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### Australian Open: Bopanna wins men's doubles title with Ebden, becomes oldest major winner

India's Rohan Bopanna made history on Saturday, becoming the oldest man in the Open Era to win a major men's doubles title.. 12



### BRS chief KCR to take oath as Gajwel MLA on February 1

BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao will take the oath as Gajwel MLA on February 1 in the presence of Telangana Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar in the Assembly. 02



### Very concerning: Elon Musk on new Apple App Store changes in EU

X owner Elon Musk on Saturday joined the debate around Apple's App Store changes in the European Union (EU) ahead of the Digital Markets Act (DMA) in March, saying these... 07

## World is witnessing mettle of India's daughters : PM Modi

New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said that the world is witnessing that the daughters of India are proving their mettle in every field be it land, sea, air or space. "There was a time when the role of women in society was limited to cultural arrangements and organisations. But today the entire world is witnessing the daughters of India are proving their mettle in every field: land, sea, air or space," the Prime Minister said while addressing the annual NCC PM rally at the Cariappa Parade Ground in New Delhi. He said that the historic 75th Republic Day was dedicated to Nari Shakti. "The country showcased the strides made by the daughters of India in every walk of life," Modi said. He highlighted the determination of the women par-

ticipants in the Republic Day parade and said that it is not a result of overnight success but the dedicated efforts of the last 10 years. "Nari has always been considered as Shakti in Indian traditions," Modi remarked as he mentioned valiant warriors like Rani Lakshmi Bai, Rani Chennamma and Queen Velu Nachiyar who crushed the British. He said that removing all obstacles in the entry of women into sectors which were once barred or limited and gave examples of opening up the front line of all three defence forces, permanent commission for women in defence, and command roles and combat positions. "Be it Agniveer or fighter pilots the participation of women is only increasing," Modi said. He also informed about the opening of admission for girl students in Sainik Schools. "Number of women in the Central Armed Forces has more than doubled in the last 10 years, while states are being encouraged to recruit more women in the state police force," Modi said. He also talked about the change in mentality of calling the border village as the last village. "Now these villages are the 'first villages' the 'Vibrant Villages'. These villages are going to become big tourist centers in the coming days," Modi said. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Defence said that Subedar Preeti Rajak, Trap Shooter, has created history as she has become the First woman Subedar of the Indian Army.



### CM directs officials to prepare estimation on promise of one tola gold

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has directed the officials to prepare an estimated budget to provide one Tola Gold as well as one lakh cash through Kalyanamastu scheme. The Congress party, during the recent Assembly elections, had promised ten gram gold to each eligible woman at the time of marriage, besides Rs 1 lakh cash under the Kalyanamastu scheme. The Chief Minister held a review meeting with BC, Minority and Tribal Welfare departments at Secretariat here on Saturday and discussed various issues, including the promise of one Tola Gold.

Ministers Ponnam Prabhakar, Seethakka, Government Adviser Shabbir Ali and officials of concerned departments were present. Revanth also asked the officials to provide full details regarding Gurukula schools running in rented buildings in the State. Officials were directed to estimate the total budget required for running all types of government welfare hostels in Telangana and to release the budget through green channel based on the estimated cost. "At first, you can identify available lands and prepare an estimated report for the construction of own buildings where these are required," the Chief Minister said.



### KTR accuses congress govt of "bulldozing" self-respect of muslims

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : BRS working president KT Rama Rao has accused the Congress government, headed by Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy, of "bulldozing" the self-respect and honour of minorities, especially Muslim in Telangana State. Addressing a meeting with the BRS minority leaders from across the State at Telangana Bhavan here on Saturday, KT Rama Rao said that the Congress govern-

ment had adopted the BJP's "bulldozer" policy against the minorities. While BJP govts are demolishing the properties belonging to minorities in their States, in Telangana, Revanth Reddy's Govt is "Bulldozing" the self-respect of Muslims, he alleged. "Congress is in revenge mode against Muslims who supported BRS in Assembly elections."

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### Sharmila accuses CM Jagan of neglecting irrigation projects

Prakasam, Jan.27 (IANS) : Newly appointed Andhra Pradesh Congress Committee president Y S Sharmila today lashed out at the YSRCP government led by YS Jagan Mohan Reddy for being responsible for the washing away of the Gundlakamma project due to its criminal negligence. She also said the project constructed by late YS Rajashekhara Reddy regime was left to the winds.

### BRS would have formed govt had it got four lakh more votes : Harish rao

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Former minister Harish Rao today said if four lakh more votes had come to their party in the assembly elections, the government would have been formed by their BRS party. Harish Rao said. Speaking at the BRS gratitude meeting in Siddipet district. Harish Rao said, "in the assembly election, we got only 1.8 per cent less votes. We have not been completely rejected by the people, we have won 39 assembly seats. This is the third time in the history of South India that no government has come to power," he said. The party activists told Harish Rao that Dalit Bandhu, BC Bandhu and Griha Lakshmi schemes had troubled the BRS



party a lot and added that they had failed to propagate their government's schemes. He also criticised that the Congress party's attitude was a lie in its propaganda then and added

### FILM ACTOR

### VENKATESH MEETS CM REVANTH

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Film actor Venkatesh, his brother and producer D Suresh Babu paid a courtesy call on Chief Minister Revanth Reddy at his residence here on Saturday. This is the first time that

the film actor Venkatesh has met Revanth Reddy after becoming the Chief Minister of Telangana State. Later, former MLA and BRS leader Teegala Krishna Reddy also called.



### We will win in the Lok Sabha elections : Jagadish Reddy

Nalgonda, Jan 27 (IANS) : Nalgonda assembly Constituency level BRS meeting was held in the district headquarters. Former Minister Jagadish Reddy was the guest of honour at the event. Speaking on the occasion, He made it clear that the BRS party will emerge victorious in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

Continued on pg 02

### Amit Shah's state visit cancelled

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Union Home Minister Amit Shah's visit to Telangana State has been cancelled. BJP State president Kishan Reddy revealed that the visit of Amit Shah on Sunday was cancelled due to some urgent work. He said the party meetings scheduled to be held in Karimnagar, Hyderabad and Mahabubnagar districts were also cancelled due to the cancellation of Amit Shah's visit.





## We will win in the Lok Sabha elections : Jagadish Reddy

Continued From pg 01

He expressed hope that the Telangana community would be ready to correct the mistakes made in the recently held elections. He also said that the ruling party leaders were threatening to attack people with slippers as they were not able to implement the promises. "The demands for loan waiver and rythu bandhu are from the people," he said while asking what happened to the ? 2 lakh loan waiver promised to be implemented on the occasion of the birth anniversary of the congress party chief Sonia Gandhi. He warned that Nalgonda district had taught the struggles of the original Telangana community and added that he would fight for the implementation of the government's promises from such a district. He alleged that the ruling Congress party, which had colluded with the BJP soon after coming to power, had initiated no-confidence motions against the municipal chairpersons. He said that the people of Suryapet, which had exposed such illegal alliances, had stopped the illicit

relationship between the Congress and the BJP. He said that the Congress and the BJP, which have forged alliances at the national level and regional levels, had come out in the open on the issue of defective agreements and municipal no-confidence motions in the assembly elections. Reddy said that KCR will visit Nalgonda district soon to prepare the party rank and file for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The meeting was presided over by former MLA Kancharla Krishna Reddy, while district party president and former MLA N Ravindra Kumar, Nalgonda and Bhonagiri ZP chairpersons Banda Narendra Reddy, MLC Kotireddy, former legislators Gadhari Kishore Kumar, N Bhaskar Rao, BRS leaders Kancharla Krishna Reddy and Chada Kishan Reddy were present at the meeting. Borra Sudhakar, Tandu Saidulu Goud, Sahadeva Reddy, Karim Pasha, Pankaj Yadav, Tipparthi, Kanagal, Nalgonda mandals, Nalgonda town presidents Palreddy Ravinder



## CASTE CENSUS IN STATE WILL BEGIN SOON : REVANTH

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy has informed that caste census will be taken up soon in Telangana. He directed the officials concerned to take necessary steps for caste enumeration.

The Chief Minister said his government is committed to take up the caste census as per the promise given to the people before the Assembly elections. He held a review meeting on BC, Minority and Tribal Welfare departments at the Secretariat here on Saturday

and discussed various issues. During the meeting, officials were also directed to implement the Mahatma Jyothiba Phule Overseas Scholarship scheme more effectively. "With effective implementation of Overseas Scholarship scheme,

more deserving students can benefit than the present. Based on the rankings of universities abroad, top universities should be identified and a framework should be prepared. Students who are going to study in these universities should be advised to give first priority to avail the benefits of the scheme," Revanth Reddy told the officials.

The Chief Minister also said all educational institutions of SC, ST and BC welfare and Gurukul should be set up as an integrated education hub instead of being separated at different places. Moreover, the proposals should be prepared to build an integrated hub for the each Assembly constituency, he said and asked the officials to identify suitable places for the construction of education hub in all the Assembly constituencies. "If it is not possible to construct an integrated education hub at the constituency level, the land should be identified at another town or mandal center in the same segment as an alternative," he said.

## KTR accuses congress govt of "bulldozing" self-respect of muslims

Continued From pg 01

KTR asserted The BRS working president claimed that communal tension has resurfaced due to the Congress returning to power, citing recent incidents in Sangareddy, Nalgonda, and other places on January 22. He criticised the Congress government for failing to handle these incidents appropriately, highlighting a case in Daulatabad where a Muslim family, including a 5-year-old, was allegedly attacked. KT Rama Rao has accused the Congress government of wrongly booking cases against innocent youths and not taking proper action against the troublemakers. Referring to a prediction made

during a press conference on November 28, 2023, KTR stated that BRS had foreseen a resurgence of communal tension and violence if Congress came to power. Asserting that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, holding the Home Portfolio, has not initiated an inquiry into the incidents, KTR criticised the lack of a review meeting or direct communication with district SPs to address the reported violence. He reminded that the previous BRS Government had promptly addressed similar incidents with seriousness and caution. KTR emphasized the truly secular nature of the BRS party and its previous government, expressing gratitude to voters who supported them. Presenting statistics, he highlighted

BRS's success in winning seats with substantial Muslim populations in Telangana. However, he noted that the Congress party is harboring resentment towards minorities due to their support for BRS in the Assembly elections, suggesting a continuous "revenge mode" against them since the declaration of election results and the formation of the new government. "BRS is genuinely secular, and the government it led until 50 days ago reflected this commitment. Minorities not only appreciated BRS's secular approach, but also rewarded the party with their votes," he emphasized. Sharing statistics, KTR highlighted that out of 119 Assembly constituencies, approximately 40 seats in

Telangana have more than 10 percent Muslim voters. "BRS has secured victory in 18 of these seats with over 10 percent Muslim voters, while MIM won 7 seats. Congress and BJP each claimed 8 seats, primarily due to the division of minority votes and polarization," he explained. Furthermore, in Greater Hyderabad, with 24 Assembly seats and a combined Muslim population of nearly 27 percent, BRS won 16 seats, MIM won 7, BJP secured one seat in Gosha Mahal, and Congress scored zero. In six other seats - Boath, Siddipet, Patancheru, Chevella, Uppal & Balkonda - where the Muslim population is over 8%, BRS emerged victorious in all. "These statistics underscore the significant

role Muslim voters played in BRS's victory in almost 24 out of the 39 seats we won. In the remaining 15 seats, where the minority population is between 2.5-6.6%, BRS garnered support from all minority communities," he claimed. Expressing gratitude, KTR stated, "BRS is thankful to all the voters who trusted us and rejected the false propaganda of Congress." He criticized the Congress party for the absence of Muslim representation in the Telangana Cabinet. "RSS-ideologue Revanth Reddy assumed office as Chief Minister on December 7, 2023. For the first time in the history of Telugu States since 1953.



## People throng Major temples across Telangana

Hyderabad, Jan.27 (IANS) : All major temples across the Telangana State were thronged with heavy rush on Saturday. Due to consecutive holidays, the people made a beeline to the temples in the State. Several important temples, including Yadadri, Vemulawada, Bhadradri, Bhadrakali and Basara in Telangana were flocked by the devotees from the early hours.

## Only rivalry, not enmity in politics : Vinod Kumar

Karimnagar, Jan 27 (IANS) : BRS leader and former MP B Vinod Kumar opined that in politics, there should be only rivals and not enemies. Politicians should learn this from sportsmen, he said. Inaugurating a badminton tournament organized by Karimnagar Club at the Indoor stadium, Ambedkar Stadium here on Saturday, Vinod Kumar said to win and lose was natural in sports. The players, who lost the game, would practice hard and try to win

again. The players, who would take win and lose equally, would excel in sports, he said and advised politicians to learn from sportsmen and take win and lose equally but not to develop enmity. The BRS government gave top priority for the welfare of sportsmen during its ten years regime. When he was MP, he sanctioned synthetic track for athletic players and it was laid in Karimnagar regional sports schools by spending Rs 7 crore.



## BRS chief KCR to take oath as Gajwel MLA on February 1

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : BRS chief K Chandrashekar Rao will take the oath as Gajwel MLA on February 1 in the presence of Telangana Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar in the Assembly. Elections for the Telangana Assembly were held in November, and the results were declared on December 3. The majority of MLAs took the oath on December 9, presided over by pro-term Speaker Akbaruddin Owaisi. However, KCR couldn't attend the oath-taking ceremony as he suffered a hip fracture after slipping in the washroom at his Erravalli farmhouse in Medak on December 8.



## Telangana among high prevalence States for child marriages

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : With Telangana figuring among high prevalence States for child marriages in the country, with the State's average being higher than the national average, the State machinery is taking steps to end the practice by 2030. Telangana is one among eight States where the prevalence of child marriage is high. According to the report of Na-

tional Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) 2021, the number of child marriages reported in Telangana were 25 in 2017, 24 in 2018, 35 in 2019, 60 in 2020 and 57 in 2021. As per the National Family Health Survey 5 (NFHS 2019-21), Telangana's child marriage average stood at 23.5 percent against the national average of 23.3 percent. Keeping this in mind, the State government has intensified efforts to ensure that minor children

in the State were not married before the legal age. Recently, the Women and Child Development (WCD) department, State Legal Services Authority (SLSA) and TS Commission for Protection of Child Rights (SCPCR) along with Bachpan Bachao Andolan (BBA) discussed the various challenges and solutions in combating child marriage and child sexual abuse.







**Ram, Sita had meat and parotta, writes CPI Kerala Legislator, withdraws post after protest**

**Kochi, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Following strong protests from several quarters, first time CPI Legislator from Thrissur, P Balachandran on Saturday apologized for a controversial social media post on his Facebook page where he said that Lord Ram, Laxman and Sita ate meat and parotta (layered flatbread). Balachandran's post appeared on Saturday evening and after a few hours he himself withdrew it. In a note that he put out on Saturday he rendered an apology for putting up the post. He added that he at times pens stories and he had put up one such on his social media space that he wrote long ago, but after his friends and well-wishers informed him that it might hurt Hindu sentiments, he withdrew the same. The Thrissur District BJP President, KK Anish Kumar said, "Such offensive things can only be written by a Communist who has scant respect for our culture and they will go to any extent to get a few votes from those who propagate terrorism."

**NMC's advice to nix bond policy based on 7 case studies; of them 3 are from MP**

**Bhopal, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The National Medical Commission's (NMC) recommendation to states and Union Territories to scrap the 'seat-leaving bond' policy in medical colleges has been made on the basis of seven case studies brought before it between 2020 and 2023. Out of these seven cases studies, three are from Madhya Pradesh as the state Government has fixed a bond amount of Rs. 30 lakh for students who wish to leave their course midway. This policy is prevalent in both government-run and private medical colleges. Out of the three case studies from Madhya Pradesh, one is the tragic case of Dr. Aakanksha Maheshwari, a 24-year-old junior doctor from Gwalior. Dr. Aakanksha Maheshwari was pursuing her PG in paediatrics, and wanted to quit mid-session. She committed suicide at her hostel room in Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College (GMC) in January 2023, as she was unable to pay the bond amount of Rs 30 lakh. In her suicide note on WhatsApp, Dr. Maheshwari had written to her father, "Sorry Papa, if I had money, I could have left the seat." The second incident from Madhya Pradesh that became a part of the NMC's case study took place in 2020. An MS general surgery student wanted to take leave as his father had been hurt in an accident and had been hospitalized. However, instead of helping or being sympathetic to his cause he was threatened by his seniors either to provide a substitute or resign. According to the NMC's notification issued to the Principal Secretary, Health, Madhya Pradesh Government on January 19, "The student had to resign under mental stress after paying Rs. 30 lakh." The NMC's notification, a copy of which is available with the IANS further read, "The student re-



joined the college later by signing a fresh seat-leaving bond." In the third case related to a medical college in Madhya Pradesh, a female student from the Northeast who was pursuing MS general surgery faced mental harassment due to ragging and a toxic working environment. She had to leave the course midway after paying a hefty amount of Rs. 30 lakh as 'seat leaving bond' in 2022, which was against the principles of natural justice. Therefore, the NMC's recommendation for scrapping the 'seat-leaving bond' comes as a ray of hope for medical students pursuing their MBBS or PG degrees in Madhya Pradesh and around the country. The concept of seat leaving bond was started to secure commitment, discourage abrupt resignations, and address the issue of seat blocking and wastage of medical seats. The NMC's study also includes two incidents from

medical colleges in Maharashtra, and one each in Uttar Pradesh and Telangana. Medical students including junior doctors in Madhya Pradesh have been demanding nixing of the bond policy for several years as it has affected the lives of many medical students. The MP Government, however, is yet to make any announcement in this regard. A junior doctor in Bhopal's Gandhi Medical College, the biggest medical institution of Madhya Pradesh, Dr. Akash Soni, who is also pursuing his PG, told IANS, "In April 2023, we submitted our recommendation to the state government saying that students should be given ample time to decide after first counseling. Now, let's see what the state government decides."



**Ahmedabad Police seize illegal e-cigarettes, arrest two**

**Ahmedabad, Jan 27 (IANS) :** In a crackdown on illegal e-cigarettes, the Ahmedabad crime branch police in Kalupur arrested two men for possessing contraband worth Rs 9.42 lakh. The operation unfolded in the bustling area of Gandhi Road in Ahmedabad. Acting on a tip-off about a suspect transporting e-cigarettes near Valanda Ni Haveli on Gandhi Road, the police initiated surveillance of the specified location. Their vigilance paid off when they spotted a man, later identified as Azim Shaikh, 25, from Kalupur, carrying a bag full of e-cigarettes. Shaikh, upon questioning, revealed that he had acquired the e-cigarettes from a store on Gandhi Road. Furthering their investigation, the police conducted a raid at Arihant Kitchen, where they uncovered a significant stash of e-cigarettes. A total of 628 e-cigarettes, valued at approximately Rs 9.42 lakh, were recovered from the premises. The shop, located in the heart of the city, is owned by Manoj Maniar, a 34-year-old resident of Meghaninagar.

**Toll-free Mumbai Coastal Road Project 85% done; may partly open by Jan-end**

**Mumbai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The upcoming Mumbai Coastal Road Project (MCRP) first phase is 85 per cent completed even as a part of it is likely to be opened for traffic by the month-end, while the entire project is slated for completion by May, officials said here on Saturday. In a status report, the BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) said the MCRP is 10.58 kms, with 8-lanes running from the Princess Street Flyover on Marine Drive till the southern end of the Bandra Worli Sea Link, with 6 lanes inside the tunnel segment,

and a dedicated lane for bus in both directions. The project is costing Rs 13,984 crore, comprising Rs 9,384 crore construction cost and the remaining as administrative charges, physical, water, sewerage, cost contingencies, supervision, compensation paid for mangroves, shifting utilities, etc. Of the total work in the first phase, the progress is 84.08 per cent (physical) and 79.84 per cent (financial), tunnel boring (100 per cent), land reclamation (97 per cent), constructing a 7.47 kms long sea wall (84 per cent).



**Teen couple held in Lucknow for robbing people to collect money for their wedding**

**Lucknow, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A young couple has been arrested for snatching bags, phones and other valuable items in Lucknow in order to collect money for their wedding. The couple have been arrested, along with their aide, who used to stand guard near the crime scene to alert them. He posed as a cop. The three have been identified as Shivam Rai, Himanshu Yadav and Khushi (all of them aged 19), and they had recently come to Lucknow from Ghazipur. Shivam has a criminal history with seven cases against him while his girlfriend, Khushi, and their aide, Himanshu, have three cases each against them.



**SC shields Umar Ansari from arrest in 2022 hate speech case**

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court on Saturday granted an interim protection from arrest to Umar Ansari, son of gangster-turned-politician Mukhtar Ansari, who was chargesheeted by Uttar Pradesh Police for allegedly giving hate speech in a rally during the 2022 Assembly polls. A bench presided over by Justice Hrishikesh Roy took note of the submission made

by senior advocate Kapil Sibal, who appeared on behalf of Umar Ansari, that the alleged inflammatory speech was given by the petitioner's brother -- Abbas Ansari. Further, the bench, also comprising Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra, noted that Abbas Ansari along with a co-accused have already been granted regular bail by the trial court. After hearing the submissions, the apex court ordered: "Issue notice returnable within a period of four

weeks. In the meantime, the petitioner is protected from arrest." In December 2023, the Allahabad High Court rejected the anticipatory bail application filed by Umar Ansari -- who was co-accused for allegedly threatening government officials with payback at a public meeting stage in the Pahadpur area of Mau during the elections. Mau Police, in March 2022 booked the Ansari brothers under section 171F (offence of undue influence or personation at an election) and 506 (criminal intimidation) of IPC, after a video of the speech went viral on social media. Earlier in July last year, the Supreme Court had declined to quash criminal proceedings against Umar Ansari and asked him to apply for discharge before the trial court. He had contended that he was charged for merely sharing the stage when his brother allegedly made the controversial speech in violation of the Model Code of Conduct (MCC).

**CM Vijayan plays down Gov's one-minute address in Kerala Assembly**

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 27 (IANS) :** After Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan completed his address to the state Assembly on Saturday in a minute, Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said "it need not be seen as an act of confrontation" and sought to play it down. CM Vijayan said this at the legislature party meeting of the ruling Left which was held at the state CPI(M) party headquarters here. The CM said in the meeting that as per the rules a governor needs to read only the first and last paragraph and Khan has done that, hence it can be allowed. He further said,

"Maybe the Governor had some health issues, which we may not know." Incidentally, the tension between Khan and the ruling Left Front has been prevailing for a while now. On Thursday, the Governor arrived at the state Assembly for his customary address on the first day of the session in the New Year but read only the last paragraph of the more than 60-page address. The two have been at loggerheads for a while and have been taking on one another in public space and it continued on Thursday when Khan arrived at the foyer of the Assembly. Though he was greeted by Vijayan and his entourage, what was evident was everyone



except Khan and Vijayan were in smiles. As soon as Vijayan handed over the bouquet to Khan, he quickly gave it to his aide and with a grim face walked into the floor of the Assembly. After reading the opening statement that he is pleased to address

the House, he said, "now, I am going to read the last paragraph..." And after reading the last paragraph, Khan took leave and when he was escorted back to the foyer, Khan and Vijayan did not look at each other.

**SDM dismissed after a woman staffer ties his shoelaces in Madhya Pradesh**

**Bhopal, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A Sub-Divisional Magistrate (SDM) in Madhya Pradesh was on Saturday dismissed after a photograph showing a woman employee tying his shoelaces surfaced on social media. The officer in question, Aswan Ram Chiravan

was posted as SDM in Chitrangi Division of Singrauli District in Madhya Pradesh. As per the report, the incident occurred during a programme organised on the occasion of the 'Prana-Pratishta' of the Ram temple in Ayodhya.





## OPINIONmail

FOR INDIAN SPACE INDUSTRY,  
2024 IS A YEAR OF BIG  
EXPANSION AND NEW MISSIONS

As Finance Minister presents her interim budget for 2024-25 on February 1 this year, she has to keep in mind that this year promises to be a watershed year for India's space exploration! The year, 2024, has been marked as 'The Year of Gaganyaan' by Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) chief Somanath, who elaborated on the Gaganyaan timeline. At this critical juncture in the planning and implementation of this historic space project, ISRO has scheduled important mission-related tests and demonstrations throughout the entire year. The NASA-ISRO Synthetic Aperture Radar (NISAR), a collaborative effort between NASA and ISRO, is also scheduled for launch in 2024. Besides NISAR, ISRO has many other ambitious projects lined up. A communications satellite in the Indian National Satellite System series, INSAT-3DS, is a key to meteorology and disaster management studies. Enhancing India's remote-sensing capabilities, RISAT-1B and Resourcesat-3 are work-in-progress. TDS01 and SPADEX are also expected to contribute to technological research and experiments for Moon missions.

Union Minister for Science and Technology Jitendra Singh has gone on record, saying that the Indian space sector was projected to grow at a rate of 6%-8% over the ensuing year. This year, the stakeholders in India's space sector will keep a sharp watch on the Budget outlay for the space sector, which stood at Rs 12,543.91 crore in the Budget estimates for 2023-2024 as a cumulative allocation made for the Department of Space (DoS)—the government watchdog for the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), New Space India Limited (NSIL) and Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe), which have provided a platform for greater private sector participation. Singh had said in a written reply to the Lok Sabha at end-December 2023 that the Budget allocation for the DoS had doubled in 2023-2024 (Rs 12,543.91 crore) compared to that in 2013-2014 (Rs 6,972 crore). Also, the revenue garnered from satellite launches from 2003 to 2013, which stood at only \$15 million, had grown to \$157 million from 2014 to 2023 with 396 foreign satellites and 70 domestic satellites launched. The satellite services segment is estimated to account for 36% of India's space economy by 2025, with the ground segment accounting for 31%, the satellite manufacturing segment 25% and the launch services segment 8.15%. The lion's share of the total allocation of Rs 12,543.91 crore, an amount of approximately Rs 11,669.41 crore, was listed for central sector schemes and projects—including the human space-flight centre and various institutions within DoS handling launch vehicle and satellite projects—covering both development and operations. However, there was a slight reduction of nearly 8% in the fiscal 2023-2024 Budget, compared to the Rs 13,700 crore for fiscal 2022-2023, witnessing a 32% reduction in the allocation for space science—including Chandrayaan-3, Aditya L-1 and ISRO's Climate and Atmospheric Programme—compared to the previous Budget estimate. This even gave the Opposition to troll Prime Minister Narendra Modi while he congratulated Somanath and the ISRO team for the very successful landing of Chandrayaan-3 on the Moon's south polar region! India's space economy is now valued at about \$8.4 billion—a share of 2%-3% of the global space economy. Riding piggyback on the twin contributions of the private space sector and the Indian Space Policy (ISP), 2023, the Indian space economy is estimated to be valued at \$44 billion by 2033, Singh further said. The ISP encourages end-to-end space solutions encompassing satellite manufacturing, launch vehicle production, satellite services and ground system manufacturing, although the 'Space Policy' unveiled by the Centre focuses mostly on satellite launches and associated infrastructure.

(By Girish Linganna)

EDITORIAL  
the indian mailRAHUL GANDHI HAS TO BE CAREFUL IN  
CHOOSING HIS POLITICAL ADVISERS

Is Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's judgement coming under scrutiny? The critics wonder whether he promoted aides who ultimately betrayed him and the Congress. The recent departure of former minister Milind Deora has shrunk his inner circle, leaving only a few close aides who remain loyal. It's worth noting that the BJP has welcomed many aides who have left Congress and even encouraged some to defect from the Party. Why have Rahul Gandhi's friends joined other political parties recently? The simple answer was that they were disenchanted with the Congress and its leaders. It is important to remember that wise advisers are crucial for the success of any leader. Rajiv and Rahul had similar political and personal experiences, and both started their political careers on a high note. However, Rajiv's politi-

cal education came from learning on the job. Four years after entering politics, Rajiv became the Prime Minister due to unforeseen circumstances. While he was out of power, Rajiv learned his political lessons well. Rahul is still learning. In 1989, Rajiv Gandhi was targeted by his political opponents through negative campaigning, leading to his political downfall. Several notable members, including Arun Nehru, Arun Singh, V.P. Singh, and Amitabh Bachchan, left Rajiv's team during this period. Rajiv's trusted friends were from the Doon School, collectively known as the Dosco team. Rahul's team of image makers put much effort into presenting him as a capable leader. He is credited with creative solutions to address issues related to religion, caste, and economy and to bring India together towards progress. However, the BJP attempted to present him as an inept and entitled leader who lacked vision and could not lead the country towards prosper-



ity. They often called him "pappu" to reinforce this negative perception. Frustrated with the continuous electoral losses, most of Rahul's inner circle sought greener pastures. They belonged to influential political dynasties and were ambitious. They were in a hurry to take over from the old guard. After enjoying power, most of his handpicked team left. For instance, Jyotiraditya Scindia, a close friend of Rahul Gandhi, was disappointed when the Congress leadership did not appoint him as the Chief Minister of Madhya Pradesh after the 2018 Assembly polls. As a result, he played a significant role in toppling the Madhya Pradesh govern-

ment, eventually leading to establishing the BJP government two years ago. Scindia was offered a ministerial position in the Centre for his support. Recently, Jitin Prasada has joined the Yogi government in Uttar Pradesh. At the same time, Kapil Sibal, Alpesh Thakur, and R.P.N Singh have all moved to different parties. Moreover, Ghulam Nabi Azad has ended his relationship with Congress due to his dissatisfaction with Rahul Gandhi's leadership. Captain Amarinder Singh left the Congress Party in Punjab and established a new political party.

WINE INDUSTRY OUTLOOK  
PERKS UP WITH MAHARASHTRA  
REINSTATING TAX REBATE

The Maharashtra government has decided to revive a tax-rebate scheme, which was withdrawn in the wake of Covid-19 in 2020. This scheme provides the wineries using grapes grown within the state a refund of 16% of the 20% VAT they pay. The decision would be enforced retroactively, covering the last four financial years – from 2020-21 to 2023-2024. Jagdish Holkar, the president of the All India Wine Producers Association (AIWPA), stated, "The scheme's revival will be a big relief for us, as it has been the bread and butter for the wine industry. It is part of a farmer-centric policy being promoted by the state government." As per estimates, Maharashtra wineries pay Rs 80 crore in VAT annually. Now, they are going to receive 80% of it in refunds. Sula Vineyards which is the biggest among the Indian wineries is expected to receive up to \$40 crore in tax refunds annually. As the decision is being retroactively, it could be a quite a windfall for the wineries. The Wine Industrial Promotion Scheme (WIPS) that provides incentives to wineries by returning 16% of the 20% VAT charged will be in force for the next five years.

IMRAN KHAN IS AT WAR WITH PAKISTAN  
ELECTION COMMISSION, ARMY, US AGENCY

Democratic governance, backed by popular mandate is the sole path towards political stability, rule of law and much needed reforms. It is a contention none has any quarrel with. Imran Khan, who led Pakistan to a victory in World Cup cricket final in 1992, founded a new party in Pakistan and became the Prime Minister of his country in August 2018 only to be deposed and imprisoned later. This has sounded a warning about the viability of the national elections. It is scheduled to be held on February 8. Khan has painted a bleak picture of the state of af-

fairs of his country post elections. The man who finds himself behind the bars since August 23 last year after being accused in the Toshakhana case (National Treasury) feels the coming election would be nothing short of a farce. The former prime minister has pointed fingers at an allegedly biased caretaker government, an election commission similarly tarred together with interferences that stretch across the borders. In so many words he raises doubts about the foundations of democracy in Pakistan. The powers that be in Pakistan are unlikely to pay any heed to Khan's words. After all, he had not been

in the good books of his captors ever since the attack by PTI activists on public installations and the military General Head Quarters on May 9 last year. It has also been a part of Khan's charges that the State is using every possible tactic to stop PTI nominees filing nomination for the February 8 elections. The war of words which ought to have been engaged into the confines of Pakistan's parliament is raging outside it. This state of affairs is a pointer to the credibility of Khan's charges. As these allegations are being dissected, it is apparent that Pakistan is at a cross roads.

MASSIVE DEMONSTRATIONS  
TAKING PLACE IN EUROPEAN  
CAPITALS AGAINST FAR RIGHT

The latest moves of the far right forces in a number of countries in Europe have finally awakened the common liberal masses leading many of them to join the protest demonstrations against the continuing campaign of the right wing forces. Germany is the latest example where massive demonstrations were held on Saturday and Sunday against the activities of the far right AfD.

Following Saturday's huge demonstrations, further protests on Sunday saw hundreds of thousands of people take to the streets of Germany's cities, with campaigners condemning a neo fascist meeting that discussed the idea of deporting immigrants en masse. Some members of the far-right Alternative for Germany party (AfD) were said to be present at that meeting. A report by journalism network Corrective on the meeting —



which primarily focused on a mass deportation programme for migrants and asylum-seekers, including some German citizens — has sent shockwaves throughout the country, with banners calling for far-right parties to be outlawed. The AfD is represented in German parliament and it is bound by the

country's constitution. The alleged meeting proposed that the immigrants should be identified and deported en masse since they might very soon replace the white natives. The focus was mostly on coloured people.

(IPA Service)





## US urges N.Korea to refrain from 'threatening' activity after cruise missile launches

**Washington, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The US has called on North Korea to refrain from further "threatening" activity and return to dialogue after Pyongyang fired several cruise missiles toward the Yellow Sea, the latest in a series of its weapons tests that heightened tensions on the Korean Peninsula. "We urge the DPRK to refrain

from further threatening activity and call on Pyongyang to engage in serious and sustained diplomacy," a State Department spokesperson said on Saturday in response to a question from Yonhap News Agency. DPRK stands for the North's official name, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Later in a press briefing, State Department Deputy Spokes-

person Vedant Patel repeated the message. "It's important to remember that we have been incredibly clear about the fact that we harbour no hostile intent towards the DPRK and continue to be open to diplomacy without preconditions," he said. "This is also an avenue for us to continue to consult closely with the Republic of Korea, with Japan and other allies and partners about how to best engage with the DPRK to deter some of their aggressive and destabilizing behaviours," he added. Patel also underscored that the US goal of engagement with North Korea remains the same. "We are eager to engage in substantive discussions on identifying ways to not just manage military risk but create lasting peace on the Korean Peninsula as well as our continued stated goal of the complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula," he said.



## Russia calls for emergency UNSC meeting after downing of plane

**United Nations, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov has said that Russia has called for an emergency meeting of the UN Security Council (UNSC) after the downing of a Russian plane carrying captured Ukrainian soldiers.

At a press conference at the UN headquarters in New York, Lavrov said Moscow requested

a meeting for 3 p.m. Saturday. But obviously, the meeting has not been scheduled accordingly, Xinhua news agency reported. Lavrov said a Russian IL-76 transport aircraft was downed with 65 captured Ukrainian military servicemen on board together with three Russian officers and six crew members. All people on board the plane died as a result of

what he said was a terrorist attack by Ukraine. Lavrov said an air defence missile launched by Ukraine from the Kharkiv region downed the plane in the Belgorod region. The IL-76 was carrying the 65 captured Ukrainian soldiers from Moscow to Belgorod for a prisoner-of-war swap that had been agreed on between Moscow and Kiev.



## Sri Lankan cabinet nod for FTA with Thailand

**Colombo, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Sri Lanka's cabinet has granted approval to sign a free trade agreement (FTA) with Thailand, the government's information department said on Saturday. A complete 14-chapter draft FTA was prepared after nine rounds of discussions between the two sides, Xinhua news agency reported. The department, in a statement said the development of supply capacity, attracting export-oriented foreign direct investment and expanding international market access for Sri Lankan goods and services had been identified as strategies essential for the country's economic growth. The National Trade Negotiations Committee has also exchanged views with all relevant local stakeholders during the negotiation process.



## 'This race is far from over': Nikki Haley after New Hampshire loss

**Washington, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Indian-American Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley said that the race for White House 2024 was "far from over" after her former boss Donald Trump won the New Hampshire primary, solidifying his position as GOP's likely nominee. With 36 per cent of the estimated vote counted, the former president registered 53.6 per cent support against Haley's 45.3 per cent in the

critical early state contest Saturday, the New York Post reported. "New Hampshire is first in the nation, it is not last in the nation," Haley, the two-time former South Carolina governor, told supporters in Concord minutes after Trump's projected victory by the local media. Congratulating Trump for the victory, Haley said that he "earned it" but added that "this race is far from over."

## Canadian Sikh driver surrenders in 2021 fatal car crash case

**Toronto, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A 27-year-old Sikh driver has surrendered himself to police more than two years after a car crash in Canada's Ontario province left a 21-year-old woman dead. Harkamalpreet Singh, who turned himself in earlier this month, is scheduled to make his first appearance at a Brampton court on February 23. He has been charged with dangerous operation causing death, flight from a peace officer, and failure to stop at an accident, the Ontario Provincial Police (OPP) said in a release. The collision took place just before 3 a.m. on November 5, 2021, after a Mississauga OPP officer tried to stop a black vehicle that appeared to be driving erratically near Highway 410 and Sandalwood Parkway in Brampton.



## EU forms port alliance to fight drug trafficking

**Brussels, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The European Commission has launched the European Ports Alliance Public Private Partnership, aimed at bringing all stakeholders together to protect ports from drug trafficking and criminal infiltration. The alliance was being launched in conjunction with the Belgian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (EU), member states, ports authorities, European associations, EU anti-crime agencies, customs and law enforcement authorities, Xinhua news agency reported. The vast majority of illicit drugs into the EU are trafficked along maritime routes and 70 per cent of drug seizures are in EU ports, according to Ylva Johansson, Commissioner for Home Affairs. "That is why cooperation between national and EU authori-

ties and EU ports is vital," Johansson said in a press release on Saturday. The Commission said the launch comes against a backdrop of "criminal networks using extreme violence, corruption and intimidation in their search for profits." Seizures of cocaine in the EU are at record levels, with more than 300 tonnes seized on an annual basis in recent years, said the Commission. In Belgium alone, authorities seized a record 121 tonnes of cocaine at the Port of Antwerp-Bruges in 2023, a 10 per cent increase over the previous year. EU figures show that ports contribute to 75 per cent of EU external trade volumes and 31 per cent of EU internal trade volumes, making them vulnerable to drug smuggling and exploitation by high-risk criminal networks.



## 'Israel-Hamas conflict spillover to region through shipping attacks has impact on India'

**United Nations, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The spillover of the Israel-Hamas conflict to "the vicinity of India" with attacks on shipping by Houthi rebels has an impact on India's economic interests, according to Deputy Permanent Representative R. Ravindra. The conflict's impact on the safety of commercial shipping in the Indian Ocean "has a direct bearing on India's own energy and economic interests", he said on Saturday at a high-level meeting of the Security Council on the situation in the Middle East. He said some of the attacks

were happening "in the vicinity of India" and "this fraught situation is not to the benefit of any party, and this must be clearly recognised," he said. Ravindra did not name the Yemeni Houthi rebels who are carrying out the attack or specifically mention the Red Sea around where the incidents have taken place. The Houthi rebels have said that they are attacking ships as an act of solidarity with the Palestinians under attack from Israel in Gaza. The Red Sea forms the link for the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean to the Suez Canal, the main link for India and Asia to areas of the

Middle East, Europe and beyond. India's Navy has said that it was "surging" its presence in the region and earlier this month one of its ships acted to protect a commercial ship under attack. France, the president of the Security Council for this month, convened the high-level meeting presided over by Foreign Minister Stephane Sejourne with the participation of about 15 foreign ministers, including Russia's Sergey Lavrov and Iran's Hossein Amirabdollahian. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the situation in the Red Sea is "deeply worrying". "Houthi attacks are disrupting global trade", he said, and "these have been followed by airstrikes by the United States and the United Kingdom on Houthi positions in Yemen." "De-escalation is essential -- and all attacks on merchant and commercial vessels in the Red Sea must cease immediately," he said. He said that a two-state solution of independent Israel and Palestine living side-by-side is the only way to end the conflict.

## Israel-Hamas war : Mediatory talks on for a two-month-long ceasefire to release hostages

**Tel Aviv, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Hectic parleys are on in Doha, Cairo and Washington for a two-month-long ceasefire between Israel and Hamas for release of hostages. Arab and Qatari media have reported that the Hamas leadership wants a permanent truce on the release of hostages. Sources in Israel Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office told IANS that Israel was not agreeing to such a truce. IANS had earlier reported that the latest round of mediatory talks commenced on December 28 and is continuing. However, Israel

side may agree for a one month ceasefire for a phased release of hostages in exchange of Palestinian prisoners who are in Israel's jails. The agreement, if done, would have a phased release of hostages commencing from civilians to soldiers and reservists who are in the captivity of Hamas. The Hamas side also wants Israel to agree for the relocation of its top leaders including Mohammed Deif and Yahya Sinwar to be relocated to other countries, which according to sources, Israel has not agreed upon. Israel is facing mounting pressure



back home with the families of Hostages upping their ante with various protests inside the country and abroad for the release of prisoners. Meanwhile, former Hamas head Khaled Mashaal has rejected the proposed two nation theory of Israel and Palestine.





## Punjab Cabinet restores 10.77 lakh ration cards

**Chandigarh, Jan 27 (IANS)** : Ahead of the Lok Sabha elections, the Punjab government on Saturday announced restoration of 10.77 lakh ration cards to enable their holders to avail the benefits of the ration being supplied under the Public Distribution System (PDS). The decision was taken at a Cabinet meeting, chaired by Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann, here. The Chief Minister told the media that these cards were earlier deleted during the verification process. However, keeping in view the larger public interest, the Cabinet has decided to restore these cards. As per this decision

all these beneficiaries will be able to derive the benefits of the PDS and door to door delivery of ration schemes being started by the state government. The Cabinet also gave green signal to a new transfer policy for the teachers. This policy has been streamlined to ensure the teachers contribute zealously in the teaching works rather than running pillar to post for their transfers. This policy facilitates teachers, having family members suffering from chronic diseases, to apply for the transfer throughout the year to take care of their families. The Cabinet also gave nod to extend CM Di

Yogshala campaign to 15 more districts - Barnala, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Ferozepur, Fazilka, Gurdaspur, Kapurthala, Mansa, Moga, Sri Muktsar Sahib, Pathankot, Rupnagar, SBS Nagar, Tarn Taran, and Malerkotla. This health-oriented initiative is already getting massive response after its launch in nine cities of the state under Phase I.

## Navy's ammunition cum torpedo cum missile barge - LSAM 19 launched

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The launch of ammunition cum torpedo cum missile (ACTCM) barge, LSAM 19 (Yard 129), fifth barge of 11 x ACTCM Barge Project, built by MSME shipyard, Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane for Indian Navy, was undertaken on Saturday, an official said. The launch ceremony was presided over by Commodore V Pravin, AWPS (Mbi).

In a statement, the Indian Navy said that the contract for building 11 XACTCM Barge was signed between Defence Minister and Suryadipta Projects Pvt Ltd, Thane on March 5, 2021. The availability of these barges would provide impetus to operational commitments of Indian Navy by facilitating transportation, embarkation and disembarkation of articles/ ammunition to Indian Navy Ships both alongside jetties and at outer harbours, the statement read.



## We will complete Mokedatu project during our term : K'taka Dy CM Shivakumar

**Mysuru, (Karnataka) Jan 27 (IANS)** : Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister, DK Shivakumar, on Saturday said the much-awaited Mokedatu project would be completed during the term of the present Congress Government itself. Speaking after inaugurating the Mutthina Mullusoge project in Periyapatna taluk, he said, "Former Prime Minister HD Deve Gowda has accused that the Congress Government is not serious about the Mokedatu project. We will complete the project within our government's tenure, but will Mr Gowda, who is close to the Prime Minister, get us the Centre's approval for the project?" "Mr Deve Gowda is casting aspersions on us un-

essarily. We are fighting legally to get approvals for the Mokedatu project. The Supreme Court has already instructed the Water Management Tribunal not to obstruct construction of a dam at Mokedatu," he said. "River Cauvery is our mother and we are all alive due to her blessing. Yet, none of the 26 MPs from the BJP are pressurising the Centre to approve the project. Why isn't Mysuru BJP MP Pratap Simha approaching the Prime Minister to obtain approvals for the Mokedatu project," he asked. "We have already instructed Revenue officials of Mandya, Chamarajanagar, Mysuru and Bengaluru Rural districts to hand over revenue lands to those who will lose their lands to the Mokedatu project.

## Why does PM talk only of Ram Temple and not of inflation, jobs or farmers, asks Congress

**Thane (Maharashtra), Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Maharashtra Congress on Saturday accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi of only harping on the Ram temple consecration and Ayodhya all over the country, but not uttering a word on burning issues like inflation, unemployment or farmers' plight. AICC incharge of Maharashtra Congress, Ramesh Chennithala said that the Prime Minister has visited Maharashtra thrice in the last few weeks, "but

gave nothing to the state". "The PM has gone to all states at least three times yet he has not spoken a word on the basic issues confronting the people of the country. The farmers and labourers are suffering, the youth want jobs, people want inflation to be curbed, but the PM keeps discussing one topic only - the Ram Mandir," said Chennithala. He said, "Crores of people in the country worship Lord Ram. Even we are his devotees and never opposed the construction of the Ram Mandir, but the Congress' main

objection was to (BJP) playing politics in the name of Ayodhya and the Ram Temple." Chennithala pointed out how, during the 'Prana Pratishtha' ceremony on January 22 in Ayodhya, the entire focus was on Modi rather than on Lord Ram or the Shankaracharyas there. He also slammed the BJP and the PM for converting the 'Prana Pratishtha' into a political event, but failing miserably in their attempts to break the secular fabric of the country. The AICC leader's comments

came after a Congress district-wise review meeting of the Konkan Division ahead of the Lok Sabha polls. Attacking Assam Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma, for creating hurdles in the way of the Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, Chennithala said that last year, Rahul Gandhi had travelled nearly 4,000-kms in the Bharat Jodo Yatra, "but not a single state created any obstacles." "The people of Assam and other states are participating enthusiastically in the BJNY... they greet and cheer him, but the Assam CM is bent on disrupting (the yatra) at every stage," said Chennithala. To a question, he said that the national Opposition alliance INDIA bloc was formed for the benefit and progress of the country vis-a-vis the BJP's policies of divide-and-rule. Top state party leaders including Congress President Nana Patole, Working President M Arif Naseem Khan, Congress Legislature Party Leader Balasaheb



Thorat, Leader of Opposition Vijay Wadettiwar, ex-CM Prithviraj Chavan and others were present at the meeting in Bhiwandi town.



## Defence Ministry signs pact to acquire 14 fast & hi-tech patrol vessels for ICG

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Ministry of Defence has signed a contract for acquisition of 14 Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) equipped with multi-purpose drones and AI worth Rs 1,070.47 crore for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG), an official said on Saturday. The FPVs will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd, Mumbai, under Buy (Indian-IDD) Category. The Defence Ministry said that the FPVs would offer greater flexibility and operational edge to the ICG to face new age multi-dimensional challenges. These modern FPVs will play a critical role in enhancing fisheries protection and monitoring, control and surveillance, anti-smuggling

operations, search and rescue operations including in shallow waters, assistance to ship/aircraft in distress, towing capabilities, assistance and monitoring during marine pollution response operations and anti-piracy operations. The acquisition of these FPVs is aimed to boost ICG's capability and reinforces the increased focus of the government towards maritime security, an official said. In line with the 'Atmanirbhar Bharat', the contract will boost the nation's indigenous shipbuilding capability, bolster maritime economic activities and foster growth of ancillary industries, especially the MSME Sector. The project will effectively generate employment opportunities and expertise development in the country, the official added.

## PM Modi to launch seven projects in Goa on Feb 6

**Panaji, Jan 27 (IANS)** : Prime Minister Narendra is scheduled to visit the coastal state on February 6 to launch various projects. Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said on Saturday that the Prime Minister will attend the India Energy Week programme in South Goa besides launching various projects. Sawant said that a total of seven projects will be launched by the Prime Minister. "PM Modi will be inaugurating the new campus of National Institute of Technology at Cuncolim, Indian Institute of Watersports in Donapula, Navy College at Betim, Solid Waste Management Plant at Curchorem besides laying the foundation for a ropeway project at Reis Magos Fort, 100 MLD plant at Salaulim dam and 3D building at Patto Plaza in Panaji," Sawant said.



## Punjab Police to establish AI, machine learning lab

**Chandigarh, Jan 27 (IANS)** : Punjab Police on Saturday inked a memorandum of understanding with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar for the establishment of first-of-its-kind in-house artificial intelligence and machine learning lab, Director General of Police (DGP) Gaurav Yadav said here. The pact was signed by Additional Director General of Police (Technical Services) Ram Singh and Director IIT Rajeev Ahuja in the presence of Yadav. DGP Yadav said this collaboration would not only pave the way for various technological innovations but will also help harnessing the cutting-edge technologies for predictive policing, crime pattern

recognition and analysis, facial recognition and intelligent decision-making. He said where AI can assist the police in the detection of criminal activities and fraud by identifying patterns and trends in large volumes of data, on the other side, machine learning algorithms can help understand criminal behaviour and allocate resources accordingly. The lab will also help in optimising the deployment of manpower based on real-time data, he said. Sharing more details, Ram Singh said in the present era, the rapid progress in machine learning and artificial intelligence holds the potential to transform the operations of law enforcement agencies.

## Delhi HC imposes penalty on husband for false rape allegations, cautions against frivolous complaints

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Delhi High Court has imposed a penalty of Rs 25,000 on a husband who sought the registration of a purportedly false rape case against his wife's cousin, cautioning against frivolous complaints that could potentially harm innocent individuals. The husband alleged that the cousin had raped his wife, who vehemently denied the accusations. Justice Anoop Kumar Mendiratta stated that prima facie, the husband initiated the proceedings with ulterior motives, aiming to gain an advantage in ongoing matrimonial proceedings against his wife. The court stressed that the criminal justice system should not be burdened by baseless complaints and that the provision of Section 156(3) Cr.P.C. should not be misused. The husband challenged two court orders -- one from a Magistrate and another from a Sessions Court -- that had declined to direct the registration of an FIR against the cousin using Section 156(3) of Cr.P.C.







## Growth in banks' credit surpassing deposits: RBI

**Mumbai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The gap between credit and deposit growth of banks as of the first fortnight of January 2024 has widened compared to the last fortnight of September 2023, according to the latest RBI data. As on January 12, 2024, year-on-year credit and deposit growth stood at 19.93 per cent and 12.84 per cent respectively, which reflects a gap of 7.09 percentage points, RBI data on scheduled banks' statement of position in India shows. During the reporting

fortnight ended January 12, 2024, scheduled banks' credit outstanding increased by Rs 10,277 crore while deposits declined by Rs 98,848 crore, according to the statement. "Healthier balance sheets have facilitated broad-based expansion in lending by banks. Bank credit growth continues to outpace deposit growth on the back of sustained momentum of demand," the RBI said in its last Financial Stability Report (FSR). The RBI noted that rising interest rates have benefited banks and improved their net interest margins (NIM), as the transmission to yield on assets has been faster than that to the cost of funds. "Nevertheless, as the rate cycle approaches its peak, banks' profitability is expected to come under pressure due to rising valuation losses, increasing risks for asset quality and tempering of credit growth," the RBI said.



## Yes Bank posts 4-fold jump in net profit for Oct-Dec quarter

**Mumbai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Private sector lender Yes Bank on Saturday reported an over 4-fold jump in net profit to Rs 231.6 crore for the October-December quarter of the current financial year. The bank had posted a net profit of Rs 51.5 crore in the same quarter of the previous year. Net interest income (NII), which is the difference between interest received on loans and that paid on deposits, increased 2.3 per cent year-on-year. The bank's operating profit grew 5.4 percent to Rs 864 crore during the quarter. The gross non-performing assets (NPA) of the bank remained at 2 per cent, showing no change from the previous year while there was a marginal improvement in the net NPAs which dipped to 0.9 per cent from 1 per cent in the same period last year.



## FPIs sold equities worth Rs 27,000 crore in January

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) :** FPIs continued to be sellers in the cash market having sold equity worth Rs 27,664 crores through January 25, said V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist, Geojit Financial Services. FPIs were sellers in autos and auto ancillary, media and entertainment and marginally in IT. They bought oil and gas, power and selectively in financial services, he said. The rising bond yields in the US is a matter of concern and this has triggered the recent bout of selling in the cash market. The rally in global stock markets was triggered by the Fed pivot which saw the 10-year bond yield falling from 5% to around 3.8%. Now the 10-year is back at 4.18% which indicates that the Fed rate cut will come only in H2 of 2024, he said. As per a report by Kotak Institutional Equities, listed funds witnessed inflows of \$2 billion, completely led by ETF inflows. India-dedicated funds witnessed inflows of \$3.1 billion, broken down into \$2 billion of ETF inflows and \$1.1 billion of non-ETF inflows, whereas GEM funds saw \$247 million of outflows, led by \$337 million of non-ETF outflows, offset by \$90 million of ETF inflows. Listed emerging market fund flows were mixed. South Korea, Indonesia and Taiwan witnessed \$3 billion, \$262 million and \$76 million of outflows, respectively.

## Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal officially exits board

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Flipkart co-founder Binny Bansal has officially exited the e-commerce platform's board after more than 16 years. Sachin Bansal, the other co-founder, left the board in 2018. After leaving Flipkart, Sachin founded Navi, a financial services firm. "Flipkart is in a robust position, with a strong leadership team and a clear path forward, and with this confidence, I have decided to step aside, knowing the company is in capable hands," Binny said in a statement. "I wish the team the best as they continue to transform experiences for customers, and I remain a strong supporter of the business," he added. Flipkart Group CEO Kalyan Krishnamurthy said in a statement on Saturday that the company is the outcome of a

great idea and a lot of hard work, built by teams committed to transforming how India shops. "We wish Binny the best as he embarks on his next venture and thank him for the deep impact he has enabled for the Indian retail ecosystem," he added. Earlier this month, Binny announced a new venture called 'OppDoor', which will help e-commerce companies expand operations globally by providing them with end-to-end solutions. As per reports, OppDoor will initially focus on e-commerce companies in the US,



Canada, Mexico, the UK, Germany, Singapore, Japan, and Australia. Last year, Bansal sold his remaining stake in Flipkart and received about \$1-\$1.5 billion from his shareholding in Flipkart. Binny, along with Sachin Bansal,

exited Flipkart after selling it to Walmart in 2018 for around \$16 billion. Binny has backed around 60 startups, like Acko, Ather Energy, Curefoods, Cultfit, BrightChamps, Unacademy, Yulu and others.

## SpiceJet allots shares and warrants worth Rs 744 cr in first tranche of preferential issue

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) :** SpiceJet has allotted shares and warrants amounting to a total of Rs 744 crore in the first tranche of its preferential issue. The decision was taken by the company's Board of Directors on Saturday, marking a significant step in bolstering SpiceJet's financial position. According to the airline spokesperson, on Thursday, the Board of Directors had approved the allotment of 5.55 crore equity shares on a preferential basis to 54 subscribers. Additionally, the Board approved the allotment of 9.33 crore warrants, offering the option to apply for and be allotted an equivalent number of equity shares, on a preferential basis to Elara India Opportunities Fund Ltd and Silver Stallion Ltd. SpiceJet Chairman and Managing Director Ajay Singh said: "We are pleased with the completion of the first tranche of our preferential allotment,



which demonstrates the confidence of investors in SpiceJet's growth prospects and we remain committed to completing the further allotment process progressively. "The fund infusion will open new avenues for SpiceJet, resulting in a more cash-efficient operation, expanded fleet and network." SpiceJet is due to complete another tranche of equity/warrants raise from remaining

subscribers and has requested additional time from the competent authority to complete the process under the ongoing preferential issue, as approved by the shareholders of the company on January 10. The extension is necessitated on account of limited banking days arising from long weekends during the intervening period.

## Logistics firm Flexport to lay off another 20% of its workforce : Report

**San Francisco, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Logistics company Flexport is reportedly planning additional layoffs, around 20 per cent of its workforce. According to a report in The Information, Flexport is likely to trim its workforce in the next few weeks. Flexport in October last year slashed the company's workforce by 20 per cent -- affecting about 600 workers.



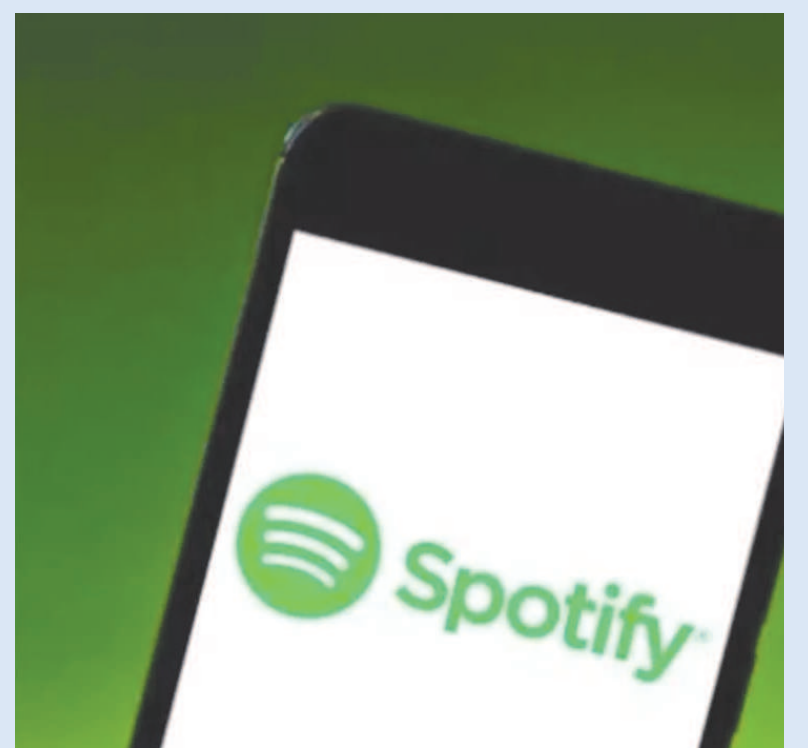
## Very concerning : Elon Musk on new Apple App Store changes in EU

**San Francisco, Jan 27 (IANS) :** X owner Elon Musk on Saturday joined the debate around Apple's App Store changes in the European Union (EU) ahead of the Digital Markets Act (DMA) in March, saying these changes are "very concerning". The world's richest man reacted to Spotify CEO Daniel Ek who posted on X that Apple's DMA announcement is, "at best vague and misleading".

## Spotify CEO calls Apple's new EU App Store changes 'extortion'

**San Francisco, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Swedish music streaming service Spotify's CEO Daniel Ek has criticised Apple's proposed App Store changes ahead of the EU Digital Markets Act (DMA), saying the changes are "at best vague and misleading" and a "new low for the company". In a blog post, the Spotify CEO alleged that under the false pretense of compliance and concessions, Apple has put forward a new plan "that is a complete and total farce". "Essentially, the old tax was rendered unacceptable under the DMA, so they created a new one masquerading as compliance with the law," he argued. Earlier, Epic Games' CEO Tim Sweeney, whose company sued Apple over antitrust practices, also

condemned Apple's plan, saying it was a case of "malicious compliance" and full of "junk fees". Ek said that a completely new 0.50 cent Euro fee per download, every year, in perpetuity, to Apple for just allowing developers to exist on iOS "is extortion, plain and simple". "If Apple's already charging a commission of 17 per cent (and 10 per cent for recurring payments) on digital goods purchased, why would they also need to charge an annual flat fee for every user?" he argued.





## Bomma says INDIA bloc will collapse

**Bengaluru, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Former Karnataka Chief Minister Basavaraj Bommai on Saturday said that the Opposition INDIA bloc led by Congress will disintegrate as the allies are drifting away.

"Dissatisfied over the behaviour of the Congress, many allies of the INDIA bloc were drifting away. West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee has gone out of the bloc, while Sharad Pawar and Bihar CM Nitish Kumar have stepped out. In total, the INDIA bloc will disintegrate," the senior BJP leader told reporters here. "Sharad Pawar would soon follow suit. Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar had already placed one step outside the alliance."



## 94,680 youth in J&K provided self-employment opportunities in one day

**Srinagar, Jan 27 (IANS) :** J&K Lt Governor, Manoj Sinha said on Saturday that 94,680 youth were provided entrepreneurship and self-employment opportunities in a day.

J&K created a new record by distributing sanction letters to set up new units and startups that will fulfill the dreams of the youth as they will become job givers and not job seekers. Sinha said that under Ghar Ghar KCC Abhiyaan, about 2 lakh farmers were provided with Kisan credit cards to ensure they have access to reliable, adequate and affordable credit. "I see a new revolution is under way in Agri & Allied Sector that will construct new pathways for UT's prosperity. Swarozgar Utsav for entrepreneurship."



## BJP legislators from Bengal to visit Ayodhya next month

**Kolkata, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The BJP legislators from West Bengal led by the Leader of Opposition in the Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, will visit the newly inaugurated Ram Mandir in Ayodhya next month. Sources said the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislators will be flying to Ayodhya on Feb-

ruary 10 and return to Kolkata later in the night. "All members of our legislative team will be in Kolkata from February 5 to attend the Budget Session of the Assembly which will commence from that day. There would be no session on February 10 as it is Saturday. Hence, the Leader of the Opposition has cho-

sen February 10 for Ayodhya visit," a state committee member of the BJP said. Political observers feel that nationwide euphoria over the inauguration of the Ram Temple has enlivened the BJP leadership, and hence, they want to spread the ecstasy in West Bengal ahead of the Lok Sabha polls.

## Akhilesh, Mayawati demand Bharat Ratna for their leaders too

**Lucknow, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Samajwadi Party chief Akhilesh Yadav and Bahujan Samaj Party president Mayawati have now demanded that the Bharat Ratna should be conferred on their political icons too. Akhilesh has sought that the Bharat Ratna should be conferred posthumously on leaders of the social justice movement, including Ram Manohar Lohia, B P Mandal, Chaudhary Charan Singh and Mulayam Singh Yadav. He said these leaders fought to remove social disparity and uplift backwards, Dalits, minorities and the poor, all

through their lives. Yadav lauded the fact that the Modi government had conferred the Bharat Ratna on Bihar's prominent socialist leader Karpoori Thakur, who championed the cause of the backward classes and is called a 'Jannayak' or the people's hero. Meanwhile, Mayawati has demanded the country's top civilian honour for BSP founder Kanshi Ram. In a post on X, Mayawati said, the contribution of Kanshi Ram, the father and founder of BSP, in enabling Dalits stand on their feet is unforgettable.



## Assam CM slams Rahul, says Cong yatra gets crowd only in minority areas

**Guwahati, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma has called Rahul Gandhi 'darpok' (coward) and claimed that he fled from Guwahati in a car leaving the bus used for his yatra. In a post on his X handle, Sarma wrote, "After investigating Congress workers to orchestrate violence, Rahul Gandhi (who is on a Bus Yatra) quietly came out of his fancy bus and fled

the city in a small car to Hajo, his next destination. "Rahul has set a new standard for being a Darpok," he added. Sarma also claimed that Rahul Gandhi's yatra only drew crowds in Muslim populated areas in Assam. He posted two photographs, one in Gandhi inside a bus, captioned as 'Hindu majority area (inside the vehicle)' while the other was captioned 'Muslim Majority area (atop the vehicle)'.



## School students in Rajasthan to perform Surya Namaskar from next month

**Jaipur, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Students of government and private schools in Rajasthan will now practice yoga along with studying. The Bhajan Lal Sharma-led Rajasthan government had issued an order in this regard late on Saturday night. Under this, from Surya Saptami (February 15), the students will be made to do Surya Namaskar at all the schools in the state. For this, first the teachers will be given training by yoga teach-

ers. After this, students, teachers, and parents along with the general public and public representatives will start this campaign to ensure the setting up of a world record. Following the order issued by the state Education Minister Madan Dilawar, the Director of Secondary Education Department, Ashish Modi, has started preparations for conducting Surya Namaskar on Surya Saptami at all the government schools of the state. Under this, Surya Namaskar will be practised during prayer meetings at all the government schools. While practising Surya Namaskar, training for other yoga moves will also be given to the students. Initially, all the school teachers will be trained by experts to ensure that he/she can teach the correct yoga moves to the students.



Madan Dilawar said that a student should practice at least 15 Surya Namaskars every day during morning prayers. Even during the tenure of the previous Vasundhara Raje-led BJP government, Surya Namaskar was declared mandatory in government and private schools. At that time, an order was also issued making it mandatory for students to perform Surya Namaskar and other yoga moves after morning prayers.

## Woman files complaint of sexual exploitation against K'taka cop

**Vijayapura (Karnataka), Jan 27 (IANS) :** A woman on Saturday lodged a complaint against a police officer accusing him of sexual exploitation under the false promise of marriage in Vijayapura district of Karnataka. The police have lodged a rape case against Vinayak Takkalagi attached to the Gandhi Chowk police station in Vijayapura city. According to the complaint, the woman from Basavanabagewadi got introduced to the accused cop eight months ago. They exchanged phone numbers and started to chat and call on mobiles regularly. The two fell in love. The accused promised her marriage and developed physical intimacy forcefully. But, after sometime he started neglecting her and finally refused to marry her.



## ED grills NCP (SP) MLA Rohit Pawar for 10 hrs, summons him again on Feb 1

**Mumbai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Saturday grilled Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) MLA Rohit R. Pawar for around 10 hours in connection with an alleged money-laundering case, before issuing him another summons for February 1. Rohit R. Pawar, 38, the grand-nephew of NCP (SP) supremo Sharad Pawar, had stepped into the ED office in south Mumbai at around 10.30 a.m. on Saturday. A huge number of party activists from his constituency Karjat-Jamkhed (Ahmednagar), Pune and Mumbai gathered near the ED office where tight security was deployed to prevent any untoward incidents. Amid intense speculation and uncertainty, Rohit Pawar was finally allowed to leave after a 10-hour grilling session. All through the day, Pawar Sr., party's Working President Supriya Sule and other senior leaders maintained an anxious vigil at the NCP (SP) state headquarters just across the road. After coming out, thousands of

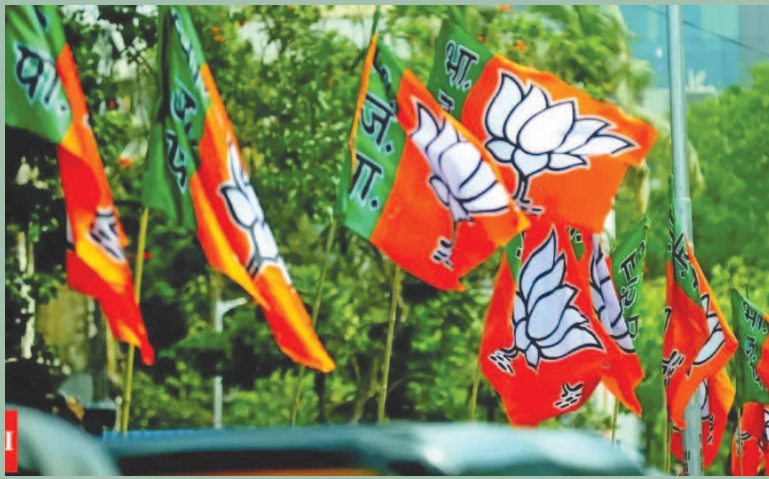
party workers greeted Rohit Pawar with loud cheers, claps and V-signs. He took a mike to address the gathering, saying that he had fully cooperated with the ED team, answered all their questions, and cleared their doubts. However, he said the ED has summoned him again on February 1 for the probe. "The struggle is not yet over... I have been summoned again on February 1. I shall come... I have nothing against the ED officials, they are only doing their duty," said Rohit Pawar. He also said that what is going on does not augur well for the country, but the fight must continue against injustice. "This is a struggle for 'satya' and ultimately the truth will triumph," Sule had said before her nephew entered the ED office for the probe. Meanwhile, Shiv Sena (UBT) Leader of Opposition (Assembly), Ajay Choudhari, slammed the BJP for the blatant misuse of Central probe agencies against the Opposition parties and leaders.

## Digvijaya continues to raise questions about EVMs, says Cong agrees with him

**Bhopal, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Veteran Congress leader and Rajya Sabha MP Digvijaya Singh continued to press his demand to stop the use of Electronic Voting Machines (EVM) to ensure transparency in elections. During a press conference at his residence in Bhopal, the former Chief Minister on Saturday claimed that the Election Commission of India (ECI) wasn't taking decisions independently, but on the directions of the ruling BJP. Singh alleged that the "BJP forming governments was not because of voters' votes but because of 'machine votes.'" Singh said the Congress had sought information through RTI related to the software and hardware of EVMs, but the ECI passed the question to the companies instead of providing an answer. A demonstration was also conducted by a technical expert, Atul Patel, who claimed that the EVMs and VVPAT can be manipulated.







## Gujarat: BJP inducts over 1,500 leaders into party fold

**Gandhinagar, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Gujarat on Saturday inducted over 1,500 leaders into the party fold, including some prominent names from the Congress. The induction ceremony, marked by the donning of the BJP's saffron cap and scarf, was held at the state party headquarters, Shri Kamalam, here. Gujarat unit BJP chief CR Paatil was also present at the event.

Welcoming the new members into the party fold, Patil said: "We will move forward together, and by strengthening Gujarat, we will strengthen the country." Among the leaders who switched allegiance to the BJP were Indrajitsinh Thakor, former MLA from the Mahudha constituency; Vipul Patel, former president of Sabarkantha Congress; Sudhir Patel, former President of the Yuva Congress and Himmat Nagar Marketing Yard; Vinod Chaudhary, former President of the Kheralu Taluka Congress; and Jiteandra Singh Parmar of Congress, among several others. During the function, CR Paatil highlighted Prime Minister Narendra Modi's influence and leadership, expressing pride in PM Modi's Gujarati roots. "For the first time in the country, we have a political leader whose words and guarantees

hold value," Paatil said. Paatil also reflected on the recent nationwide celebrations marking Pran Pratishtha ceremony at the newly constructed Ram temple in Ayodhya. He described the widespread celebrations, including firecracker displays, rangoli art, prasad distribution, and bhandaras, as fulfilling the people's long-standing desire. "PM Modi fulfilled this expectation of building Lord Ram's mandir at the Janmabhoomi," Patil added. He said despite the cold weather in northern India, Ayodhya witnessed a footfall of 5 lakh people the previous day. This turnout, according to Paatil, is a testament to the deep-seated devotion among the people.



## Obligatory for woman to serve her elderly mother-in-law : Jharkhand HC

**Ranchi, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Jharkhand High Court has observed that in Indian culture, it is an obligation for a married woman to serve her elderly mother-in-law or grandmother-in-law. A woman cannot put pressure on her husband to stay away from his mother and grandmother without reasonable cause, the High Court said giving its verdict in a family dispute case. Justice Subhash Chand was hearing a plea by one Rudra Narayan Rai against an order by a family court, which directed him to pay a sum of Rs 30,000 per month to his wife and Rs 15,000 to his son. The High Court held that the woman was not entitled to maintenance as she refused to live with her husband without reasonable cause. However, it increased the son's maintenance allowance from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000. The court referred to the funda-

mental duties mentioned under Article 51-A in the Constitution and the mythological texts Yajurveda and Manusmriti. Referring to Article 51-A, the Judge said it is a fundamental duty of a citizen "to value and preserve the rich heritage of our composite culture". "It is the culture in India to serve the old aged mother-in-law or grandmother-in-law, as the case may be, by the wife, in order to preserve this culture," the court said. Quoting a verse from Manusmriti, the court said: "A family where women remain unhappy... is bound to be destroyed. And a family where women are always happy is bound to prosper forever..." Rudra Narayan Rai's wife Piyali Rai Chatterjee had alleged that her husband and in-laws were cruel to her and tortured her for dowry. On the other hand, Rudra Narayan Rai said that his wife pressured him to stay away from his mother and grandmother.

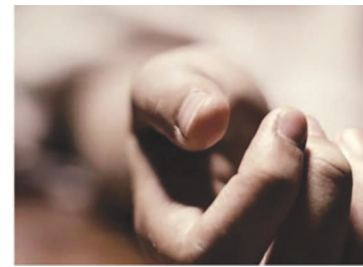


## All roads lead to Ayodhya for BJP CMs, ministers

**Lucknow, Jan 27 (IANS)** : Chief ministers and ministers of the BJP-ruled states will start arriving in Ayodhya to have 'darshan' of Ram Lalla in the newly-built temple, inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on January 22. Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is likely to visit Ayodhya on February 1, a day ahead of the beginning of Budget session, along with his cabinet ministers to offer prayers. Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami is scheduled to visit the temple town on February 2, while Eknath Shinde, chief minister of Maharashtra, along with deputy chief ministers Devendra Fadnis and Ajit Pawar, is expected to land

in Ayodhya on February 5. "People have been eagerly awaiting the construction of the Ram Temple, and now the time has come to seek the blessings of Ram Lalla," Dhami said while announcing his visit to Ayodhya on Saturday. Chief Minister of Tripura, Manik Saha will also visit Ayodhya on February 5 along with the cabinet ministers. "A new era of Ram Rajawad or rule of Ram is beginning with the inauguration of Ram Temple in Ayodhya," he said. Upon Saha's request, the railway ministry has allocated three special trains for devotees from Tripura to visit Ayodhya. Arunachal Chief Minister Pema Khandu and Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar will visit Ayodhya on February 6 and 9, respectively, while newly

elected Chief Minister of Rajasthan, Bhajan Lal Sharma is all set to reach Ayodhya with his cabinet ministers to seek Ram Lalla's blessing on February 12. Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant will have darshan on February 15. Sharing a post on X, Assam Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma announced that he would visit Ayodhya on February 22 with his entire cabinet. Two days later, on February 24, Gujarat Chief Minister, Bhupendra Singh Patel will be present in Ayodhya and will hold a cabinet meeting as well. On March 4, Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav will reach Ayodhya to pay obeisance to Ram Lalla. Meanwhile, CM Yogi Adityanath said that amidst the extraordinary circumstances arising from the influx of devotees in Ayodhya, it is advisable to notify the local administration, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Tirtha Kshetra Trust, or the state government at least a week in advance of any planned visit by distinguished dignitaries to Ayodhya. This proactive communication will facilitate better coordination and ensure a smooth and well-managed reception for these special guests, Yogi Adityanath added.



## 8-year-old boy kidnapped, killed in Ayodhya

**Ayodhya (UP), Jan 27 (IANS)** : An 8-year-old boy was kidnapped and brutally murdered in Mishram forest area under the vicinity of Tarun police station of Ayodhya. The body of the child was found in the forest area on Saturday. According to the police, Raj Gupta, son of businessman Manoj Gupta, resident of Kichuti Bazar of Tarun police station area, was abducted from the town at 7 p.m. on Saturday. After failing to trace the boy, the father lodged a complaint with the police station regarding the suspicion of kidnapping. However, instead of registering a report for kidnapping, the police filed a missing person report. On Wednesday, when the villagers had gone to the forest to cut wood, they saw the body of the child lying in an 8 feet deep pit. The body bore several stab wounds. According to the police spokesman, the body has been sent for postmortem.



## Shri Ramcharitmanas row: SC stays criminal proceedings against Swami Prasad Maurya

**New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Supreme Court on Saturday passed an interim order staying the criminal proceedings initiated against Samajwadi Party leader Swami Prasad Maurya for allegedly insulting the Shri Ramcharitmanas and inciting

people to tear and burn pages of the Hindu epic. "Why are you so touchy about these things? It is a matter of interpretation. It is a line of thought. How is it an offence? He (Maurya) cannot be held responsible for burning of copies."



## 2-month suspension for two Calcutta Medical College PGTs found guilty in ragging

**Kolkata, Jan 27 (IANS)**: The Calcutta Medical College & Hospital authorities have suspended two senior postgraduate trainees (PGTs) for two months found guilty of involvement in ragging of their juniors. The suspension has been as per the recommendation of the internal committee of the Calcutta Medical College who had earlier found

merit in the complaints against these two senior PGTs associated with the orthopaedic department of the reputed medical institute. During the two-month suspension period, these two senior PGTs will not be able to attend classes. Their statutory leaves during that period will also not be sanctioned. At the same time, during this period, they will have to

compulsorily attend a programme on 'attitude communication' with the office of the medical-education coordination of Calcutta Medical College.



## Bengal school job case: CBI summons two TMC heavyweights for interrogation

**Kolkata, Jan 27 (IANS)** : The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI), on Saturday, summoned two heavyweight Trinamool Congress leaders for questioning in connection with the multi-crore cash-for-school job case in West Bengal. Both have been asked to be present at CBI's Nizam Palace in central Kolkata by Saturday afternoon only. One of the two leaders, who has been summoned, is Debraj Chakraborty, the Member-Mayor-in-Council (MMIC) of Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation (BMC). He is also the husband of popular devotional singer and Trinamool Congress legislator from Rajarhat-Gopalpur assembly constituency, Aditi Munshi

## SP-Cong talks on seat-sharing in UP on 'smooth track'

**Lucknow, Jan 27 (IANS)** : Even as crisis grips INDIA bloc in West Bengal and Punjab, there is some respite for the beleaguered opposition in Uttar Pradesh. The seat-sharing talks between the Samajwadi Party and the Congress seems to be on track. The SP leaders hope that things will fall in place in the state soon and the seat-sharing will reach

its conclusion soon. "We hope of finalising the seat adjustment in a week or so. We do not have any problem and the BJP will be wiped out in Uttar Pradesh," said SP spokesperson Rajendra Chaudhary. A senior Samajwadi Party leader, however, hinted that the Congress wanted the seat sharing on the basis of the outcome of the 2009 Lok Sabha elections.







## Had doubts about TMC's participation in INDIA bloc since beginning : CPI-M

**Kolkata, Jan 27 (IANS) :** With West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee making it clear on Saturday that her party would fight the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls alone in West Bengal, the CPI-M leadership claimed that the longevity of Trinamool Congress' participation in the Opposition INDIA bloc was doubtful since the beginning. "The INDIA bloc will not collapse because of her absence. We had warned about the Trinamool Congress' future role since the time the talks for the Opposition bloc started. We expressed doubts about the length of time that the Trinamool Congress would continue its association with the Opposition bloc," said

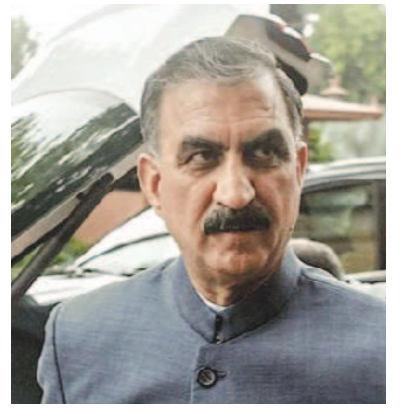
CPI-M politburo member and former Leader of Opposition in the West Bengal Assembly, Dr Surya Kanta Mishra. Reacting to her announcement to go it alone in the Lok Sabha polls, Mishra, also the former West Bengal Health Minister in the previous Left Front regime, said that ultimately the Chief Minister will have to decide how long she will remain with the BJP and how long with the Congress. "No one can predict which way she will move and when. But our fight will not stop for even a day for that. In the recent elections, our performance has been better and we are going ahead with the alliance talks," said Mishra.

## TN govt to file status report after PIL on water release from Vaigai dam to Melur

**Chennai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The Tamil Nadu government will file a status report on the release of water from Vaigai dam in Madurai to farmlands in Melur taluk of Madurai district. This move comes after a directive of the Madurai bench of the Madras High Court on the basis of a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) filed by a farmer. Farmer B. Stalin in his PIL has drawn the attention of the court to the fact that farmers in Melur taluk were getting water from Periyar dam which reaches Vaigai dam through the Perandai channel and irrigates the farm-

lands of Melur taluk. Stalin, who is a resident of Ettimangalam village in Melur taluk, in his PIL said that this water was irrigating the farmlands of Melur taluk spread across 1,15,000 acres and that this water was the lifeline of the farmers in the taluk. He said that water was earlier released continuously for 120 days which was necessary for irrigating the farmlands. In the PIL Stalin said that the water department officials of Tamil Nadu arbitrarily reduced the number of days of the water release from 120 to 90. He charged that this water was not sufficient and that the farmlands would disap-

pear if water was not provided for 120 days continuously. The farmer said that the present storage capacity of Periyar and Vaigai is enough to release water for 120 days and added that if proper directions were not given to the Tamil Nadu government the farmlands would turn into barren land and would become real estate properties. The Madurai division bench of the Madras high court comprising of Justices D. Krishna Kumar and R. Vijayakumar directed the state government to provide a status report on the situation within one week.



## Himachal CM sanctions Rs 100 crore for Shimla's infrastructure

**Shimla, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu on Saturday sanctioned Rs 100 crore for enhancing and strengthening infrastructure in Shimla town to increase footfall of tourists and facilitate locals. He said Rs 55 crore would be spent on underground power cables in Shimla which would ensure proper ducts facilities. "This would provide uninterrupted and round-the-clock power supply even during heavy snowfall and adverse weather in the town." Sukhu said this step would enhance the aesthetic appeal of Shimla, besides restoring the old glory of the town. The Chief Minister said the government would spend Rs 45 crore for improvement and widening of Circular Road in Shimla.



## BJP-JJP govt cheating farmers in Haryana, says Hooda

**Chandigarh, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Veteran Congress leader Bhupinder Hooda on Saturday said the BJP-JJP government in Haryana is cheating farmers in the name of Farmer Producer Organisation (FPO) and crop insurance scheme. He said that the scam worth hundreds of crores is an eye-opener. Hooda, the state's Leader of Opposition and former Chief Minister, said hundreds of crores were looted from farmers first in the name of paddy and market purchase, then in the name of crop insurance and compensation.

"Now another scam of the government has come to light. Fake FPOs were created in the name of fake farmers. The money which should have been used for the uplift of farmers went straight into the pockets of scamsters. "Farmers neither received equity grant nor subsidy. The scam took place on such a large scale in the entire state that the matter reached the Central government. But the BJP-JJP government left no stone unturned to mislead the Central government. In the name of CID investigation, the entire scam was white-washed and the culprits were saved," he alleged. The Congress leader said the coa-

lition government had earlier been cheating farmers in the name of crop insurance scheme every season. "The coffers of private insurance companies are being filled by looting farmers through PM Crop Insurance Scheme. "The Centre itself had informed the Parliament in July that in the past seven years, private insurance companies collected insurance premium of Rs 1,97,657 crore across the country. In return, the companies gave compensation of only Rs 1,40,036 crore. This means they made a huge profit of Rs 57,000 crore. In Haryana, AIC company took a premium of Rs



703.84 crore in 2022-23, but only gave a compensation of Rs 7.46 crore. That means 99 per cent of the amount went into the company's coffers," he said. The Leader of Opposition said crops of about 3 lakh farmers in

seven districts of the state were not insured this time. "The deadline for taking insurance has also passed on December 31. The farmers have been left to rely on god.



## JD-U MLA Gopal Mandal asks Umesh Kushwaha not to interrupt his speech in rally

**Patna, Jan 27 (IANS) :** JD-U MLA Gopal Mandal surprised his party's state President Umesh Kushwaha by asking him not to interrupt his speech during a rally on Saturday. The rally was held at Patna's Veterinary College ground to celebrate the 100 birth anniversary of the great socialist leader of Bihar Karpooori Thakur.



## Haryana CM inaugurates 60 Amrit Sarovars

**Chandigarh, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Haryana Chief Minister Manohar Lal Khattar on Saturday urged the residents to use water judiciously and avoid wastage. The Chief Minister was virtually addressing the people of the state after inaugurating 60 Amrit Sarovars from Dult village in the Tohana assembly constituency of Fatehabad district. Out of the 60 ponds, 31 are located in Fatehabad district. Khattar said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi initiated the Amrit Sarovar Mission in 2022

to rejuvenate the country's ponds. He said that under this mission, the goal was to rejuvenate 1,650 ponds in every district of Haryana, as per the plan of having 75 ponds in each district from May 1, 2002. "Haryana has constructed 2,078 Amrit Sarovars. An additional 200 Amrit Sarovars will be constructed in the upcoming month," the Chief Minister said. He said that to rejuvenate ponds in the state the Haryana Pond and Wastewater Management Authority has been established.

## Ex-CEC Chawla bats for 'one nation one election', says it's challenging

**Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Effecting drastic constitutional changes with two-thirds majority in Parliament would be the biggest challenge in implementing 'one nation one election', but India can hold simultaneous elections to the Lok Sabha and state Assemblies every five years to substantially reduce the poll expenditure, said former Chief

Election Commissioner (CEC) Navin Chawla. "The reason behind the move is to reduce the cost of elections as well as the frequency of the imposition of the model code of conduct by the Election Commission, which some political parties accuse of impeding development work. However, One Nation One Election (ONOE) will necessitate wide political consultation and major constitutional changes, which are not easy to achieve," wrote the former CEC in an exclusive article for Manorama Yearbook 2024. Chawla, who was India's 16th CEC, pointed out that the six-day special session of Parliament held in September 2023 and the setting up of a Committee under former President Ram Nath Kovind have once again brought into focus the



issue of simultaneous elections. Pointing out that the issue has been hanging fire for years, he said the issue needs to be examined from the perspectives of the Election Commission of India (ECI), parliamentarians, legislators and voters. From the ECI's point of view, the implementation of ONOE is technically feasible.

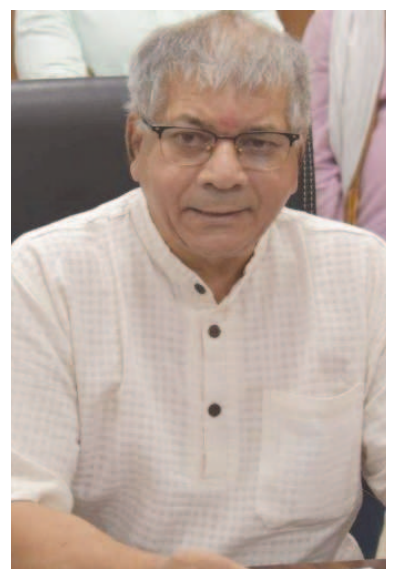
## Kashmir agri university professor convicted for sexual harassment

**Srinagar, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A professor of the agricultural university in Kashmir was on Saturday convicted for sexual harassment. A local court in Kashmir's Sopore town has found a professor guilty of sexual harassment at the Sher-e-Kashmir university of agricultural sciences and technology (SKUAST) Wadoora campus.

## Will not attend MVA seat-share talks without formal invite : VBA

**Mumbai, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) on Saturday led by Prakash Ambedkar has said that it will not go as an 'uninvited guest' to the seat-sharing talks of the Opposition alliance Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) scheduled to be held here on Saturday. VBA Spokesperson Siddharth Mokale said that

his party has "not yet received a formal invite" for the discussions among the MVA allies, Congress-Shiv Sena (UBT)-Nationalist Congress Party (SP). "We have not received any letter or invitation so far... we will not go there until we get an official invite signed by the leaders of all the three (MVA) parties."





## Strong marine heatwave adds to New Zealand's hot, humid weather

**Wellington, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A strong marine heatwave, the periods of unusually warm ocean temperatures, is contributing to New Zealand's unusually hot weather, due to which the North Island is experiencing above-normal humidity levels, keeping nighttime temperatures elevated. Marine heatwaves affect everything from ecosystems to economics and influence weather patterns, priming the environment for tropical cyclones, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric (NIWA) research meteorologist Ben Noll said on Saturday. Due to the rapidly intensifying marine heatwave, sea surface temperatures had reached a near-record 23-24 Celsius in some coastal areas in late January, Xinhua news agency reported. Sea surface temperatures around Auckland, New Zealand's largest city, are borderline tropical, he said



## Russia playing with lives of Ukrainian prisoners: Zelensky

**Kiev, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky has accused Moscow of playing with the lives of Kiev's prisoners, after a Il-76 military transport aircraft was shot down in Belgorod, the media reported. Zelensky's comment came after Russia claimed that there were no survivors after Kiev downed the plane carrying 65 Ukrainian prisoners, six Russian crew and three escorts, BBC reported. "It is obvious that the Russians are playing with the lives of Ukrainian prisoners, with the feelings of their relatives and with the emotions of our society," he said. As Ukraine was not told to ensure safe airspace, as on previous occasions, this can point to Russia's "deliberate" actions

aimed at putting the lives and safety of the PoWs under threat," Ukraine's general staff was quoted as saying by Ukrainska Pravda. On Zelensky seeking an international probe into the incident, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said it means the Ukrainian President wants an international inquiry into "the criminal actions of the Kyiv regime", and it is definitely needed. The Russian Defense Ministry said that Ukraine knew its prisoners would be transported to Belgorod for an exchange based on an agreement previously reached between the two sides. Kiev's move was an attempt to blame Russia for the deaths of the Ukrainian military personnel on board, said the Russian statement.

## Myanmar Army flies back remaining 92 soldiers from Mizoram

**Aizawl, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Myanmar Army authorities on Saturday took back their remaining 92 soldiers, a day after Myanmar Air Force aircraft, which came to Mizoram to evacuate them, skidded off the tabletop runway of the Lengpui airport here, injuring eight of the 14 crew members. Officials said that an ATR aircraft of Myanmar Air Force, in two sorties, evacuated the 92 Myanmar soldiers and 14 crew members of Tuesday's plane. "All necessary formalities including collection of biometric details of the Myanmar military personnel have been conducted. Necessary medical support was also given to the soldiers and the eight injured crew members," an official said. The 276 Myanmar Army personnel took refuge in Mizoram's Lawngtlai district on January 17 after their camps were captured by the Arakan Army militants. The Myanmar soldiers, with their arms and ammunition, reached Bandukbanga village, situated on the Mizoram-Myanmar-Bangladesh border trijunction, in Lawngtlai and were taken to Assam Rifles' Parva camp in the district. "A Myanmar Air Force transport plane from



Mandalay (Myanmar) landed at Lengpui airport on Monday (Jan 22) and evacuated 184 Myanmar soldiers to Sittwe (Akyab) in two sorties and the remaining 92 Myanmar soldiers were supposed to be airlifted on Tuesday but could not be done due to the aircraft accident," a senior official told IANS. Officials said that out of the 14 people who were on board the medium size aircraft along with the pilot, eight were injured, who were immediately rushed to Lengpui hospital and subsequently discharged. Due to the faulty landing and the overshoot from the runway, the plane was partially damaged. Mizoram disaster management officials, along with the district administration and police officials.

## Goa to rope in social media influencers to promote tourism, schemes

**Panaji, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The BJP government in Goa has launched empanelment Portal for local social media influencers for promotion of schemes, tourism and policies. Addressing a press conference, Chief Minister Pramod Sawant said that the purpose of the initiative is to promote the schemes, tourism activities and policies among people. "Social Media has become the best influencing platform and hence we have decided to empanel social media influencers,"

he said. Sawant said that content created by the empaneled social influencers will be vetted by the official team and then permission will be given for production.

"The newly launched portal is a pioneering initiative by the Goa Government, making it the second state in the nation to introduce a comprehensive Policy for Social Media Influencer Empanelment," he said, adding Rajasthan was the first state to use such a platform.



## Thousands rally in Israel, calling for hostage release deal

**Jerusalem, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Thousands of Israeli women took to the streets across the country, urging their government to sign a ceasefire deal for the release of hostages held in Gaza. In Tel Aviv, protesters on Saturday wearing white temporarily blocked Israel's main freeway, the Ayalon Highway. They held red signs reading, "Stop the bloodshed!" and "Deal now!", Xinhua news agency reported. "We have united to break the silence," the organizers said in a statement. "We take to the streets to choose life before anything else." Israel and Hamas have recently resumed Qatari-brokered negotiations for a ceasefire deal to end the bloody war that started on October 7, 2023.

## Indian-origin man charged with kicking cop during arrest in Singapore

**Singapore, Jan 27 (IANS) :** A 49-year-old Indian-origin man in Singapore has been charged with assaulting a public servant, an offence for which he can be jailed for up to seven years and fined or caned. Haridas Ryan Peter allegedly kicked a 22-year-old special constable sergeant on his hip and right hand on January 23 at a carpark in Sembawang, a residential town located in the north of Singapore.

Police said they were alerted to a case of assault at Block 462 in the same neighbourhood at around 9.15 pm that day, The Straits Times reported on Saturday. Following police's arrival at the scene, Haridas barricaded himself in a flat with his 52-year-old girlfriend. Officers from the Crisis Negotiation Unit, Special Operations Command, and the Singapore Civil Defence Force also responded to the incident as Haridas might have posed a danger to himself and others. "After-



negotiation by CNU officers, the police saw an opportunity to breach the unit when they observed that the woman went to the toilet, thus buying them time to ensure her safety," Police said in a statement.



## Canada to probe India's alleged interference in Federal elections

**Ottawa, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Months after Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau accused India of having a role in killing of pro-Khalistan leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a designated terrorist in New Delhi, Ottawa has now announced to investigate alleged meddling by India in country's Federal elections in 2019 and 2021. The Foreign Interference Commission, which was set up last year by the Trudeau government to investigate interference by foreign governments in the last two federal elections in Canada, on Saturday said that it will also investigate India's alleged interference in the elections. The commission in a state-

ment has asked the Canadian government to give it all information and documents related to said accusation. Earlier, the main target of the commission's work was alleged interference by China and Russia. Now, India has also been included in its investigation after India-Canada relations nosedived in the wake of Trudeau's allegations against New Delhi in Nijjar's killing. The commission, scheduled to begin its hearings next Monday, will examine all the information about foreign interference in the two elections and make recommendations to stop it. It will submit its interim report by May 3 and final report by December 31.

## Sri Lankan Parliament passes Bill to regulate online content, draws oppn criticism

**Colombo, Jan 27 (IANS) :** Sri Lankan Parliament has passed a bill to regulate online content, drawing criticism by the opposition parties which termed it as serious threat to freedom of speech and crackdown on dissent, ahead of polls in the country, local media reported.

The Speaker said that the Bill was passed on Saturday by a 108-62 vote, the Colombo Times reported. Debunking allegations that the Bill will impact the freedom of speech, Public Security Minister Tiran Alles said: "It is not suppress media or opposition." While presenting the bill on Saturday, President Ranil Wickremesinghe's government has said that it is aimed at checking cybercrimes.



## UN asks Houthis to reconsider order to expel US, UK nationals

**United Nations, Jan 27 (IANS) :** The United Nations has asked Yemen's Houthi authorities to reconsider their decision to expel US and British nationals working for the world body in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. Stephane Dujarric, spokesman for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, confirmed on Saturday that the United Nations has received communications from the Houthis, which gave the world body one month for all US and British nationals to leave the areas under the control of the de facto authorities, Xinhua news agency re-

ported. "What needs to be said is that any request or requirement for UN staff to leave based solely on the nationality of that staff is inconsistent with the legal framework applicable to the UN," said Dujarric. "It also, of course, impedes our ability to deliver on the mandate to support all of the people in Yemen. And we call on all the authorities in Yemen to ensure that our staff can continue to perform their functions on behalf of the UN." He said UN staff serve impartially and serve the flag of the United Nations and none other. The spokesman refused to say how many US and British nationals are working for the UN in

Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen. "I can find out the number of international staff. We do not give breakdowns of our staff's own nationality," said Dujarric. The order of the Houthi militia came amid rising tensions between the US and British forces stationed in the Red Sea and the Houthis who have been attacking "Israeli-linked ships" in the region since the onset of the Israel-Hamas conflict on October 7, 2023. The US-UK maritime coalition in the Red Sea has carried out multiple airstrikes on Houthi camps in various northern provinces of Yemen.



## 1st Test: Pope's stunning unbeaten 148 pulls England out of trouble; gives them 126-run lead over India

Hyderabad, Jan 27 (IANS) : Top-order batter and vice-captain Ollie Pope slammed his fifth Test century and first in India to pull England out of trouble and helped them take a lead of 126 runs at the end of day three in the first Test at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium on Saturday. Pope, who made just one in England's first innings, stood up amidst a fightback from India to hit an unbeaten 148, laced with 17 boundaries, which guided England to 316/6 in 77 overs, the first time a visiting team has scored 300 in a Test match second innings in India since Nagpur 2012. The day began with England facing the prospect of conceding a lead of 200 runs, but Joe

Root's 4-79 meant India added only 15 runs to their overnight total and were all out for 436 in their first innings, with the hosts' taking a 190-run lead. Though Jasprit Bumrah and Ravichandran Ashwin helped India bounce back in the second session, England made 154 runs in the final session, losing just one wicket to make day three theirs'. With the pitch going slower and slower, it meant the batters had time to adjust their strokeplay against the bowlers. Pope hugely benefitted from it by blunting the spinners with good use of his feet and wrists, survived a fiery Jasprit Bumrah spell, and executed the conventional sweeps and reverse sweeps to good effect to play one of his best knocks in Test cricket. Apart from Pope messing the line

and length of the Indian spinners with his proactiveness, the opening pair of Zak Crawley and Ben Duckett set the tone for England's much better showing in the second innings with a fine 45-run opening stand. Pope also shared a 112-run stand for the sixth wicket with Ben Foakes (34) and had a reprieve at 110 when Axar Patel dropped his catch off Ravindra Jadeja. Root and Mark Wood began the morning with eight sedate overs to keep Jadeja and Axar Patel in check. As soon as Leach, nursing a left knee injury, entered the attack, Axar feasted on his overpitched deliveries by striking back-to-back cover drives for boundaries. But Root came back to trap Jadeja LBW for 87 with an off-break de-



livery which didn't turn much, making the left-handed third Indian batter in the innings to be out in the 80s. On the very next ball, Root got an off-break delivery from around the wicket to turn in and castled Bumrah through the gate.

Axar went on the back foot to cut off Rehan, but the leg-break delivery kept low to beat the batter on the inside edge and it crashed into the stumps, ending India's innings in the first hour of the day. In England's second innings, Crawley took the positive route

early on, reverse-sweeping Ashwin twice, while square-driving off Bumrah for a boundary. Crawley's positive strokeplay continued by lofting Axar for a six down the ground and took a four off Ashwin via a classy cover drive.



### ISSF World Cup 2024: Rhythm, Ujjwal win mixed team pistol gold

New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) : India picked up their first gold of the International Shooting Sport Federation (ISSF) World Cup Rifle/Pistol/Shotgun stage in Cairo, Egypt, when Rhythm Sangwan and Ujjwal combined to defeat the Armenian pair of Elmira Karapetyan and Benik Khlghatyan 17-7 in the 10m air pistol mixed team gold medal match on Day Two of competitions, at the Egypt International Olympic City Shooting range on Saturday.



### Australian Open: Bopanna wins men's doubles title with Ebden, becomes oldest major winner

Melbourne, Jan 27 (IANS) : India's Rohan Bopanna made history on Saturday, becoming the oldest man in the Open Era to win a major men's doubles title on Saturday, teaming up with Australian Matthew Ebden to win the Australian

Open. The 43-year-old Bopanna and Ebden overcame Italians Simone Bolelli and Andrea Vavassori 7-6(0), 7-5 to clinch the crown at Rod Laver Arena in Melbourne. Bopanna, who was awarded the Padma Shri by the Indian govern-

ment for becoming the oldest first-time World No.1 in men's doubles recently, completed his mission to win his first Grand Slam men's doubles title.

Bopanna and Ebden were dominant on serve throughout the one-hour, 40-minute clash, winning 80 per cent (40/50) of points behind their first delivery and not facing a break point to cap a dream week.

Bopanna, who had won his first Grand Slam title, the mixed doubles title alongside Gabriela Dabrowski at the French Open in 2017, and Ebden produced their best tennis at the crucial stages. They found great depth on return in the first-set tie-break to storm ahead before they gained the crucial break of the second set in the 11th game.

### Australian Open : Aryna Sabalenka beats Zheng to win second singles crown in Melbourne

Melbourne, Jan 27 (IANS) : Second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka successfully defended her Australian Open women's singles title, overpowering China's Zheng Qinwen in the final on Saturday to claim her second title in Melbourne Park.

The 25-year-old Sabalenka defeated the Chinese first-time finalists Zheng Qinwen 6-3, 6-2 in a 76-minute encounter to get her name etched onto the Daphne Akhurst Memorial Cup for the second time in her career.

Sabalenka raised her fists and blew a kiss to the sky after sealing victory in cool conditions at Rod Laver Arena on Saturday night. With this victory, Sabalenka became the first player to defend their first ma-

ior title since Victoria Azarenka defeated Li Na in the 2013 Australian Open final. The 25-year-old is also the first player to successfully defend an Australian Open crown since Azarenka that year. Like Azarenka, Sabalenka also has career-best Slam performances of a semifinal at Roland Garros, a semifinal at Wimbledon and a final at the US Open. Both players have also reached World No.1. The world No.2 won 84 per cent of first serve points and saved each of the four break points she faced en route to claiming her second singles Grand Slam title with the most dominant performance in an Australian Open women's singles final since Azarenka dropped just three games against Maria Sharapova in 2012.



### KTYG 2023: Weightlifter Jyoshna rises from poverty in remote Odisha village to shatter national record

Chennai, Jan 27 (IANS) : A few months ago, Commonwealth Games gold medallist weightlifter K Ravi Kumar was supposed to reach Jyoshna Sabar's village around 11am. But it was evening then and he

had still not been able to find his way through this mountainous, forested region of Odisha near the Andhra border. The road wasn't exactly motorable either. Fortunately, he spotted a man who turned out to be Jyoshna's grandfather.



### WTT Star Contender Goa: India's Sreeja advances into quarterfinals, Manika loses

Mapusa (Goa), Jan 27 (IANS) : Star Indian paddler Sreeja Akula registered a commanding victory to move into the women's singles quarterfinals while Manika Batra and Archana Kamath suffered defeats in their respective matches in the ongoing World Table Tennis (WTT) Star Contender Goa 2024 at the Peddem Indoor Stadium here on Saturday. The semifinals and finals in various categories will be played on Sunday.



### 'David Warner's faith in me has really helped,' says Akif Raja as Gulf Giants challenge awaits

Sharjah, Jan 27 (IANS) : UAE pacer Akif Raja lauded skipper David Warner for his support during the ongoing DP World ILT20 season 2. Speaking ahead of their clash against the Gulf Giants at the Sharjah Cricket Stadium, Akif credited the Australian for all his help

during his time with the GMR Sports-owned team till now. "I'm very grateful to have David Warner as my Captain this season. It's his faith in me that has helped me grow. He has given me a fixed role to work on, and I have focused on that.

### Savita to lead 24-member Indian women's hockey team in FIH Pro League 2023-24

New Delhi, Jan 27 (IANS) : Hockey India on Saturday named a 24-member national women's team for the Bhubaneswar and Rourkela legs of the FIH Pro League 2023-24. The Bhubaneswar leg will begin on February 3 and end on February 9 while the Rourkela leg will commence on February 12 and last till February 18.

