump should have to pay for what he's done".

"How much money will it take to make him stop," the BBC quoted Jean Carroll as saying. Crowley also told the court the former President had "unleashed his followers to go after" Carroll "to threaten her life".

As Trump continues to attack Jean Carroll on Truth Social, his official account put out more than two dozen posts on Tuesday while he was sitting in court, calling the case "PURE FICTION".

Zelensky, EU chief agree to start screening of Ukrainian legislation

Kiev, Jan 19 (IANS) : Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen have agreed to start screening of Ukrainian legislation for compliance with European Union laws. The screening is another step towards the opening of negotiations on Ukraine's membership in the EU, Xinhua news agency reported, citing the Ukrainian presidential press service. Zelensky and von der Leyen, who met on the sidelines of the 54th World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, also discussed other key priorities of the EU-Ukraine agenda ahead of the actual opening of the accession negotiations. They paid particular attention to the issue of unblocking the EU aid package for Ukraine worth 50 billion euros (about \$54.4 billion) at an extraordinary session of the European Council on February 1.



Palaniswami asks AIADMK workers to oust 'tyrannical' DMK govt in TN

Chennai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Edappadi K. Palaniswami (EPS) on Friday called upon the AIADMK party workers to work for ousting the DMK government and termed the DMK rule as "tyrannical" and "anti-people". Palaniswami said that the people of the state have been abandoned by the DMK government and called upon the party cadres to work hard to remove the government. He said that the DMK government under Chief Minister M.K. Stalin is not able to implement welfare projects and schemes in the state as the government is highly "corrupt". Palaniswami said that the DMK government is not even able to protect the natural calamities victims. "The DMK government is tormenting the people of Tamil Nadu by increasing electricity tariff, milk price and house tax," he said.



Discussion to lower property tax penalties in B'luru going on: Shivakumar

Bengaluru, Jan 19 (IANS) : Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar on Friday said that the government is in discussion with BBMP officials to reduce property tax penalties for certain types of properties in Bengaluru. Speaking at the mass grievance redressal programme titled 'Government at Your Doorstep' at Gandhinagar, the Deputy Chief Minister said that there are a lot of pleas regarding reduction of property tax and penalties for 30x40 sites and sheds. "We are discussing it with the concerned officials. Do not worry about the notices served to you about payment of property taxes and penalties. We are trying to reduce the penalties as much as possible. We have received similar pleas from other grievance redressal programmes too," the Deputy Chief Minister said.

ter said. He said that the 2020 law has heavy penalties for property tax payment delays. "The law needs to be amended. We will give you more information regarding it in a few days. We have already instructed officials to collect taxes as per the old regime and not put pressure on the public to pay up the new tariff. The differential will be adjusted in the next year's taxes," he said. The Deputy Chief Minister said that the government's intention is to bring everyone under the tax bracket. "With the widened tax net, both taxpayers and the BBMP benefit. Under the self-declaration scheme, people are under-declaring their property sizes. Minister Ramalinga Reddy has also written a letter about it," he said. "You have come here with your individual and collective pleas because the officials concerned haven't cooperated with you. We are here to solve your issues, please register your pleas and provide your contact details so that officials can contact you," he said.



Election Commission was aware of Thackeray's election as Shiv Sena chief in 2013-2018: Parab

Mumbai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Shiv Sena-UBT leader Anil Parab on Friday said that the election of Uddhav Thackeray as the President of the original and undivided Shiv Sena was as per norms, and the Election Commission was fully aware of it. Addressing a mammoth town hall-style meeting here, Parab slammed the January 10 verdict of the Assembly Speaker, Rahul Narwekar, on the disqualification of MLAs of the two factions led by Chief Minister Eknath Shinde and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray. He played the videos of the 2013 and 2018 elections held in the (undivided) Shiv Sena which unanimously elected Uddhav Thackeray as the President with full powers, on both occasions. "All the decisions were taken as per the norms and rules, and all relevant papers were submitted to the ECI, with the list of the party's other elected leaders, the national executive and other office-bearers. We have the copies of the ECI's date-stamp, the signature of its receiving official and everything was in the public domain," said Parab. Parab alleged that the same documents were submitted to the Speaker also, but despite all this, he chose to ignore everything that was done as per the laws.

BJP announces Lok Sabha cluster in-charges for Rajasthan at Delhi meeting

Jaipur, Jan 19 (IANS) : In view of the upcoming parliamentary elections, the BJP has divided the 25 Lok Sabha seats in Rajasthan into 8 clusters and appointed the cluster in-charges. A meeting of these cluster in-charges was held in Delhi on Friday at the national headquarters of the BJP from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., in which the cluster in-charges from all over the country participated. When Rajasthan's number came, 8 cluster in-charges of the state were given information about their clusters. The responsibility for 2 out of 8 clusters has been given to senior BJP lead-

ers including Rajendra Rathore and Satish Poonia. Party sources said the "BJP has started preparations for the Lok Sabha elections. Its target is to win 25 out of the 25 seats in the state this time too, but if we look at the voting trend in the assembly elections, there are about 10-12 Lok Sabha seats where the BJP got less votes than the Congress. In such a situation, this time the party will work on dividing the Lok Sabha seats into clusters, so that the party can be strengthened in the assembly seats where it is weak." The cluster in-charges include former Leader of the Opposition in the state Rajendra Rathore, former Deputy Leader of the Op-

position Satish Poonia, former state party president Arun Chaturvedi, former cabinet minister and party vice president Prabhulal Saini, government chief whip Jogeshwar Garg, Rajya Sabha MP Rajendra Gehlot, former Rajya Sabha MP Narayan Panchariya and former state officials. The RSS' Prasanna Chand Mehta has been made the clusters in-charge. At today's meeting in Delhi, all of them were given information about their cluster, and now their work will start. They will report directly to BJP national president JP Nadda, Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Union Defence Minister Rajnath Singh.

Meanwhile, Rathore-Poonia's chances of contesting the elections have come down. After losing the assembly elections, there was constant discussion that the party could make Rajendra Rathore and Satish Poonia contest the Lok Sabha elections, but now the chances seem less because the 8 leaders have been made cluster in-charges. He will be responsible for at least 3 Lok Sabha seats. In such a situation, if he is made to contest elections, he will not be able to concentrate on his seat. Apart from this, it does not seem possible to change the cluster in-charge midway. This can also be understood in the way that the party has not made any Union



Minister or sitting MP a cluster in-charge, even though they have more experience in Lok Sabha elections. The party has given these jobs only to those leaders who do not have any big responsibility right now. Party sources said that issues re-

lated to rallies, plans to reach the grassroot level to check if there is any anti-incumbency, if fresh candidates need to be fielded, government schemes feedback and how to implement schemes were also discussed at the Delhi meeting



Congress names Tika Ram Jolly as Leader of Opposition in Rajasthan

Jaipur, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Congress on Friday named Alwar Rural MLA and former minister Tika Ram Jolly as the Leader of Opposition in the Rajasthan Assembly. This time, Congress has decided to give the responsibility of the post of Leader of Opposition to a Dalit leader. Jolly, who has become MLA from Alwar Rural for the third time, was first a Minister of State in the Ashok Gehlot government, after which he was promoted and made a Cabinet Minister. Party sources said that this time, Congress has adopted the formula of Jat-Dalit combination. Govind Singh Dotasra, a Jat, has meanwhile, has been retained as the state party President.

Inter-state fire training centre to be built in Haryana on lines of Nagpur model: Deputy CM

Gurugram, Jan 19 (IANS) : Haryana Deputy Chief Minister Dushyant Chautala on Friday said that an inter-state fire training centre will be established in the state on the lines of Nagpur model. He said that the Fire Department will soon have its own 90-meter hydraulic platform in Manesar Sector-8, Gurugram and a gym will be built at the fire training centre at the same location. The Deputy Chief Minister visited the Fire and Emergency Services Training Centre in Manesar Sector-8 on Tuesday. He said that the state government is making efforts to enhance emergency services. "To achieve this, an Inter-State

Fire Training Centre is planned in Jind district, covering 25 acres of land. The foundation for this centre will be laid next month," the Deputy Chief Minister said. He said that discussions are underway regarding establishing fire training centres in every city. "Haryana is working towards enhancing emergency services similar to metropolitan cities in the country. The proposed Inter-State Fire Training Centre in Jind will benefit not only the youth of Haryana but also those from other states," he said. The Fire Department currently possesses hydraulic platforms of up to 40 meters in height in Gurugram and Panchkula.



Haryana making efforts to increase farmers' income: Barala

Chandigarh, Jan 19 (IANS) : Haryana Public Enterprise Bureau Chairman Subhash Barala on Friday said the state government is making efforts to increase the income of farmers. "A policy, Haryana Farmer Producers Organisation, is also being formulated," Barala said during a meeting with the Northern Farmer Mega FPO, an apex body comprising 1,200 farmers, having an annual turnover of approximately Rs 10 crore. He said that the Northern Farmer Mega FPO of the government's cooperation in the formation of the policy. He also expressed interest in promoting the export of agricultural products. Barala said that the government is committed to making farmers in the region economically stronger.



3.7 crore people came out of poverty in Bihar due to Nitish's policies: Choudhary

Patna, Jan 19 (IANS) : After a NITI Aayog report revealed on Friday that 3.70 crore people of Bihar had come out of poverty, the state's Finance Minister, Vijay Kumar Choudhary, said on Tuesday that such an achievement was possible due to the leadership of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar. The NITI Aayog said in a report on Monday that as many as 24.82 crore people moved out of multidimensional poverty in India in nine years, with Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh registering the largest decline. The NITI Aayog report said that at the state level, Uttar Pradesh topped the list with 5.94 crore people escaping poverty followed by Bihar at 3.77 crore and Madhya Pradesh at

2.30 crore. "The way Nitish Kumar brought public-oriented policies in Bihar since 2005, our state has come top in the field of poverty elimination. Justice along with development is the basic mantra of the Nitish Kumar Government and the NITI Aayog's report is proof of it. "The performance of Bihar in the field of poverty eradication and minimisation has improved and not only national but international agencies are also taking notice of it," he said. The NITI Aayog has given an extensive report where it has said that 44.52 per cent people of Bihar came out of poverty from 2005-06 to 2019-20. Bihar's overall poverty was 19.5 per cent in 2013-14 and it has reduced to 11.28 per cent in 2022-23.

Paytm registers bumper operating revenue uptick of 38% YoY, PAT improves by Rs 170cr YoY

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : India's leading payments and financial services company Paytm has shown yet another impressive quarterly growth, registering a bumper operating revenue uptick of 38 per cent YoY, taking the revenue to Rs 2,850 crore in Q3FY24. The PAT improved by Rs 170 crore YoY for the company, standing at (Rs 222 crore) due to growth and operating profitability.

Paytm's EBITDA before ESOP stood at Rs 219 crore in the quarter of December 2023, compared to Rs 153 Cr in Q2FY24 (excluding UPI in-

centives). The fintech giant crossed 14 lakh devices in this quarter, the company stated in its earnings release.

Paytm's payments revenue experienced a substantial 45 per cent YoY growth, reaching Rs 1730 crore. Furthermore, the profitability of their payments segment demonstrated a significant improvement, as the net payment margin expanded by an impressive 63 per cent YoY to Rs 748 crore. The revenue from financial services and others also increased 36 crore YoY to Rs 607 crore in Q3FY24.

This was achieved by increase in GMV, merchant subscription rev-

enues, and growth of loans registered on the platform. Resting on the back of its strong merchant leadership in in-store payments, Paytm now has 1 crore merchants onboard with them.

Furthermore, Paytm's Average Monthly Transacting Users (MTU) for Q3 FY 2024 stood at 10 crore as adoption of mobile payments for consumers in India continues.

This complements the robust growth for its pioneering devices like Paytm Sound Box and Paytm Card machines. Contribution profit increased 45 per cent YoY to Rs 1,520 Cr, due to growth in net payment margin and financial

services business. Within its Marketing Services segment (formerly Cloud and Commerce), the company continues to capitalise on the monetisation of Paytm app traffic. This segment encompasses various services such as ticketing (covering travel, movies, events, etc.), advertising, credit card marketing, and deals and gift vouchers. Notably, in Q3FY24, the Marketing Services revenue experienced a 22 per cent year-over-year growth, reaching Rs 514 Cr.

As a merchant payments leader, Paytm continues to see sustained traction on merchant loans. The value of loans distributed by the company stood to Rs 15,535 crore

paytm
sound
BOX



due to improved takerate, up by 56 per cent YoY. It has also distributed Rs 490 crore of high-ticket loans in the December quarter. In the Payments vertical, the company's multi-device-led approach will solidify its dominance in the acquiring space. Additionally, it intends to prioritise emerging use cases such as credit on UPI and Autopay to generate incre-

mental and monetisable customer acquisitions. Transitioning to Marketing Services, Paytm is providing merchants with deal, gift voucher, and loyalty services, as well as enabling e-commerce functionalities. Paytm is also facilitating advertising on its app for various brands and businesses.



Reliance Retail delivers gross revenue of Rs 83,063cr for 3Q FY24

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Reliance Retail delivered gross revenue of Rs 83,063 crore for 3Q FY24, a growth of 22.8 per cent Y-o-Y led by Grocery, Fashion & Lifestyle and Consumer Electronics businesses. Business posted an EBITDA of Rs 6,258 crore which was up by 31.1 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis. EBITDA before Investment Income was recorded at Rs 6,061 crore, up 30.1 per cent on a Y-o-Y basis. EBITDA margin from operations on net sales was at 8.1 per cent, up 40 bps Y-o-Y driven by

operating leverage and continued focus on cost management.

Depreciation increased on account of higher asset base due to addition of new stores and supply chain infrastructure.

Higher finance cost on account of increase in interest rate and borrowings for business expansion. The business expanded its store network with 252 new store openings taking the total store count at the end of the quarter to 18,774 stores with an area of 72.9 million sq ft.

The quarter recorded footfalls of over 282 million across formats,

a growth of 40.3 per cent Y-o-Y. Digital Commerce and New Commerce businesses continued to grow and contributed to 19 per cent of revenue. Reliance Retail launched Swadesh, focusing on India's tradition & art forms, and AjioGram, a D2C focused content driven platform. The business acquired Sephora India's franchise business and entered into an exclusive distribution arrangement with SMCP to launch Sandro and Maje brands in India.

UltraTech Cement logs Rs 1,777 cr Q3 PAT

Chennai, Jan 19 (IANS) Aditya Birla Group's UltraTech Cement Limited on Friday said it closed the third quarter of FY24 with a consolidated net sales of Rs 16,487 crore as against Rs 15,299 crore over the corresponding period of the previous year.

Profit after tax was Rs 1,777 crore highest ever quarterly PAT as compared to Rs 1,058 crore in Q3FY23.

During the quarter under review, domestic grey cement sales volume rose 5 per cent YoY and 1 per cent QoQ, respectively. Improved operational efficiencies, coupled with lower fuel and raw material costs resulted in im-

proved EBITDA margins, the company said.

During the quarter under review, the company acquired a 0.54 mtpa cement grinding asset of Burnpur Cement Limited, located at Patratu in Jharkhand for a consideration of Rs 169.79 crore, marking its entry in the state of Jharkhand.

The company has successfully completed the first phase of capacity expansion announced in December 2020. Work on the second phase of 22.6 mtpa announced in June, 2022 is in full swing and will start commissioning during the current quarter itself, ahead of schedule.



Money markets to remain shut on Jan 22 : RBI

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Reserve Bank of India (RBI) on Friday said that the money markets will remain closed on January 22. RBI said that as the Maharashtra government has declared January 22 as a public holiday under Section 25 of the Negotiable Instruments Act, 1881, there will be no transactions and settlements in government securities (primary and secondary), foreign exchange, money markets and Rupee Interest Rate Derivatives on January 22. It said that the settlement of all outstanding transactions will accordingly get postponed to the next working day i.e. January 23.

JetSetGo signs \$1.3 billion deal for 280 hybrid-electric aircraft

Hyderabad, Jan 18 (IANS) : Air service operator JetSetGo on Friday signed a deal with three global aviation tech firms for 280 hybrid-electric aircraft worth over \$1.3 billion. The company is set to acquire 150 aircraft for an aggregate deal value of \$780 million. The agreements include further options to acquire additional aircraft for a potential fleet size of 280, raising the overall deal value to above \$1.3 billion. JetSetGo announced strategic partnerships with three global aviation technology leaders - Electra.aero, Horizon Aircraft and Overair - to bring Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) solutions to India.



Zuckerberg's firms fined \$2.8bn for wrongful user data processing in last 4 yrs: Report

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Mark Zuckerberg's Meta and its affiliated subsidiaries have incurred fines totalling \$2.8 billion in the last four years due to multiple GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) violations, a new report has revealed.

According to data gathered by Finbold as of January 17, the

largest fine of \$1.3 billion was imposed on Meta Platforms Ireland Limited in May 2023 for insufficient legal basis for data processing. This fine includes nearly half (48 per cent) of all penalties incurred by Meta for GDPR breaches.

Other fines included WhatsApp Ireland in September 2021

(\$245.25 million), Facebook Ireland in December 2021 (\$65.4 million), Meta Platforms Ireland Limited in March 2022 (\$18.53 million), WhatsApp Ireland in January 2023 (\$5.9 million), and Facebook Germany GmbH in December 2019 (\$55,590), according to the report.

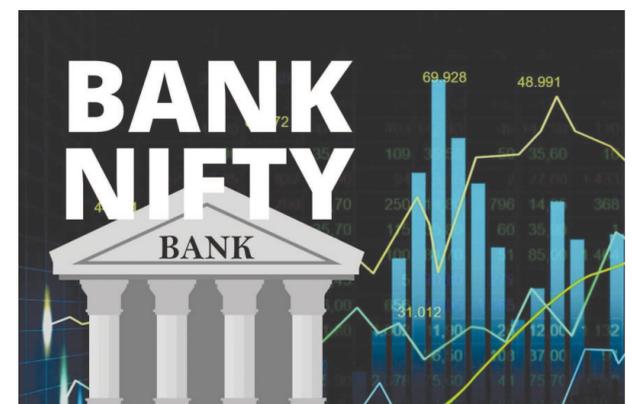
Bank Nifty witnesses bearish trend

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Senior Technical & Derivative Analyst at LKP Securities Kunal Shah on Friday said that the Bank Nifty is witnessing a bearish trend, with bears exerting dominance from higher levels. He said that the index encounters strong resistance around the 46300 mark, posing a significant hurdle for any upward movement. "Active put writing indicates a lower-end support at 45500; however, breaching this level may intensify selling pressure," he said. He said that the index is trading below short-term

moving averages, signaling a bearish sentiment in the current market scenario. Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services Vinod Nair said that a 'buy on dips' and encouraging global cues propelled the market's recovery.

He said that today's rebound was broad based. "However, investors are disappointed and expect moderation in the rally," he said.

He said that as FIIs persist with risk-off sparked by the likelihood that interest rates may not moderate and domestic earnings growth can slow down as per the initial Q3 results announced.





Will not allow demolition of skywalk for metro expansion : Mamata Banerjee

Kolkata, Jan 19 (IANS) : West Bengal Mamata Banerjee on Friday said that she will not allow any demolition of the skywalk to Dakshineswar Temple for expansion of Kolkata Metro. The Chief Minister said that the proposal virtually means demolition of the skywalk.

The Union Railways Ministry has proposed modification in the skywalk to the iconic Dakshineswar Temple for expansion of Kolkata Metro. The Chief Minister said that the proposal virtually means demolition of the skywalk.

Maha Speaker defends verdict, accuses Shiv Sena-UBT of 'lying'

Mumbai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar on Friday strongly defended his January 10 verdict on the disqualification of rival Shiv Sena MLAs and accused the Shiv Sena-UBT of indulging in "lies". Addressing the media soon after the SS-UBT's town hall meeting, the Speaker said that ever since he had delivered his ruling on January 10, there have been attempts to create misconceptions and spread half-truths, and hence felt compelled to clear the air. He outright denied all the allegations made by SS-UBT President and ex-Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray, ex-minister Adv. Anil Parab and constitu-

tional expert advocate Asim Sarode among others on various facets of his verdict. Narwekar rejected the SS-UBT's claims on the (undivided) party's manifesto, and said that there was no record of anything except the 1999 constitution with the Election Commission, as per its letter. "The ECI has given this to me in writing and for whatever I have said in the verdict, I have relied on the available records and documents. The EC has no record of the Shiv Sena's amended Constitution of 2018. The Shiv Sena-UBT is lying," he said. On the SS-UBT leaders' allegations that he had violated the SC directives and committed a "gross contempt of the apex court", Narwekar countered by saying

that "they have not specified what aspects I have not adhered to". "I have delivered by ruling as per the directives of the Supreme Court," asserted Narwekar, reading out several points of his verdict, SC rulings and EC communications to justify his contentions. He categorically stated that the SS-UBT had only shown certain documents submitted to the EC, but they did not read out the contents to prove what they were about, and said there is no evidence to prove that

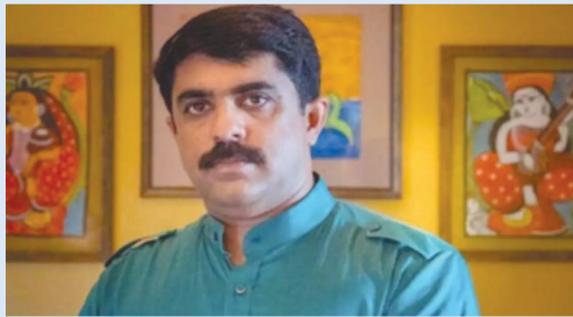


Thackeray had been elected for the top post in his party. Taking a jibe at the SS-UBT, Narwekar said that he was expecting that they would bring out some big wrongs he had committed in his decision at their mega-meeting, but nothing of the sort happened.

UCC applicable in Goa only as it didn't merge with Maharashtra : Vijai Sardesai

Panaji, Jan 19 (IANS) : Stating that Uniform Civil Code is applicable in Goa only because the coastal state didn't merge with Maharashtra, Goa Forward Party (GFP) on Friday demanded that the 'day' (January 16 -- Opinion Poll Day) should be recognised, at state level here. GFP President and MLA Vijai Sardesai was speaking during 'Opinion Poll Day' programme in South Goa. "If Goa was merged, then Uniform Civil Code would have not been applicable here. It would have been a small re-

gion of Maharashtra. UCC is now on the agenda of BJP government at Centre, they give the example of Goa showing its importance. There is no other state where UCC is functioning. Hence, this double-engine government should recognise 'Opinion Poll Day' and give state level importance to it," Sardesai, former deputy Chief Minister of Goa, said. He said that UCC is applicable in Goa only because Goans voted against merger in 1967. "There are enough reasons for the double-engine government to officially recognise January 16, as



Goa Opinion Poll Day. I will move resolution in the upcoming session of Goa Legislative Assembly for the same and will try that this day, having a lot of importance, is celebrated at an official level," he said. "Goa has a unique identity as Portuguese ruled the state for 450 years. As Goans, we have our own

history. We got liberation much later after India got Independence. Hindu, Christian and Muslim stay together here and we never witness communal riots. This uniqueness is because of our history. To protect this identity, our people voted against the merger.



'India has world's fourth strongest military, US most powerful'

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : India has the fourth strongest military globally while the US has the most powerful followed by Russia and China, according to the Global Firepower's recently released Military Strength Rankings for 2024. The rankings put Pakistan at number nine while Bhutan has the least powerful military in the world. The Global Firepower keeps track of defence-related information of 145 different countries. While ranking the military powers of these countries, it takes into account around 60 factors,

including the number of troops, military equipment, financial stability, geographic location, and available resources. These factors together determine a PowerIndex score, where lower scores indicate stronger military capabilities. The Global Firepower military strength report also examines how each nation's ranking has changed from one year to the next. The rankings placed South Korea at number five, the UK at number six, and Japan at number seven. Turkey, Pakistan and Italy were ranked number eight, nine and 10 respectively.



If I wasn't Shiv Sena President, why did BJP seek my support in 2014 and 2019, asks Thackeray

Mumbai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Shiv Sena-UBT President and former Maharashtra Chief Minister Uddhav Thackeray on Friday asked that if he was not the validly elected (undivided) party President, "then why did the Bharatiya Janata Party and Prime Minister Narendra Modi" seek his support in 2014 and 2019. Addressing the media in the "Peoples' Court" to analyse the recent ruling of Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar, Thackeray referred to the ruling in which the (undivided) Shiv

Sena party constitution of 1999 was upheld. "If that is true, then why did Prime Minister Modi ask me for support in 2014 and later in 2019? Why did Amit Shah come to my house for support... Why did the PM say that in the absence of my father, the late Balasaheb Thackeray, he always turns to me for guidance? With whose support did Devendra Fadnavis become the CM in 2014?" he thundered. Attacking the Speaker's verdict of January 10 on the disqualification of MLAs by the two rival party

factions, Thackeray demanded that the Governor should convene a special session of the state legislature. "Chief Minister Eknath Shinde should move a no-confidence against the Speaker in the special session... we shall support it... the Speaker must be removed," he declared. Throwing the gauntlet at Shinde-Narwekar, Thackeray challenged them "to come out in the open and the people will show you which is the real Shiv Sena".

Majority of drugs are supplied from Pakistan : J&K DGP

Jammu, Jan 19 (IANS) : Jammu and Kashmir's Director General of Police (DGP) R.R. Swain on Friday said that the majority of drugs in the Union Territory are being supplied from Pakistan. Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 12th Martyrs' Memorial Cricket tournament in Kathua, he said that about 6,000 brave hearts from different forces of the country have made the supreme sacrifice, and over 1600 of them are from the J&K Police alone. Speaking to the media on the sidelines of the ceremony, the DGP highlighted the comprehensive welfare schemes established and being successfully implemented for the families of J&K Police martyrs, which he said are well-organized and funded under the Police Contributory Fund.



MP CM says Chitrakoot to be developed in line with Ayodhya

Bhopal, Jan 19 (IANS) : Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Friday that Chitrakoot in Satna district, where Lord Ram stayed for 11 years during his exile, will be developed in line with Ayodhya. Yadav, who was on a visit to Chitrakoot on Friday, made the announcement after chairing a meeting with all stakeholders associated with the proposed 'Ram Van Gaman Path' project -- a circuit that covers parts of the route that Lord Ram had followed after he was sent to the exile. He said that a complete blueprint would be prepared for the development of Chitrakoot and 'Ram Van Gaman Path'. All sacred

places falling under the proposed 'Ram Van Gaman Path' would be developed with the consultation of priests, Yadav added. He also said that everyone has an opportunity to celebrate Diwali on January 22, the day scheduled for the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at Ram temple in Ayodhya. The Chief Minister's announcement came at a time when euphoria over the Ram temple is high across the country. The 'Ram Van Gaman Path' project proposal was made during the Kamal Nath-led Congress government in 2019 and an amount of Rs 22 crore was sanctioned for it. However, the project could not take off since then.

Bihar govt to give Rs 2 lakh each to 94 lakh poor families of state

Patna, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Bihar government on Friday decided to give Rs 2 lakh each to 94 lakh poor families in the state for self-employment. The decision was taken during the cabinet meeting where 18 proposals were passed on

Tuesday. Keeping in view of the Lok Sabha election this year, such a scheme is seen as a game changer for the Nitish Kumar-led Mahagathbandhan government. The proposal was passed in the winter session of Bihar Legislature held in November last year.



Over 100 schools closed, travel chaos expected due to severe cold in UK

London, Jan 19 (IANS) : More than 100 schools in Scotland and over 30 in England have been closed due to an Arctic cold front set to sweep across the UK this week, which is also expected to cause travel chaos. The UK Met Office has issued yellow warnings for snow and ice in Scotland, Northern Ireland, and parts of England and Wales, reports Xinhua news agency. The freezing weather is expected to continue until Friday. Temperatures may drop to freezing lows of -15 degrees

Celsius in parts of Scotland, according to the forecaster. "The UK is now in the grip of a cold plunge of Arctic air which has moved in from the north across the whole of the country," the national meteorological service said. By the end of Friday, more than 40 cm of snow may be seen on high ground in north-west Scotland, as wintry weather continues, the Met Office has forecast. Snow, sleet and rain are expected to continue blanketing northern parts of the UK, though there will be some sunshine.

Heavy frosts and freezing conditions are likely affecting virtually the entire country, with experts warning of treacherous pavements and roads. Earlier on Tuesday, the Met Office posted on social media: "Tonight could be the coldest January night for 14 years with temperatures possibly falling as low as -15C in snow covered parts of Scotland". Meanwhile, the National Highways issued a severe weather alert for snow affecting the North West, warning of "possible travel delays on roads with some stranded ve-

hicles and passengers". A few rail operators also urged travelers to "be careful as platforms and pathways may be slippery", and to pay close attention to the latest service information. An amber cold-health alert issued by the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) is currently in place for the whole of England until mid-day Friday. "The temperatures we will see leading into the week ahead can rapidly have a serious impact on the health of those over the age of 65, and those with pre-existing health conditions, as it increases



the risk of heart attacks, strokes and chest infections," said Agostinho Sousa from UKHSA. At around Tuesday night, there were also 20 flood warnings and 65 flood alerts in place in England. The lowest temperature so far this winter was -12.5 degrees, in Altnaharra, in December 2023. In January 2010, -22.3 degrees was recorded in the same Scottish Highlands hamlet.



2 children killed in Pakistan from Iran's airspace violation : Foreign Ministry

Islamabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Pakistani Foreign Ministry said on Friday that two children were killed and three girls were injured in the country due to Iran's violation of Pakistan's airspace. Pakistan strongly condemns the "unprovoked violation" of its airspace by Iran, the ministry said in a statement, adding that this violation of its sovereignty is "completely unacceptable and can have serious consequences". Xinhua news agency reported. Pakistan's strong protest has already been lodged with the concerned senior official in the Iranian Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tehran, said the statement. It is even more concerning that this illegal act has taken place despite the existence of several channels of communication between Pakistan and Iran, it added.

Additionally, the Iranian charge d'affaires has been called to the Pakistani Foreign Ministry to convey Pakistan's strongest condemnation of this blatant violation of its sovereignty and that the "responsibility for the consequences will lie squarely with Iran," the statement said. Pakistan has always said terrorism is a common threat to all countries in the region that requires coordinated action, said the statement. "Such unilateral acts are not in conformity with good neighbourly relations and can seriously undermine bilateral trust and confidence," the statement said. Iranian media on Friday reported that Iran "obliterated two key strongholds" of a terror group in Pakistan through precision missile and drone strikes.

Maha Congress gets cracking for LS polls with preparatory meets

Mumbai, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Maharashtra Congress has announced a series of preparatory meetings for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections across the state, officials said here on Friday. The division-level meetings, starting from Thursday (January 18), are to be held against the backdrop of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra (NJNY) launched by party MP Rahul Gandhi, which will culminate in Mumbai later. The first meeting for Vidarbha region, considered a party stronghold, will be held in Amravati on January 18, followed by Nagpur on January 20. Later, on January 23 it will shift for western Maharashtra in Pune, on January 24 for Konkan region at Bhiwandi. The attention will then focus on the North Maharashtra meeting at Dhule on January 27 and for Marathwada at Latur on January 29. Top leaders,

including AICC's state in-charge Ramesh Chennithala, state Congress President Nana Patole, Congress Legislative Party Leader Balasaheb Thorat, Leader of Opposition in Assembly Vijay Wadettiwar, Working Presidents M. Arif Naseem Khan and Chandrakant Handore, all former CMs like Sushil kumar Shinde, Ashok Chavan, Prithviraj Chavan, heads of allied organisations like Mahila, youth wings, and others will be present at these brainstormers in different divisions. The Congress, which bagged two Lok Sabha seats in 2014 and later just one in 2019, is making all-out efforts to improve its tally, even as the seat-sharing talks with the Maha Vikas Aghadi are also said to be in the final stages with Nationalist Congress Party (SP), and Shiv Sena (UBT).



Irregular crossings at EU borders in 2023 highest in 7 years

Brussels, Jan 19 (IANS) : Some 380,000 irregular border crossings were detected at the European Union's (EU) external borders in 2023, a 17-per cent rise from a year earlier and the highest annual total since 2016, the European Border and Coast Guard Agency (Frontex) said. Frontex said 2023 was the third consecutive year that the number of irregular border crossings into EU had

grown, reports Xinhua news agency. More than two out of five such crossings took place across the central Mediterranean route, with most of those departing from Tunisia and landing in Italy. The nearly 158,000 arrivals via this route last year represented a 49-per cent increase compared to 2022. The Western Balkan route accounted for 26 per cent of arrivals and the eastern Mediterranean route accounted for 16 per cent last year. Most arrivals were adult men,



Frontex said, whereas women and children took up 10 per cent respectively of the new arrivals. The previous flood of irregular border crossings into the EU was reported in 2016, with nearly 504,000 new arrivals, according to Frontex data.



Doctor lodges dowry complaint against husband, in-laws in UP

Lucknow, Jan 19 (IANS) : A city-based doctor, working with a private hospital and married for over six years, has accused her doctor husband and in-laws of harassing her for dowry. In her complaint, the woman alleged that even after paying over Rs 32 lakh to purchase a house worth Rs 1.47 crore in Delhi, her in-laws have evicted her out of the house because she refused to pay another Rs 20 lakh. A resident of Sushant Golf City area, the victim got married in 2017, and has a three-year-old daughter. Her husband, also a doctor, is posted in Ghaziabad. The woman has also accused her

father-in-law of touching her inappropriately when she would be alone at the house. She has also accused her husband of ignoring her complaints about the behaviour of her father-in-law. In her complaint, she stated that her father spent Rs 35 lakh during her wedding in 2017. "My husband and in-laws are greedy for dowry and they kept pressuring me to bring dowry from my father. In 2020, when I gave birth to a girl child, their behaviour towards me changed. They became abusive so much so that I had to shift to my father's house," she said.

Kerala HC objects to objection over gun in Bible scene in Malayalam film, says Hollywood films had it too

Kochi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Kerala High Court pointed out to increasing intolerance when it comes to matters of faith by referring to petition against a scene in an upcoming Malayalam film 'Antony' where a gun is placed in a Bible. "Should we be so intolerant that even for a passing reference to a book you should take up objection? Even if it is Bible, doesn't there need to be a negative reference or connotation for you to object," asked Justice Ramachandran. The Court remarked that

whatever be the holy text used in the scene, some section would be unhappy. "Bible is used to hide a gun so Christians are unhappy. If it is Gita, Hindus will become unhappy. If it is Quran, Muslims will be unhappy," the judge said. He added that such scenes were frequently there in English movies from 1960s and 70s. "Keeping a gun in a Bible is something that has been done umpteen times in English cinema in the 60s and 70s. It is just that Malayalees are doing it now," said the judge.



SL Navy arrests 10 TN fishermen for crossing into its waters

Chennai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Ten fishermen from Nagapattinam and Myladuthurai in Tamil Nadu have been arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy. They were arrested on Friday by an interceptor vessel of the Sri Lankan Navy at Point Calimeri (Kodiyakarai) for crossing International Maritime Border Line (IMBL). The fishermen had sailed from Nagapattinam

fishing harbour on January 13 in a mechanised fishing boat owned by Dharmapalan. The arrested fishermen were taken to Kangesenturai fishing harbour in Jaffna, Sri Lanka and handed over to the fisheries officials. They were subjected to a trail at Point Pedro and remanded to a Jaffna prison till January 29. Of the ten arrested, nine are from Nagapattinam while one is from Savadikuppam in Myladuthurai. The Sri Lankan



Navy has also apprehended mechanised fishing boats used by the arrested fishermen. According to the Sri Lankan Navy 243 fishermen were arrested in 2023 alone for crossing IMBL. 35 trawlers were also seized. A senior officer of the Fisheries department of Tamil Nadu told IANS that they have already intimated the state and central governments with the details of the arrested fishermen as also the mechanised boats seized from these boats.



Lalu won't attend Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya

Patna, Jan 19 (IANS) : RJD chief Lalu Prasad Yadav on Friday announced his decision to attend the Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22. Addressing reporters here, the former Bihar Chief Minister said: "I will not go to Ayodhya for the Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla." The RJD chief's announcement came on expected lines. BJP leaders have been appealing to opposition members to attend the highly-anticipated event.

Power struggle in K'taka Cong comes to fore: Ashoka asks Siddaramaiah to take a 'chill pill'

Bengaluru, Jan 19 (IANS) : A leadership row in the ruling Congress has come to the forefront in Karnataka, with Dr. Yathindra, son of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah, hinting at a power struggle within the party. The Karnataka BJP, taking potshots at Siddaramaiah on Friday over the development, asked him to take a "chill pill." It all began when Yathindra, while attending a rally in Hassan, stated that if the Congress wins the most number of Lok Sabha seats in Karnataka, Siddaramaiah would complete full term. "Lok Sabha elections would be fought under the leadership of Chief Minister Siddaramaiah. If the Congress wins the maximum number of seats, he would be the Chief Minister for the full term of five years as it would give him a boost," Yathindra stated. Yathindra added that the expenditure for the five guarantee schemes amounts to Rs 56,000



crore and no government in the state had spend this amount of money on such schemes. He maintained that the people's support was crucial to continue the Congress' guarantee schemes for five years. Leader of Opposition, R Ashoka ridiculing Yathindra's comments, stated on Friday, "Mr. CM Siddaramaiah, take a chill pill. If

you think you can impress your high command and save your chair by such rants and raves against Prime Minister Narendra Modi, then you are living in a fool's paradise. It is no longer a secret that your days are numbered and you will be shown the exit door after Lok Sabha elections. So take a chill pill. Keep calm and trust PM Modi."



Navy team to Chadar trek Ladakh's frozen Zaskar River

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : A team of Indian Navy's officers will trek the frozen Zaskar River in Ladakh. Admiral R. Hari Kumar, Chief of the Naval Staff (CNS) flagged off the Indian Navy Chadar Trek (Frozen Zaskar River, Ladakh) expedition at INS Shivaji on Friday. The CNS handed over the ceremonial Ice Axe to the team leader Cdr Navneet Malik and wished them a successful expedition. The team comprising 14

members would scale the summit at a height of 11,000 ft and unfurl the National flag and Naval Ensign, officials added. The Ministry of Defence said the expedition embodies the adventurous spirit of the Indian Navy and aims to cultivate a robust and resilient workforce capable of facing challenges and adverse weather conditions. Earlier, the Indian Navy had organised a Car Rally from the National War Memorial in New Delhi.

Two members of a family killed in Bihar

Patna, Jan 19 (IANS) : Two members of a family were killed by unidentified men in Bagaha subdivision of Bihar's West Champaran district, police said. The deceased were identified as Shobha Tiwari and her daughter Khusboo Tiwari. The incident came to light when Shobha's son, who is residing in Patna, tried to contact her on Friday night but his calls went unanswered. When no one responded to the repeated calls, he asked his uncle to visit the house. When Khusboo's uncle went to her house, it was locked from outside and no one was responding, after which he informed the local police about it.



New DIC appointed in IIM-C after his predecessor removed over sexual harassment charges

Kolkata, Jan 19 (IANS) : A new director-in-charge (DIC) in Indian Institute of Management-Calcutta (IIM-C), one of the most reputed management institutes in the country, has been appointed after his predecessor was removed over sexual harassment charges against him. Senior faculty member of the institute Saibal Chattopadhyay has taken charge as the new DIC with immediate effect, according to a statement dated January 16 which surfaced on Friday.

As per the statement, Chattopadhyay has replaced his predecessor Sahadeb Sarkar, against whom the internal complaints committee of the institute has received a complaint from a woman staff member. Sarkar has not only been removed from the chair of DIC but also has been relieved of all his duties with the institute. It is learnt that he has been removed as per the provision of the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013.

Gujarat HC acts on post-cataract surgery complications at hospital, next hearing on Feb 7

Ahmedabad, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Gujarat High Court on Friday took suo moto cognisance of reports regarding post-surgical complications faced by patients at the Mandal Ramanand Trust Hospital in Viramgam taluka of Ahmedabad district. The Bench, comprising Justices AS Supehia and Vimal Vyas responded to the reports and issued a notice to the Health Secretary and the Ahmedabad Rural Superintendent of Police. The court emphasised the need for appropriate care of the affected patients and mandated the government to submit a preliminary enquiry report. The case is scheduled for a hearing on February 7. In response to these developments, all surgical operations at the Ramanand Trust Hospital have been temporarily



halted. A thorough investigation into the matter revealed that 74 individuals underwent eye surgery between January 1 and January 10 at the facility. Of the 29 patients who underwent cataract surgery on January 10, a total of 17 subsequently reported a decrease in vision post-surgery.

Currently five individuals are receiving treatment at Asarwa Civil Hospital and 12 at the Ramanand Trust Hospital, which the Sevaniketan Trust manages. Of the affected patients, nine are from Ahmedabad district, 12 from Surendranagar district, and eight from Patan district.

Need some time to examine report on question if LMV licence holders can drive light transport vehicles : Centre to SC

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Union government on Friday apprised the Supreme Court that it will require some time to examine the draft report prepared by a government-appointed panel on the issue whether Light Motor Vehicle (LMV) licence holders require a separate endorsement to drive a transport vehicle of LMV class. A Constitution Bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) D.Y. Chandrachud asked the Centre to resolve the issue by April 16 this year and said that if the matter remains unresolved, it will proceed to conclude the hearing and announce the verdict. "Actually it's a part-heard matter. We will give you (the Union government) some time and if it is not

resolved at the level of government, we will proceed to hear the matter and lay down the law. Ultimately if the Parliament thereafter wants to intervene it can always do so since it is a statutory interpretation," CJI Chandrachud told Attorney General (AG) R. Venkataramani, the highest law officer of the Centre. The 5-judge bench, also comprising Justices Hrishikesh Roy, P.S. Narasimha, Pankaj Mithal, and Manoj Misra, said that it expects the draft report to be finalised within a period of three weeks and asked AG Venkataramani to place a copy of the final report on record by mid-February.



JMM workers shut shops, roads in Sahibganj over ED summons to Soren

Ranchi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM) workers took to the streets on Friday in protest against the Enforcement Directorate (ED) summons to Chief Minister Hemant Soren in connection with a money laundering case linked to an alleged land scam. On the JMM's call, Sahibganj district on Friday observed a complete shutdown as Hemant Soren represents the Barhet Assembly constitu-

ency in this district. Hundreds of party workers have been demonstrating on the streets in various areas of the district since morning and several major markets have also remained closed. JMM workers erected bamboo barricades early in the day at Patna Chowk, Imli Chowk, Barhet Bazaar, and the Sahibganj-Govindpur main road in Barhet. This led to disruption in vehicular movement at various locations. However, school buses and ambu-

lances were allowed to pass. The protesters expressed their anger against the Central government and the ED. According to the JMM, Hemant Soren is being harassed and humiliated through repeated summons from the ED, all orchestrated by the Central Government. On Tuesday, a torch procession was organised under the leadership of JMM's Sahibganj district President Shahjahan Ansari.

Two Rapido riders nabbed in snatching case in Delhi

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Two riders, working with Rapido Bike Taxi, were arrested for multiple snatchings in the national capital, an official said on Friday. The official said that both the accused, identified as Aman (22) and Pawan (21), both residents of Karawal Nagar area. The arrest came after a complainant Atul Tomar, who works as a Security Guard in Indusind Bank, Jangpura, reported that on Tuesday he came to Kashmere Gate area for his personal work. "At about 1 a.m., he was stationed in front of Ritz Cinema, Kashmere Gate. In the meantime, two boys came to him on a motorcycle and started talking to him. During the conversation, suddenly the pillion rider of the motorcycle snatched the mobile phone from the victim.



Indian-origin man in UK sentenced for gym thefts to fund lavish lifestyle

London, Jan 19 (IANS) : An Indian-origin man and his partner have been sentenced for breaking into gym lockers and stealing bank cards to pay for their lavish lifestyles in south east London. Ashley Singh (39) and Sophie Bruyca (20) of Widmore Road in Bromley, would visit gyms and rifle through victims' lockers as they got busy in their work-outs, the Metropolitan Police said on Friday. The pair would then max out their victims' credit cards on expensive tech and designer gear, before selling them on and using the cash to buy bags, shoes, holidays and a pedigree puppy. The duo was sentenced at Croydon Crown Court on January 10 to conspiracy to commit fraud by false repre-

sentation between January 2022 and January 2023 with a total value of 250,000 pounds. Singh was sentenced to three years' imprisonment while Bruyca received a 20 months sentence at a young offenders' institute, suspended for two years. The court also asked her to undergo a rehabilitation programme and complete 120 hours of unpaid work. The pair's spree was noticed by a local officer, who realised there was a pattern and flagged it to detectives who are experts in economic crime. A Lewisham-based team traced the pair's phones, cars, and faces on CCTV and linked them all together. Officers from the Metropolitan Police arrested them at Gatwick Airport on January 27, 2023 as they returned from Paris with 2,000 euros worth of designer

goods. At least 18 people were targeted in what the sentencing judge branded a "wicked conspiracy". The judge described the impact the pair's "wide-ranging spree" had had on people, including instances where people no longer felt safe around strangers, or had suffered professionally due to the stress. DC Luis Da Silva, from the Met's economic crime team that investigated this case, said: "We know Londoners are worried about theft. It's a horrible crime, and it causes a lot of stress, pain, and financial loss. That's why we take this crime seriously and a whole team of us were committed to catching Singh and Bruyca. "You



couldn't fail to be moved by the devastating impact their callous behaviour had on people, and we hope that by catching them this offers victims a little bit of solace." He urged anyone who has had something stolen to get in touch and said that the proceeds of the duo's crimes will be used to help compensate the victims. There were 18 fraud reports in total, with 14 in the Metropolitan area, one from Sussex, one from Hertfordshire and two reports from Cambridgeshire.



IDF raids offices of high-ranking Hamas leaders in Gaza's Khan Younis

Tel Aviv, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) announced that its troops raided the offices of high-ranking Hamas leaders in southern Gaza's Khan Younis city. The raids on Friday night were carried out by the IDF's Command Brigade. According to the IDF, the targeted action came after Hamas carried out an attack against its troops in Khan Younis from Nasser Hospital.

The Command Brigade then launched a large offensive on Hamas infrastructure in new areas of Khan Younis, which included a series of airstrikes before the troops moved in. The strikes targeted several Hamas sites, as well as the headquarters of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad in the area, according to the IDF. The military however, did not name the Hamas leaders whose offices were targeted.



Trumps kicks off 2024 bid with Iowa win; Ramaswamy gives up

Washington, Jan 19 (IANS) : America's twice-impeached former President, who is also facing more than 90 criminal charges, kicked off his bid for the Republican party's nomination for President with a thumping victory in the first of the primaries held Friday in Iowa. Former President Donald Trump's convincing win in the Iowa caucuses -- 98 of the state's 99 counties -- bore testimony to his continued dominance of the Republican party and showed it was not

yet ready for someone else, such as one of his remaining rivals in the race - Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, and former Ambassador to US Nikki Haley, who came second and third respectively. Indian American entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy's long-shot campaign did not last the night as he announced he was dropping out of the race and endorsed Trump. Trump called his victory a "landslide". DeSantis and Haley are both spinning their Iowa performance as proof the nomination is

a two-person race between either one of them and Trump. But, the reality is, the Republican nomination contest remains unambiguously a one-person race. Iowa caucuses are a unique feature of the US presidential election process. The state is the first to vote in the process. But, starting this year, the first only for Republicans; Democrats have announced a parallel schedule for their primaries, kicking it off in South Carolina.



Climate change may claim 14.5 mn lives by 2050: WEF

Davos, Jan 19 (IANS) : Climate change threatens to cause an additional 14.5 million deaths and \$12.5 trillion in economic losses worldwide by 2050, according to a World Economic Forum (WEF) report published here. The report, jointly compiled by the WEF and the consulting firm Oliver Wyman, is based on "scenarios developed by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change on the most likely trajectory

for the planet's rising average temperature, 2.5 to 2.9 degrees Celsius over pre-industrial levels", Xinhua news agency quoted a WEF statement as saying. The report analysed six major consequences of climate change: floods, droughts, heat waves, tropical storms, wildfires and rising sea levels. Flooding alone is estimated to cause 8.5 million deaths by 2050, posing "the highest acute risk of climate-induced mortality", according to the study.

Droughts, as the second leading cause of climate-related mortality, are forecast to claim 3.2 million lives. Heat waves, on the other hand, are expected to cause the highest economic losses, an estimated \$7.1 trillion by 2050. The report warned that climate crisis will further exacerbate global health inequality and the most vulnerable populations will suffer the most. Regions such as Africa and southern Asia will remain particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change, due to their limited resources such as infrastructure and essential medical equipment. The WEF, in the report, called on global stakeholders to take decisive and strategic action to reduce emissions and mitigate the negative health impacts of climate change. "Recent progress will be lost unless critical emission reduction and mitigation measures are improved, and decisive global action is taken to build climate resilient and adaptable health systems," said Shyam Bishen, head of the Centre for Health and Healthcare and member of the Executive Committee at the WEF.



UN General Assembly President to visit India

United Nations, Jan 19 (IANS) : UN General Assembly President Dennis Francis is to visit India later this month after attending the Nonaligned and Group of 77 summits in Uganda, according to his spokesperson Monica Grayley. She told reporters on Friday that he is scheduled to visit India and China after his trip from

January 17 to 21 to Kampala for the summits. The itinerary for the India visit was not immediately available. Security Council reform, South-South Cooperation and the UN's sustainable development goals are likely to figure in his interactions with officials in India.

Imran Khan, wife Bushra Bibi indicted in 'un-Islamic' marriage case

Rawalpindi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder Imran Khan and his wife Bushra Bibi were indicted by a local court in the "un-Islamic" nikah (marriage deed) case on Friday, a media outlet reported. Imran, the former Prime Minister who was removed from power in April 2022, and his wife have denied all charges in the case registered by Bushra's former husband, Khawar Maneka, last month, The News re-

ported. Senior Civil Judge Qudratullah read out the charges in the court set up in Rawalpindi's Adiala Jail, with the PTI supreme leader in his presence. However, Bushra did not appear, which annoyed the judge as previous indictments were postponed because of her absence. During the Tuesday's hearing the court expressed displeasure about Bushra's absence and questioned how she could leave without the court's permission.



China's population declines for second straight year

Beijing, Jan 19 (IANS) : China's population declined for a second consecutive year in 2023, while the birthrate has also plunged to a new record low, the country's National Bureau of Statistics (NBS) announced on Friday. According to the NBS, China's population fell in 2023 to 1.409 billion, down some 2.08 million people from the previous year, CNN reported. The Bureau also confirmed that the country's birth rate had

dropped to a new record low of 6.39 births per 1,000 people, down from 6.77 a year earlier and the lowest level since the founding of Communist China in 1949. Some 9.02 million babies were born, compared with 9.56 million babies in 2022, it said. China's population had declined for the first time in decades in 2022. According to analysts, this was the first drop since the 1961 Great Chinese Famine, when millions of people died.

Shamar Joseph has bright future for the West Indies : Kraigg Brathwaite

Adelaide, Jan 19 (IANS) : Though West Indies lost to Australia by ten wickets in the Test series opener at the Adelaide Oval, captain Kraigg Brathwaite heaped rich praise on fast-bowler Shamar Joseph, who put up a bright all-round performance in his debut match in the format. Joseph became just the 14th player in the history of Tests, and the first from the West Indies, to take a five-wicket haul on debut, including taking Steve Smith out on his first ball in the format. With the bat, he made 36 and 15 as a number eleven batter in both innings of West Indies' batting.



Glenn Maxwell set to quit Melbourne Stars captaincy role

Melbourne, Jan 19 (IANS) : Australia all-rounder Glenn Maxwell has decided to relinquish the captaincy of the Melbourne Stars. The announcement comes in the wake of the Stars' failure to secure a spot in the finals for the fourth consecutive year, says a report. According to cricket.com.au Maxwell shared his decision with the Stars' squad after a narrow seven-run defeat to the Hobart Hurricanes in their final game of KFC BBL 13. Despite a commendable effort in the middle of the season, where they secured four consecutive victo-



ries, the Stars stumbled in their last three games, sealing their fate outside the finals race. The 33-year-old Maxwell took charge of the Stars ahead of BBL 08, succeeding John Hastings as captain. In his five seasons at the helm, Maxwell led the team to the final in his first two seasons but couldn't secure the elusive title, succumbing to the Renegades and the Sixers in BBL 08 and BBL 09, respectively. Maxwell's captaincy record stands at 35 wins and 31 losses, with the dynamic all-rounder missing the entire BBL 12 season due to a broken leg.



Indian Chess GMs sound warning bugle at Tata Steel Masters for Candidates

Chennai, Jan 19 (IANS) : Indian chess Grandmasters (GM) have sounded the warning bugle at the ongoing Tata Steel Masters chess tournament at The Netherlands which could be termed as a 'half-Candidates Tournament'. Defeating the reigning World Chess Champion GM Ding Liren or humbling the once title challenger GM Ian Nepomniachtchi or holding the current Tata Steel Masters title GM Anish Giri are some of the notable achievements of the three young Indian GMs - Vidit Santosh Gujrathi, R. Praggnanandhaa, and D. Gukesh.

World Champion Liren, after drawing his first round against Gujrathi, tasted Indian blood in the third round against Gukesh but was defeated by Praggnanandhaa in the fourth round. On his part, Gukesh, who had lost to host country GM and the defending champion Giri in the fourth round, humbled the much higher rated Nepomniachtchi in the fifth round. At the end of fifth round, Gujrathi scored 2.5 points drawing all his games against players like Liren, Giri, Nepomniachtchi, Jorden Van Foreest, and GM Max Warmerdam. Gukesh is also with 2.5 points

while Praggnanandhaa with three points is trailing the leader Giri who has four points. With five out of the eight GMs who have qualified to play in the Candidates Tournament in the fray, Tata Steel Masters could be termed as half-a-Candidates Tournament. While the Candidates Tournament is a double round robin event, the Tata Steel Masters is a single round event. Apart from the three Indian GMs, the other two Candidates qualifiers are Nepomniachtchi and GM Alireza Firouzja. Firouzja will be playing against Gujrathi in round seven, Gukesh in round 11, and Praggnanandhaa in round 13.



CHAMPIONS

India aim for winning start in Men's U19 WC with opener against Bangladesh

Bloemfontein, Jan 19 (IANS) It is that time of the year when youngsters will be aiming to leave their mark in the Men's U19 World Cup. India, the defending champions, enter the 2024 edition of the competition to make a winning start against Bangladesh in their tournament opener at the Mangaung Oval on Saturday.

India have been the most successful team in this showpiece event, winning the World Cup in 2000, 2008, 2012, 2018 and 2022. Their preparation for the upcoming tournament included a semi-final appearance at the ACC U19 Asia Cup, and winning the tri-series featuring South Africa and Afghanistan. They will need to be careful of

Bangladesh, who defeated them in the Asia Cup semi-final. Captain Uday Saharan top scored with 112 against the Proteas in the tri-series final, though it was a washed-out affair. Saharan was also the top-scorer in their official World Cup warm-up game against Australia (74). "Born in Rajasthan, Uday moved to Punjab and has played his

cricket there. He has received a lot of support from his father and even the Punjab Cricket Association has invested heavily in him." "We'll see him play at No. 4 and 5. He played well in the tri-series featuring South Africa and Afghanistan recently and scored a century against South Africa.



Asia Olympic Shotgun Qualifiers : Two women, one man, in top six after day one of skeet qualification

New Delhi, Jan 19 (IANS) : With the Paris 2024 Olympics quota places on the line, at least two Indian women and one man, have ended day one of qualifications of the skeet competition at the Asia Olympic Qualification Shotgun in Kuwait City, Kuwait, within the top six. Ganemat Sekhon shot 71 for her three rounds to place second, while Maheshwari Chauhan shot 70 for third spot in women's skeet, even as Anant Jeet Singh Naruka (72) ended the day in fourth in the men's event. There are two Paris quota places available in each of the events and one country can only take one quota place. India are search-

ing for their first Paris quota in Skeet. The Indian Shooting squad has so far bagged a record 17 Paris quota places thus far. India's number one Ganemat, a winner of four world cup medals in Olympic events, was the most successful Indian on the day after posting rounds of 24, 24 and 23. She was one behind Gao Jinmei of China and one ahead of Maheshwari, who had rounds of 23, 23 and 24, to stay in contention. Raiza Dhillon was only slightly behind in eighth with a score of 67, a point below the top-six mark. In men's skeet, another Indian number one Anant Jeet Singh Naruka, began with a perfect round of 25.



I've accepted it's going to be hard, says Rehan Ahmed ahead of England's Test tour of India

Abu Dhabi, Jan 19 (IANS) : Ahead of England's Test tour of India starting on January 25 in Hyderabad, young leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed said he has accepted the fact that it will be chal-

lenging for him to excel in the sub-continental conditions of the upcoming series. Ahmed is one of the four spinners in England's Test squad alongside Jack Leach, Tom Hartley, and Shoaib Bashir.

Australian Open: Djokovic dazzles, charges past Etcheverry

Melbourne, Jan 19 (IANS) : Novak Djokovic continued his quest for an 11th Australian Open title with a commanding victory in the third round. Facing off against Tomas Martin Etcheverry on

Friday, the world No. 1 delivered a masterclass performance, triumphing 6-3, 6-3, 7-6(2) inside the iconic Rod Laver Arena. Djokovic's flawless performance showcased his all-around brilliance, with a strategic focus on Etcheverry's backhand proving decisive. The Serbian maestro did not concede a single break point.



Hockey Olympic Qualifiers: Defensive Japan break Indian hearts with 1-0 win, claim Olympic berth

Ranchi, Jan 19 (IANS) : The Indian women's hockey team attacked in waves, applied full press and earned several penalty corners but the only thing could not do was score as Japan survived many anxious moments to emerge 1-0 winner in the Women's FIH Hockey Olympic Qualifiers.