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Police action against Allu Arjun was mean : Gudur

Bharatiya Janata Party State senior leader Gudur Narayana Reddy on Saturday has taken serious objection to the action of police against Telugu film star....

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Stokes motivates his team to put in extra effort, says England pacer Potts

England pacer Matthew Potts credited captain Ben Stokes for motivating the team to put in extra effort after the dominating show on the first day...

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Zomato gets GST tax demand notice of Rs 803 crore

Food delivery and quick commerce services provider Zomato has received a tax demand notice of Rs 803 crore from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department.

07



Govt working to establish highest standards in education : CM Revanth

Hyderabad, Dec.14 (NSS): Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has announced that the State government is resolutely progressing towards comprehensive reform of the education system and the enhancement of educational standards. On Saturday, the Chief Minister

inaugurated a Common Diet Plan initiative across all government hostels and Gurukuls in Telangana. During a ceremony held at the Social Welfare Residential School in Chilkur village of Moinabad mandal in Rangareddy district, Revanth

Reddy remarked that the previous BRS government did not adequately prioritize diet, cosmetics, and infrastructure within government schools; however, the current people's government.

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TDP's membership reaches 73 lakh

Amaravati, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) claimed on Saturday that it has created a record of sorts in the party membership enrollment as the total number of members has reached 73 lakh. Chairing a meeting on the membership drive at the party headquarters here, the TDP supremo and Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu congratulated the party leaders and the cadre on achieving the record.

Continued on pg 02

I'm law abiding citizen, says Arjun; promises support to victim's kin

Hyderabad, Dec 14 (IANS) : Tollywood actor Allu Arjun said after release from jail on Saturday that he is a law-abiding citizen and respects the law, while promising all support to the family of the deceased person. Talking to the media after reaching his house in Jubilee Hills, he said he would cooperate with the law enforcing authorities and do the needful. He thanked all his fans across the country for their love and support.

"I want to tell my fans that I am doing well. There is nothing to worry about. Thank you very much," the actor said. He once again expressed his condolences to the family of the woman who lost her life in the stampede at a theatre in Hyderabad during the premier show of 'Pushpa 2: The Rule'.



Democracy strangled in 1975, Cong can never remove this taint : PM Modi invokes Emergency

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday launched a frontal attack at the Congress party on Saturday and raked up the 1975 Emergency imposed under former PM Indira Gandhi-led regime to slam the grand old party over its claims of being the 'rightful custodians' of democracy. PM Modi, concluding the two-day debate on the 75th anniversary of Constitution adoption in Lok Sabha, ripped into the previous Congress regimes for its

'blatant disregard' of the Constitution and 'murder of the democracy' and stressed that the trend first started during the country's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru's tenure.

Continued on pg 02

Lal Krishna Advani hospitalised at Delhi's Apollo Hospital



New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : Veteran BJP leader, Lal Krishna Advani, has been hospitalised at Delhi's Apollo Hospital after his health deteriorated. The former Deputy Prime Minister and BJP stalwart was hospitalised late on Friday night. The 97-year-old Lal Krishna Advani has not been keeping well for quite some time and was hospitalised for the fourth time in the last few months. The reason for this latest hospitalisation could not be immediately known but doctors said that his condition is stable right now.

Continued on pg 02



Actor Mohan Babu reacts on hiding rumours; says he is at his residence

Hyderabad, Dec.14 (NSS): It is known that there are reports that veteran actor Mohan Babu has gone into hiding due to fear of his arrest in an attempt murder case. The police tried to record a statement in the attempt to murder case related to the attack on a journalist, but Mohan Babu was not found by them. In this context, Mohan Babu responded on the news of his disappearance. He clarified that he had not fled anywhere and added that He was under medical care at his home. He posted to this extent on his X handle.



CP Anand visits Residential Girls School at Musheerabad & spoke to students about problems

Hyderabad, Dec.14 (NSS): Chief Minister A. Revanth Reddy has ordered officials and political leaders to visit the hostels to resolve the problems faced by the Telangana Government in Gurukuls. As part of this, to-

day, Police Commissioner C. V. Anand, IPS, visited the Telangana Minorities Residential Girls School Musheerabad, Bagh Lingampally. He inquired about the problems of the students there and the facilities available to them. He discussed with the principal

about the breakfast, lunch snacks and dinner being provided to the students and inquired about the type of diet being provided to the students. K. Vanishree, Principal and Dr K. Challa Devi, Deputy Director.

Hyderabad: 204 flight cadets graduate from Air Force Academy

Hyderabad, Dec 14 (IANS) : A total of 204 flight cadets including 26 women have graduated from the Air Force Academy in Dundigal, here. The Combined Graduation Parade (CGP) was held on Saturday at the Academy, marking the successful culmination of the pre-commissioning training of flight cadets of the Flying and Ground Duty branches of the Indian Air

Force (IAF). Air Chief Marshal AP Singh, Chief of the Air Staff (CAS), reviewed the parade and conferred the President's Commission to the graduating flight cadets. Nine officers from the Indian Navy, nine officers from the Indian Coast Guard and one officer from a friendly foreign country were awarded 'Wings' on successful completion of flying training.



Arrangements in place for smooth conduct of Group-2 exams

Hyderabad, Dec 14 : Telangana Public Service Commission (TGpsc) Chairman Burra Venkatesham has informed that that all arrangements have been made to conduct the examination for filling up Group-2 service posts in Telangana.

Over 3.13 lakh enterprises supported under Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme : Centre

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : A total of 3,13,464 enterprises have been supported under the Startup Village Entrepreneurship Programme (SVEP) to date, according to the government. Minister of State for Rural Development, Dr Chandra Sekhar Pemmasani, said in a written reply in Rajya Sabha that so far, total central share releases to states/UTs under the SVEP amount is Rs 561.13 crore. SVEP has been approved in 429 blocks across 31 states/UTs including Puducherry.

Out of which, in 280 blocks, detailed project report (DPR) has been approved and the programme implementation has started, the minister informed. A mid-term review of SVEP was carried out during 2018-19 by the Quality Council of India (QCI), which indicated that the programme was able to meet the objectives. About 82 per cent of entrepreneurs across the blocks reported being from Scheduled Caste, Scheduled Tribe and Other Backward Class categories and 75 per cent of the enter-



prises were owned and managed by women. Nearly 57 per cent of the total household income is through the enterprises promoted under

SVEP. "Average gross income of the entrepreneurs is higher than the aspirational income stated by them from the enterprise at the time of

starting the enterprise," said the Minister. Around 96 per cent of the entrepreneurs reported an enhancement in savings and 70 per cent of the entrepreneurs interviewed reported that taking loans from Community Enterprise Fund (CEF) was easy.

The exposure visits of these entrepreneurs are also organised within different community institutions for better cross learning. SVEP, the sub-scheme under Deendayal Antyodaya Yojana-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM), supports self-help groups (SHGs) and their family members to set-up small enterprises in the non-farm sector.



UP CM announces Rs 2 lakh as compensation for Kannauj accident victims

Lucknow, Dec 14 (IANS) : Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has directed immediate financial assistance of Rs two lakh each to the families of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each to those who sustained serious injuries in the Kannauj accident, the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister's Office (CMO) said. This comes after eight people lost their lives and at least 19 others were left injured after a double-decker bus collided with a water tanker on the Lucknow-Agra Expressway on Saturday. According to the police, the bus was travelling on the way to Delhi from Lucknow when the accident occurred. Earlier, Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed his condolences over the death of commuters in the bus accident in Uttar Pradesh's Kannauj.



Terrified TN villagers send SOS to forest dept as elephant herd comes close

Chennai, Dec 14 (IANS) : Villagers of Gudalur district of Tamil Nadu on Saturday called on the Tamil Nadu Forest Department to take immediate action to drive away a herd of wild elephants camping in a forest area just 2 km away from residential zones. M. Lokanathan, a farmer in Gudalur, told IANS, "A herd of more than ten elephants is camping in the forest area, which is barely 2 km from our homes. We urge the forest department to act immediately to drive away these elephants." The villagers report that the elephants frequently raid agricultural farms and banana plantations, causing extensive damage to crops. In a recent incident on Friday, a wild tusker reached a residential area and attacked the house of Suresh, a farmer in Puliyamvayal, Gudalur.

Suresh and his pregnant wife had a miraculous escape though the elephant destroyed their house. According to Gudalur range forest officials, Suresh opened his door after hearing noises, only to find the wild tusker outside. He and his wife fled through the back door, but the elephant demolished their house and belongings. The previous night, a herd of wild elephants emerged from the forest and destroyed houses in the Allurvayal area of Gudalur district. Villagers have demanded that the forest department implement preventive measures such as digging trenches and erecting solar fences to prevent wild elephant intrusions. In another instance, a herd of eight elephants has been camping in Thailathoppu, just 2 km from the forest area. Meanwhile, farmers in the

Denkanikottai locality of Krishnagiri district have also urged the forest department to drive elephants back into the forest. Tamil Nadu has recorded 256 deaths due to wild elephant attacks in the past five years. Many people have been injured or incapacitated due to random attacks, particularly in areas adjacent to forests. The Environment Ministry has issued guidelines to states and Union Territories to manage human-wildlife conflicts, including damage to crops. These guidelines advocate for cultivating crops that are unpalatable to wild animals in forest fringe areas. Farmers are encouraged to adopt agroforestry models using cash crops like chillies, lemongrass, and khus grass, mixed with trees and shrubs.

Young Indian professionals key to fulfilling global workforce requirements : Minister

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : India's youth are the nation's true wealth, with their talent and skills being recognised and appreciated globally, Union Minister for Labour and Employment, Dr Mansukh Mandaviya, has stressed. During his address at an event in the national capital, the minister emphasised that Indian professionals are contributing significantly to fulfilling global workforce needs. The webinar was organised by the Ministry of Labour and Employment in collaboration with the United Nations India, International Labour Organisation (ILO) and University Grants Commission (UGC). The minister encouraged participants to

consider internships or volunteering opportunities with international organisations, adding that such experiences enhance skills, broaden perspectives and prepare youth for diverse career challenges. Dr Mandaviya also urged participants to utilise the National Career Service (NCS) Portal, which has over 37 lakh registered establishments seeking talented individuals. He described the portal as a valuable resource for aspiring youth to find national and international career opportunities. Union Minister of State for Labour and Employment, Shobha Karandlaje, highlighted that young people are a major resource for development.



Ashok Choudhary slams Tejashwi Yadav for misleading him over normalisation in BPSC exam

Patna, Dec 14 (IANS) : Bihar Rural Work Department Minister Ashok Choudhary has criticised Opposition leader Tejashwi Yadav, accusing him of misleading the protesting candidates of the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) over the alleged normalisation policy being implemented.

Drugs worth Rs 8.57 crore seized in Mizoram, three held

Aizawl, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Assam Rifles along with other law enforcing agencies have seized drugs worth Rs 8.57 crore and apprehended three smugglers in Mizoram, officials said on Saturday. Assam Rifles sources said that

the paramilitary troops along with Excise and Narcotics Department personnel recovered 244.500 gms of heroin and 2.288 kgs of 'WY' tablets worth Rs 8.57 crore and apprehended three smugglers from Mualkawi areas in the Champhai district on Thursday. The arrested

drug peddlers were identified as Lalhruaitluanga (56), Lalromawia (44) and Lalruatmawia (42). In another operation, the Assam Rifles along with the Mizoram Police Department recovered Rs 1.24 crore of Indian currencies and apprehended one Myanmar citizen

identified as Lianbiaksang (26) from Ngur areas of the same Champhai along the India-Myanmar border. The operation was based on specific input and the Indian currencies were found inside Myanmar citizen's bags. The drugs and the

Indian currencies have been handed over to the police of the Champhai district for further legal proceedings. With this Thursday's seizure, in the past 17 days (November 20 and December 5), the Assam Rifles, state police along with other law enforce-



ing agencies in separate operations seized various drugs, smuggled from Myanmar.

Migratory birds create riot of colour as they keep tryst with Kashmir wetlands

Srinagar, Dec 14 (IANS) : The evening cackle in the sky as a large flock of migratory birds start descending on the water surface announces the fact that these avian visitors are keeping their annual tryst with Kashmir Valley. The kaleidoscopic view on the water surface inside the Hokersar bird reserve on the outskirts of Srinagar city proves beyond doubt that nature is the greatest painter of them all. Teals, Mallards, Coots, Wigeons, shovelers, Brahminy ducks, Pochards,

Pintails, Tufted ducks, Shelducks and the Greylag geese are the major species of migratory birds that come to the Valley from Russian Siberia, China, Japan, Eastern Europe and the Philippines. These visitors come to spend the winter months in the rather sanguine environs of the Kashmir winter to ward off the extreme cold of their summer homes. Regional wildlife warden, Tawheed Ahmad Deva told IANS that although the migratory bird arrivals are still not very large because of the long dry spell, as the winter season brings rain and

snow in the common days, the bird arrivals will improve in the next 10 to 20 days. "Say for example, if we expected 100 bird species till now, we have around 60 of them in our wetlands at the moment. This is definitely going to improve as rain and snow occurs in the days ahead", the wildlife warden said. Last year, official data said the Valley hosted 8 to 12 lakh migratory birds while in 2021-2022, the number was 11 to 12 lakh. In addition to the migratory birds that make Kashmir's wetlands their winter home, certain species of migratory birds called 'birds of



passage' spend some time in early winter and late spring in the Valley before moving to and out of the Indian plains. These are the Sandhill cranes and Cormorants that spend just a few weeks in the Valley while on their way to and back from the Indian

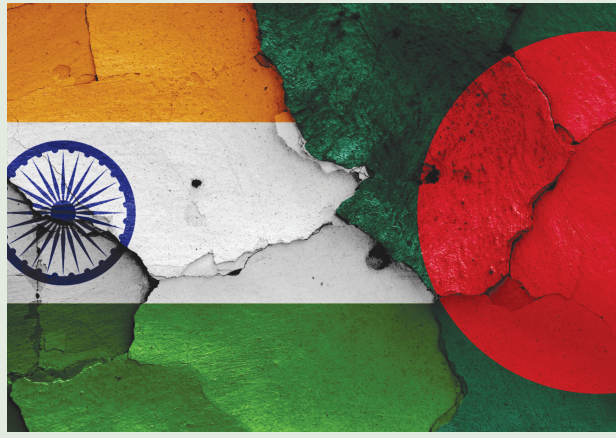
plains. The first to arrive are the Coots and the Teals while the Greylag geese come towards the first week of December. The famous migratory bird reserves of Kashmir are Hokersar, Chatlam.

Karnataka is number one state in maternal deaths : BJP

Bengaluru, Dec 14 (IANS) : Coming down heavily on the Congress government over a series of deaths of women after delivery in the state, the Karnataka BJP has said that the state occupies the top position in terms of maternal deaths.



OPINIONmail



INDIA-BANGLADESH RELATIONS ARE GETTING MORE AND MORE COMPLICATED ON THE MINORITIES ISSUE

Hindu-Muslim is a post-2014 phenomenon. Now, there is the allegation that India is looking at Bangladesh through a “Hindu lens”, instead of looking at Bangladesh through a “Muslim lens.” The critic forgets that Bangladesh is looking at India through a “Muslim lens” and that there is an undeclared war between India and Bangladesh. Also, Pakistan is taking advantage even as the minority Hindus in Bangladesh are being subjected to untold miseries. Rape. Murder. Abduction. Religious Persecution. And imprisonment. Bangladeshis in control of Bangladesh are looking at Bangladesh’s Hindu minority through a “Muslim lens.” Mohammad Yunus, the puppet who is a puppeteer, controls the strings of miseries heaped on the Hindu minority of Bangladesh, who have nowhere to run to, boxed in as they are, in ghettos, where protection is scant and distrust roams unbound. But ignoring the plight, the question is asked, “Should all this be the reason for India to look askance at Bangladesh? Why is India looking down on our neighbouring country, which isn’t any different from how we look at our neighbour to the west? The argument is to give Bangladesh the benefit of doubt, hold back criticism and give Bangladesh the chance to arrive at a correct Hindu-Muslim population balance, i.e., whittle Hindu population to a number that Bangladesh’s Muslims will accept as the right ratio. Above all, India is not the United States. India has never ever engaged in regime change except in 1971, when India was the driving force behind the creation of Bangladesh. India fought a war for the liberation of the Bengalis, Muslim, Hindu and Christian, from the persecution of Pakistani Muslims. Everyone celebrated except Pakistan and the United States, which had ordered its Seventh Fleet into the Bay of Bengal, but had to leave without a torpedo fired. Since then, there has been a secular government in Bangladesh, unlike in Pakistan, which is an Islamic Republic.

The objection now is, how dare India’s looking at Bangladesh through a “Hindu lens”? The Yunus regime, which strictly speaking isn’t a recognized government of Bangladesh but an arrangement between Yunus and the “American deep state”, has relaxed visa rules for Pakistanis and there are Indians of a certain bent who are looking at Bangladesh through Pakistani lens. These elements are adamant that India is behaving with Bangladesh exactly like it behaved with Pakistan. India plays cricket with Pakistan but only in neutral countries. Otherwise, India doesn’t want anything to do with Pakistan, which for lack of bonhomie, regularly breaches the LoC and engages in trans-border terrorism.

The ties between India and Pakistan are nothing to talk about; yet, the current set of people in control of Bangladesh think it’s the best model for the Bangladesh of today. Will Bangladesh be satisfied with “no trade, air, bus, or rail links” with India? Bangladesh’s “Hindu Policy” isn’t helping Bangladesh, which will be the bigger loser if Bangladesh continues with its “Muslims first” policy against India. It is not on “Hindu India” but on “Muslim Bangladesh” to walk both countries back from the brink. There will always be critics, those who have their own idea of what constitutes “communal harmony”, and who wouldn’t mind if India’s rightwing leadership gets the short end of the stick. The Indian Opposition has its own reasons for giving Mohammad Yunus a long rope. Having said that, what is the NDA government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi doing to protect and liberate Bangladeshi Hindus from the clutches of narrow Islamic fundamentalism? There are no answers forthcoming, the Modi regime is far from the madding crowd, leaving the feeling that Modi has cut himself out by telling the world, “this is not an era for wars.” For, the world knows, the only way to get Bangladesh to stop the “Hindu Genocide” in that country is to go to war with it.

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

INDUSTRIAL OUTLOOK IMPROVING IN BENGAL WITH BIG SUCCESS OF MSMEs

Bengal, earlier known as the state for bandhs by the labour, has attained a prime position for doing business among the states in the country. The state which a decade back was most despised by the leading industrialists as well as academics and political leaders and was derided as a state with no hope for resurrection of industrial and business activities, has been acknowledged by a recent survey of SKOCH as the country’s “new IT capital”. This turn around and revival of the economy in Bengal ought to be reviewed in proper perspective. Evaluation of nature of resurrection cannot be done in isolation, it ought to be carried out comparing the reasons of the extreme decline of the industry in the second half of the last century after partition and how cen-

tral policies and also wrong about movement contributed to that.

Ironically no serious attempt was made to find out the real reason for the decline of industry in Bengal. The reasons should have been clinically analysed; what factors caused this deterioration in the industrial production and working setting. How could one forget that Bengal used to be one of the most affluent states of India before independence? Industrial output was the highest in the country, the state frequently attracted people from as far as Rajasthan and Gujarat when it came down to business. Most of the people who migrated from other states made Bengal their second home.

Maharashtra was not a major industrial state in the last century.. It was not a rich state. Bombay of those days had textile companies and was hub of left-dominated trade unions. The mills of Bombay (now Mumbai) were serious cash – generators. Obviously many independent trade unions, not affiliated to any left party, have come up. They functioned more on the regional affinity line.

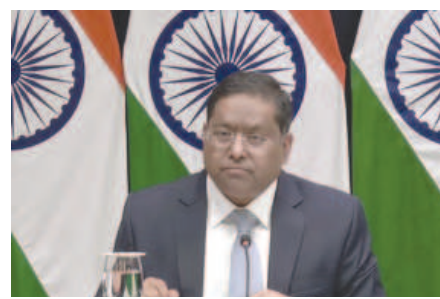


Labourers from south preferred to join unions led by south Indian leader. Maharashtrians preferred a local Marathi leader. This regional orientation was one of the basic factors for birth and growth of don culture in Bombay. The independent trade unionists who were not affiliated to any political party, either to INTUC or Left, maintained a cordial relation with the underworld operators. In most of the cases, the management of the mills took their help to foil the strikes or force the union leaders to keep away from the mills. Interestingly the industrialists and businessmen who migrated to Bombay cursing Bengal of being the lawless state did not complain against this cult of Bombay violence. Dattatray Samant a doctor by profession was the fieriest trade union leader, who had led 300 thousand textile mill workers in on a year-long strike in 1982, which triggered the closure of most of the textile mills in the city was killed by the underworld operators at the behest of the mill owners. (IPA Service)

India issues travel advisory for its citizens in violence-hit Syria amid escalating tensions

India on Friday issued an advisory urging all its citizens to avoid travelling to Syria in the wake of the violence and unrest in the Middle eastern country. "In view of the situation prevailing in Syria, Indian nationals are advised to avoid all travel to Syria, until further notification," the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said in its advisory. The Ministry also urged the stranded Indians to leave by the earliest available commercial flights. It further issued an emergency helpline number and email ID for Indian nationals to contact the Indian Embassy in Damascus.

"Indians currently in Syria are requested to remain in touch with the Indian Embassy in Damascus at their emergency helpline number +963 993385973," the MEA said. Earlier, MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said that India has taken note of the situation in Syria and South Korea, and the Indian missions in both nations are keeping a close watch on the situation.



TRUMP 2.0: REDEFINING INDIA-US TIES IN TECHNOLOGY AND SEMICONDUCTORS

Donald Trump’s re-election as U.S. President could have a big impact on India-US relations, especially in areas like technology, chips, and semiconductors. As he begins his second term on January 20 next year, both countries will face a mix of opportunities and challenges that could shape their tech and economic ties in new ways. In recent years, semiconductors have become a key part of the global economy and a major area of focus for many countries. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed weaknesses in the global supply chain, showing how heavily the world depends on a few producers. This has pushed countries to reduce their reliance on others and invest more in making semiconductors locally. Trump’s government has strongly advocated for reducing dependence on Chinese manufacturing and encouraged shifting supply chains to friendly countries, a strategy called “friend-shoring.” This approach fits well with India’s “Make in India” pro-

gram, which aims to turn the country into a global center for manufacturing. India is working hard to grow its semiconductor industry by introducing policies and incentives to attract investments. The goal is to create a strong foundation for semiconductor production and development in the country. The Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme has played a big role in boosting manufacturing in India. It provides financial rewards to companies that start production units in the country.

(IPA Service)

THE COLLAPSE OF THE CENTRE IN FRENCH POLITICS HAS ITS PARALLEL IN BRITAIN

The crisis of continuity liberalism engulfing France applies in Britain too. Our government may not have fallen, but unless it changes course it will, as soon as it has to face the electorate. President Emmanuel Macron is in denial. Addressing the French on Thursday night, he blamed everyone but himself for the collapse of the Michel Barnier government: an unholy alliance of far left and far right had conspired to defeat the centre. It’s a deceitful account. It

is not the left, but Barnier and Macron’s parliamentary bloc who entered alliance with the far right. The rejected budget continued the discredited policies Macron has championed throughout his presidency. It cut social and healthcare spending, promised job losses and attacked pensions. The French voted against all this in the summer. The parallels in Britain are striking. Britain’s first-past-the-post election did not deliver a hung parliament, but a proportional system would have done. The “centre” was rejected, with Labour and the Conserva-



tives receiving their lowest combined vote share in a century. Labour were less popular at the last election than at any stage of Jeremy Corbyn’s leadership, but they have still managed to become more unpopular since. One poll this week put them in third place, behind both the Tories and Reform UK. Reform is surging. The far-right threat so ob-

vious in France applies in Britain too. As Trademark Belfast’s Stiofan O Nuallain told the TUC’s anti-racism conference on Wednesday, we have four years to beat the far right. O Nuallain pointed out that the key to far-right success has been presenting itself as the alternative to the status quo.



US: 1.1 million oven gloves recalled after consumers report 92 minor burns

New York, Dec 14 (IANS) : US video and e-commerce retailer QVC is recalling about 1.1 million of its "Temp-tations Oven Gloves" because they fail to provide sufficient heat protection, according to a notice published by the US Consumer Product Safety Commission. QVC has received 162 reports of insufficient heat protection, including 92 minor burns, reports Xinhua news agency. Consumers in possession of the now-recalled gloves are urged to stop using them immediately and contact QVC for a refund. More information can be found on the recall's online registration page. According to the recall notice, the oven gloves were sold online at qvc.com as well as through QVC's televised and digital shopping platforms from August 2018 to August 2024 for between 4 dollars and 13 dollars a pair.

Canada launches Arctic Foreign Policy

Ottawa, Dec 14 (IANS) : Canadian Foreign Minister Melanie Joly announced the launch of Canada's Arctic Foreign Policy. The Arctic Foreign Policy, a diplomatic strategy for Canada's engagement in and on the Arctic, provides expanded presence and partnerships to address current needs and the flexibility to adapt to future challenges, the foreign minister said in a new release, Xinhua news agency reported. The Arctic Foreign Policy com-

prises four foreign policy pillars: Asserting Canada's sovereignty; advancing Canada's interests through pragmatic diplomacy; leadership on Arctic governance and multilateral challenges; and adopting a more inclusive approach to Arctic diplomacy, according to the release. One of the core priorities for the Arctic Foreign Policy is to deepen cooperation across the North American Arctic, the release added, saying that the relationships in this region are unique due to geographical proximity and the ancestral rela-



tions that exist among Indigenous Peoples. The North American Arctic encompasses the vast northern territories of three countries: Alaska (the US) in the west, northern Canada in the centre, and Greenland (the Kingdom of Denmark) in the east. The Canadian

Arctic covers 40 per cent of Canada's territory and more than 70 per cent of its coastline and is home to many Canadians, including Indigenous Peoples, who have inhabited this land since time immemorial.

Jordan closes border crossing with Syria

Amman, Dec 14 (IANS) : Jordan's Interior Minister Mazen Farrayah has announced the closure of the Jaber border crossing with Syria due to the security conditions in southern Syria. Under the decision, Jordanian citizens and trucks will be allowed to return to the kingdom.



Lebanese army deploys along border as Syrian conflict escalates

Beirut, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Lebanese army has reinforced its deployment along the Lebanese-Syrian border in the Bekaa region amid escalating conflicts in Syria, according to security sources. The move comes as Lebanon fears that the intensifying clashes between the Syrian government and rebel groups could increase the likelihood of extremist groups reaching the Lebanese border, Xinhua news agency reported. Anonymous Lebanese security sources told Xinhua that the army had heightened its readiness and strengthened its presence along the 375-km border separating Lebanon and Syria. They added that units from the Airborne Regiment had been deployed to the eastern mountain range near the Syrian border, along with



land border guards assigned to monitor mountain paths and illegal crossings linking the two countries. Lebanon remains concerned about a repeat of the events of 2014, when armed groups from ISIS and Jabhat al-Nusra stormed the border town of Aarsal, killing soldiers and civilians before occupying areas along the Lebanese-Syrian border for years. Meanwhile, the General Directorate of Public Security issued a statement on Friday announcing the closure of several land border crossings.



12 killed, dozens injured in attacks on Ukrainian cities

Kyiv, Dec 14 (IANS) : At least 12 people were killed and 39 others injured in Russian attacks on Ukraine, authorities reported. Ten people lost their lives, and 20 others were injured when guided aerial bombs struck the southern city of Zaporizhzhia, igniting a fire at a car service station, said the State Service for Emergencies on Saturday. The blaze, which spread to an area of 250 square metres and damaged six vehicles, was extinguished, Xinhua news agency reported. In central Ukraine's city of Kryvyi Rih, a ballistic missile hit a civilian administrative building, killing two people and injuring 19 others, said Oleksandr Vilkul, head of the city's defense council. Vilkul said the attack also damaged six apartment buildings, five private houses, and several vehicles.



National Assembly in S.Korea to vote on Yoon's impeachment motion amid president's public apology

Seoul, Dec 14 (IANS) : The National Assembly is set to vote on Saturday on an impeachment motion against South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol over his short-lived attempt to impose martial law earlier this week, which left South Korea in political turmoil. The plenary session for the motion will be held at 5 p.m., yet it remains unclear whether the motion submitted by opposition lawmakers will get the two-thirds majority required to pass, Yonhap news agency reported. Earlier in the day, Yoon delivered a nationally televised apology for the public anxiety caused by his botched attempt on Tuesday night, while pledging not to make such an attempt again.

'Khalistan lobby' likely to again push forward motion to declare 1984 riots as genocide, says Canadian MP Chandra Arya

Toronto (Canada), Dec 14 (IANS) : Chandra Arya, Member of Parliament (MP) of Canada, has shared his strong stance against a motion in the Parliament attempting to label the 1984 anti-Sikh riots as genocide and warned that "politically powerful Khalistani lobby" would likely attempt to push the motion again. He said on Saturday that he was the only MP present in the House of Commons to oppose the motion, blocking its passage. The Canadian MP also highlighted the ongoing threats and pressure he faces for voicing concerns of the Hindu-Canadian community and warned that the "politically powerful Khalistani lobby" would likely attempt to push the motion

again. Sharing a post on X, Arya said, "Today, the Member of Parliament from Surrey-Newton attempted to have the Parliament declare the 1984 riots in India against Sikhs as a genocide. He sought unanimous consent from all Members in the House of Commons to pass his motion. I was the only Member present in the House to say NO, and my single objection was enough to prevent this motion from being approved." He added, "Immediately after this, I was threatened inside the Parliament building for standing up and saying no. There have been several attempts, both within the Parliament and outside, to stop me from freely and publicly voicing the concerns of Hindu-Canadians. While I am proud of having stopped this divisive agenda from succeeding to-

day, we cannot afford to be complacent. Next time, we may not be as fortunate." He further said that Khalistan might try to bring the motion forward again. "The politically powerful Khalistani lobby will undoubtedly try again to push for Parliament to label the 1984 riots as genocide. There is no guarantee I will be in the House to block it the next time any other Member, from any political party, attempts to bring this motion forward," Arya said. He urged Hindu-Canadians to actively engage with their MPs to ensure the motion is blocked in the future. "I urge all Hindu-Canadians to act now. Reach out to your local Members of Parliament and secure their commitment to oppose this motion whenever it arises.



The 1984 anti-Sikh riots in India, which followed the assassination of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi by her Sikh bodyguards, were undeniably barbaric," the Canadian MP said. Arya further condemned the loss of lives in the riots but emphasised that terming the riots as genocide would be "misleading and unjustified". He said, "Thousands of innocent Sikhs lost their lives in those horrific events, and we all con-

demn this brutality without reservation. However, labelling these tragic and dreadful riots as genocide is misleading and unjustified." He added, "Such an assertion fuels the agenda of anti-Hindu forces and risks driving a wedge between the Hindu and Sikh communities in Canada. We must not let these divisive elements succeed in their efforts to destabilise harmony.



Pakistan: New Gwadar International Airport to start operations by end December

Islamabad, Dec 14 (IANS) : The New Gwadar International Airport is set to commence operations by the end of December, Acting Director General of the Pakistan Airports Authority (PAA), Air Vice Marshal Zeeshan Saeed, said.

During his visit to the airport, the officer was briefed about the airport's cutting-edge features and the promising business and investment opportunities it is expected to generate in the future, Xinhua news agency reported quoting

PAA. The airport, a donation by China, is a 4F-grade state-of-the-art facility that can handle the largest civil aircraft. Its 3,658-metre-long, 75-metre-wide runway, with specialised foundation treatment, sets a benchmark in engineering

standards. Designed to transform connectivity, the airport features a spacious apron with five slots for wide-body aircraft and plans for extensive cargo operations with a dedicated cargo shed and future expansions. Addressing previous connectivity challenges, the airport will enable modern airlines to serve Gwadar, enhancing regional economic growth and positioning Gwadar as a transshipment hub linked to the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). Launched in 2013, CPEC, a flagship project of the China-proposed Belt and Road Initiative, is a corridor linking the Gwadar Port in southwest Pakistan's Balochistan province with Kashgar in northwest China's Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, which highlights energy.

India to chair UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs for the 1st time

Vienna, Dec 14 (IANS) : India has been chosen to Chair the 68th Session of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND), said the Indian Embassy in Austria on Saturday in a statement. Ambassador Shambhu S Kumaran, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Vienna, officially assumed the Chairmanship of the prestigious UN forum. The CND is the principal policy-making body of the United Nations on drug-related matters. It is mandated to monitor glo-

bal drug trends, support member states in formulating balanced policies, and oversee the implementation of the major international drug conventions.



BJP woos Delhi industrialists, seeks suggestions for manifesto

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : Ahead of the Delhi Assembly elections, BJP leaders on Saturday interacted with entrepreneurs in the capital to understand their problems and take their suggestions for inclusion in the party's manifesto.

BJP leaders assured the development of a single-window system for entrepreneurs' convenience. They promised to involve entrepreneurs in Delhi's industrial growth and prioritise the development of industrial areas, said a state-

ment. The dialogue session was held at Ambedkar International Center, Janpath. It was attended by BJP's Delhi Pradesh Election Manifesto Committee Convener and MP Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, along with committee members, including former minister Meenakshi Lekhi, Media Head Praveen Shankar Kapoor, and Youth Morcha Leader Abhishek Tandon.

A large number of entrepreneurs attended the programme, submitted written suggestions in a designated suggestion box, and discussed issues specific to their sec-

tors. Bidhuri emphasised that industries are the backbone of any state's development as they not only generate revenue in the form of taxes but also share the government's responsibility of creating employment.

He stated that creating a conducive environment for industries is the duty of every government.

Bidhuri criticised the previous governments for treating entrepreneurs merely as sources of revenue. He noted that less than one per cent of development efforts reach industrial areas.

The BJP MP highlighted the poor

state of roads, blocked sewer systems, and lack of drinking water facilities in nearly all industrial zones of Delhi. He assured that BJP's top priority would be the simultaneous development of industries and industrial areas.

Meenakshi Lekhi said that the BJP is engaging with various community groups to draft its manifesto. On December 5, the party had discussions with RWAs (Resident Welfare Associations), followed by a youth dialogue on Friday morning and a meeting with entrepreneurs in the evening.

Industrial associations whose rep-



representatives participated in the meeting included Okhla Chamber of Industries, Badli Industrial Estate Association, Okhla Printers and Providers Association, Mohan Estate Welfare Association, MCIE Badarpur Industries Association,

Udyog Nagar Factory Owners Association, Wazirpur Industrial Estate Welfare Association, Mayapuri Industrial Welfare Association, Naraina Industries Association (Phase 1 and 2).

Cabinet green lights Rs 6,230 crore Rithala-Kundli corridor of Delhi Metro

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Saturday approved the Rithala-Narela-Nathupur (Kundli) corridor of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project with Rs 6,230 crore outlay. The 26.463 km-long corridor will further enhance connectivity between the national capital and neighbouring Haryana. The corridor is scheduled to be completed in 4 years from the date of its sanction, said the Cabinet.

The completion cost is to be implemented by Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Limited (DMRC) under the existing 50:50 Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) of the central government and the Government of National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD) in four years. According to a Cabinet note, this Metro line will be an extension of the presently operational Shaheed Sthal (New Bus Adda)-Rithala (Red Line) corridor and will boost connectivity in the north-western parts of the national capital in areas such as Narela, Bawana, parts of Rohini etc.

The entire stretch will comprise 21 stations. All the stations of this corridor will be elevated. This corridor will be Delhi Metro's fourth extension into Haryana. Presently, the Delhi Metro operates up to Gurugram, Ballabhgarh and Bahadurgarh in Haryana.



J&K Police, BSF carry out joint patrolling along IB in Samba

Jammu, Dec 14 (IANS) : J&K Police personnel and Border Security Force (BSF) troopers carried out joint patrolling along the international border (IB) in Samba district on Saturday, officials said. Officials said J&K Police and BSF carried out the joint exercise to strengthen the security grid along the IB.

"SSP Samba, Virinder Singh Manhas, and the Commandants of BSF's 65th and 159th Battalions participated in the intensive patrolling exercise aimed at assessing security preparedness and strategic locations along the India-Pakistan border in the Ghagwal-Samba sector. The joint forces inspected various streams, culverts and canals to identify potential vulnerabilities in the region. They also interacted with local residents to enhance police-public coordination and encourage timely sharing of information about any suspicious person with law enforcement agencies," an official said. During the exercise, the officers interacted with jawans and asked them to remain extra vigilant and cautious while performing their duties to avert any eventuality.

Centre committed to buy farmers' produce at MSP of 50 pc above cost: Shivraj Chouhan

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : Union Minister for Agriculture & Farmers' Welfare Shivraj Singh Chouhan on Saturday said that the Centre will not only fix the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops at more than 50 per cent of the production cost but also procure the produce from farmers. Speaking in the Rajya Sabha, he said that the Congress had previously denied farmers the Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops.

"In contrast, the Central Government, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has consistently increased the MSP over the last decade," the minister said.

He highlighted that in 2015, the ministry was renamed as the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, marking a significant shift towards prioritising farmers' welfare, which was previously lacking.

He said that when the Congress was in power, they said that they cannot accept the recommendations of the MS Swaminathan Com-



mission. In 2019, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government decided that MSP rates would be fixed by adding 50 per cent profit on the cost.

"When the Congress government was in power, they never gave more than 50 per cent profit to the farmers on cost, but we are committed to buying the crops of the farmers by giving at least more than 50 per cent profit," he said. "There has been an unprecedented increase in the budget allocation for agriculture. Till 2013-14, it

was only Rs 21,900 crore, which has now been increased to Rs 1.23 lakh crore," he pointed out.

"We have six priorities for farmers' welfare -- we will increase production, reduce the cost of production, give fair price for the production if there is any loss in the crop, we will compensate for it through Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana, we will diversify agriculture and by taking them towards natural farming.



INDIA bloc in Manipur urges PM Modi to visit state to resolve ethnic crisis

New Delhi/Imphal, Dec 14 (IANS) : The 10-party INDIA bloc in Manipur on Saturday urged Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Manipur, at the earliest convenience or hold talks with political parties from the state in New Delhi. The bloc, led by the Congress, submitted a letter to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO), requesting him to visit Manipur to resolve the 19-month-long ethnic conflict. Manipur state Congress President Keisham Meghachandra Singh, while talking to the media in Delhi, said that the leaders of the INDIA bloc sought permission to hold a sit-in demonstration in Jantar Mantar but the authorities declined permission. "It is very unfortunate that we can't practise our right to protest unprecedented turmoil... Our movement will not stop. We will continue to protest in different forms," said Singh, who was part of the delegation of leaders of the bloc's parties. He said that due to the 19-month-long ethnic violence over one lakh people were displaced from their homes and villages while a few hundred people were killed and hundreds of others injured.

The violence also destroyed huge amounts of property of the people of different communities, the Congress leader said, adding that the continued violence has also further escalated the turmoil with unprecedented pain, trauma, fear and complete helplessness among the people of Manipur.

SC issues notice on PIL raising concerns on removal of ICC members in private sector

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Supreme Court on Saturday agreed to examine a public interest litigation (PIL) seeking the introduction of safeguards for the members of the Internal Complaints Committee (ICC), constituted under the Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013, in the private sector.

A bench of Justices Surya Kant and Ujjah Bhuyan issued notice and sought responses from the Union Ministries of Women And Child Development and Corporate Affairs, and the Nation Commission For Women in the matter.

As per the computerised case status, the matter is tentatively listed for hearing on January 24, 2025.

The plea, filed through advocate Munawwar Naseem, said that though Internal Complaints Committees are bestowed with the power of

a civil court but ICC members, akin to judges, have not been provided with any safeguards, which will enable them to act without fear and favour.

"An anomalous situation has arisen where ICC members have been conferred quasi-judicial powers without the requisite independence and safeguards. By the very nature of their employment, the ICC members may have to take decisions which could jeopardise their careers. In such a scenario, ICC members lose their jobs in the private sector when they take a decision which does not find favour with senior management. This acts as a barrier to holistically addressing the issue of sexual harassment," contended the petition. It added that on the contrary, in the government sector, ICC members have a greater degree of job security and their employment cannot be terminated without showing due cause, unlike in the private sector.



Congress' Delhi Nyay Yatra covers 68th Assembly seat on penultimate day

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Congress' Delhi Nyay Yatra passed through the 68th Assembly segment on Saturday as former Deputy Chief Minister and PCC president of Rajasthan Sachin Pilot joined DPCC President Devender Yadav in interacting with people in the Badli constituency. People in Yadav's own

Assembly constituency, Badli, accorded a massive reception on the yatra's penultimate day and assured him of their whole-hearted support in bringing Congress back to power in Delhi, a statement said. Yadav said that during the Delhi Nyay Yatra's 29 days till Saturday, he interacted with a cross-section of people, who shared their pains and sufferings with him. People told me that only a Congress government can undo the wrongs done by the AAP Government and the BJP who have only pursued politics.



Samsung to launch 'extended reality' headset next year

Seoul, Dec 14 (IANS): South Korean tech giant Samsung Electronics said on Saturday it will launch an "extended reality" (XR) headset jointly developed with Alphabet's Google and Qualcomm in global markets next year.

The extended reality headset is part of wearable devices to be powered by the new version of Google's Android software -- called Android XR -- developed in tandem with Samsung.

"The XR headset product will arrive in global markets sometime next year. No further details are available about the product for now," a company spokesperson said over the phone, reports Yonhap news agency. Extended Reality is a blanket term that refers to a range of virtual-, augmented- and mixed-reality technologies.

The new headset, code-named Project Moohan, taken from the Korean word for "infinity," will have Google's Gemini chatbot built into its core, allowing users to control their apps with conversational commands and physical gestures.

The Samsung headset is equipped with Qualcomm's XR2 Gen 2 chip for mixed-reality devices.

Zomato gets GST tax demand notice of Rs 803 crore

Mumbai, Dec 14 (IANS): Food delivery and quick commerce services provider Zomato has received a tax demand notice of Rs 803 crore from the Goods and Services Tax (GST) department.

In a stock exchange filing, the company said this notice has been given by the Joint Commissioner of CGST and Central Excise in Thane. This tax notice includes GST demand and interest and penalty.

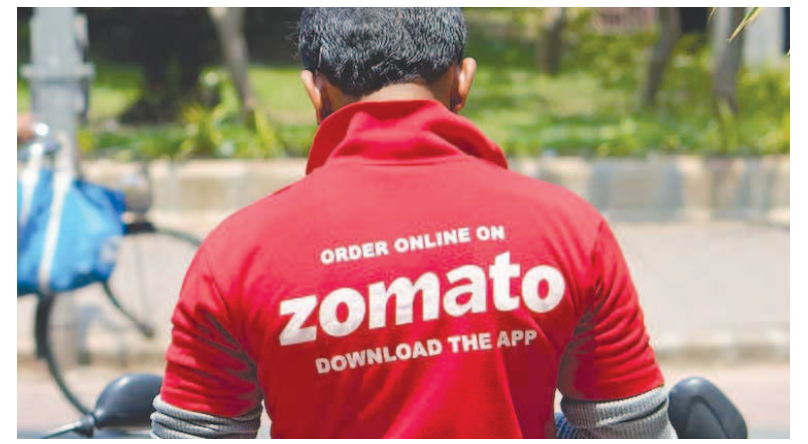
"This tax demand notice is for not paying GST on delivery charges. The total amount of Rs 803 crore includes GST demand of Rs 401.7 crore and interest/penalty of the

same amount," according to the exchange filing.

The company further said, "We believe that we have a strong case on merits, supported by the opinion of our external legal and tax advisors. The company will file an appeal against the order before the appropriate authority."

Earlier, in January and June this year, Zomato received Rs 4.2 crore and Rs 9.45 crore GST demand notices, respectively.

Zomato in 2023 received a GST



demand notice of Rs 400 crore on delivery charges. Delivery charges are levied by Zomato, Swiggy and other food and quick commerce companies on their services.

"These companies claim that gig

workers work as delivery partners. They are paid on an order basis. This delivery charge collected from the users is given directly to the gig worker," according to reports.



India's industrial growth to accelerate, inflation to ease in 2nd half of 2024-25: Report

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS)

: India's industrial activity is expected to accelerate in the second half of the current financial year on the back of recovering consumption demand and higher export growth while inflation is likely to ease, according to a CRISIL report released on Saturday. "So far, high food inflation, elevated interest rates and slowing credit growth have impacted consumption recovery. However, with food inflation showing signs of easing, the space for discretionary consumption is expected to increase," the report states. Moreover, the rural economy will likely improve following healthy agricultural production this year, it adds.

Passenger vehicles clock highest ever November sales in India

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS): Passenger vehicles in India saw their highest-ever November sales at 3.48 lakh units, with a growth of 4.1 per cent as compared to the same month last year, according to figures released by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (SIAM) on Saturday.

Though the Diwali festival did not fall in the month of November, the two-wheeler segment posted sales of 16.05 lakh units, crossing the 16 lakh units mark for the first time in a non-Diwali November, the figures showed. The total production of automobiles during the month including of passenger vehicles, three wheelers, two wheelers, and quadricycle in November 2024 was 24,07,351 units. "The demand momentum which was seen in October during the festive period has continued in November for the industry as a whole," said Rajesh Menon, Director General, SIAM.

Data released by the auto manufacturers earlier this month showed there was an uptick in the sale of cars and SUVs in the domestic market during Nov with market leader Maruti Suzuki India Ltd, Tata Motors and Toyota Kirloskar recording an increase in dispatches to dealers during the month. Maruti Suzuki's total domestic passenger vehicle sales went up to 141,312 units during November this year from 134,158 units in the



same month last year. The main growth was recorded in the SUV segment where sales of its popular models such as Brezza, Grand Vitara and Jimmy surged to 59,003 units during the month from 49,016 units in Nov 2023. Toyota Kirloskar Motor (TKM) registered a monthly sales volume of 25,586 units in November 2024, representing a 44 percent increase over the 17,818 units sold in the same month last year. In addition, the company exported 1140 units. "Our diverse portfolio, spanning from hatchbacks to SUVs, continues to offer tailored mobility solutions that resonate with varying lifestyles," TKM Vice President, Sales-Service-Used Car Business Sabari Manohar said in a statement. The year 2024 has exceeded the company's expectations, he said. Tata Motors recorded a 2 per cent year-on-year increase in passenger vehicle sales during November this year at 47,117 units.

Commercial-level air taxis arriving soon in South Korea

Seoul, Dec 14 (IANS): The transport ministry said on Saturday it will conduct a flight demonstration of a commercial-level air taxi model this week, as part of a government project to introduce the urban air mobility (UAM) industry in the country. The ministry will demonstrate the operation of the S-4 model built by U.S. electric aircraft manufacturer Joby Aviation Inc. at the Korea Aerospace Research Institute's aviation center in Goheung.



India's GDP growth to hold steady in FY25, likely to clock 6.7 pc in FY26

Mumbai, Dec 14 (IANS):

India's economic growth will continue to hold steady in FY25 despite global uncertainties, with a projected GDP at 6.7 per cent in FY26, a report showed on Saturday. CareEdge Ratings said that it expects Indian government to continue on the path of fiscal consolidation and projects India's GDP growth to remain healthy at 6.5 per cent in FY25 and 6.7 per cent in FY26.

"We expect to see improvement in private investment in 2025, supported by anticipated monetary policy easing," said Sachin Gupta, Chief Rating Officer and ED, CareEdge Ratings.

The report said that CPI inflation is expected to moderate in the coming quarters. It expects food inflation to moderate, driven by a strong kharif harvest and favourable conditions for rabi sowing.

The CPI inflation, excluding vegetable inflation, has been below 4 per cent in the last few months. The average CPI inflation is projected at 4.8 per cent in FY25 and 4.5 per cent in FY26. Core inflation is expected to remain benign, averaging 3.5 per cent in FY25 and 4.3 per cent in FY26.



Indian share market opens in red amid selling across sectors

Mumbai, Dec 14 (IANS): The Indian stock market opened in red on Saturday as selling was seen in Nifty's all sectors in early trade.

At around 9:29 am, Sensex was trading at 80,840.9 after declining 449.02 points or 0.55 per cent, while Nifty was trading at 24,421.15 after dropping 127.55 points or 0.52 per cent. The market trend remained negative. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 559 stocks were trading in green, while 1,657 stocks were in red. According to market experts, "November CPI inflation at 5.48 per cent has come within the RBI's tolerance limit. If this trend continues it can pave the way for a rate cut by the monetary policy committee (MPC) in February." "However, the rising dollar is a concern since it can lead to imported inflation. Nifty is unlikely to break from the range of 24,500-24,850," they added.

Nifty Bank was down 40.95 points or 0.08 per cent at 53,175.50 Nifty Midcap 100 index was trading at 58,706.85 after dropping 314.85 points or 0.53 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 19,336.50 after dropping 130.05 points or 0.67 per cent. Akshay Chinchalkar of Axis Securi-

ties said that Thursday was another down day on the Nifty with the market yet again failing to get past what is now undoubtedly a key near-term hurdle near 24,700.

"Yesterday's drop had higher participation compared with what was seen the day before, which means market participants are nervous," he mentioned

In the Sensex pack, Power Grid, Bharti Airtel, Adani Ports, Sun Pharma, NTPC and Tata Motors were the top gainers. Whereas, JSW Steel, Tata Steel, Infosys, M&M, Titan, UltraTech Cement, Bajaj Finance and L&T were the top losers.

In the Asian markets, except Seoul, the markets of Hong Kong, Bangkok, China, Jakarta and Japan were trading in red.

In the US stock markets, the S&P 500 and Nasdaq Composite ended 0.54 per cent and 0.66 per cent lower, respectively. The Dow Jones Industrial Average ended 0.53 per cent down on the previous trading day.



RBI gets bomb threat in 'Russian' language, 2nd time in a month

Mumbai, Dec 14 (IANS): Following a string of online bomb threats in the country, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has received a bomb threat via email, second such incident in a month for the Central Bank. Apparently written in the Russian language, the email was sent to the official website of the Central Bank on Saturday afternoon, threatening to blow up the building with explosives. The police have registered a case against the unknown sender at Mata Ramabai Marg (MRA Marg) police station in Mumbai.

The authorities were actively investigating the matter and

working to track down those responsible for the email threat. On November 16, a similar bomb threat was received on the RBI's customer care number and the caller claimed to be the "CEO of Lashkar-e-Taiba". During the call, the accused reportedly sang a song over the phone before issuing the threat. The Lashkar-e-Taiba terror group had carried out the 2008 Mumbai attacks, one of the deadliest terror attacks in the country. The matter was immediately escalated to the Mumbai Police, who conducted a search. However, nothing suspicious was found. The latest incident occurs at a time when the country continues to witness several hoax threat calls, primarily targeting airlines and schools. On Saturday, six schools in Delhi received a bomb threat via email. The police were following the usual standard operating procedure (SOP) of undertaking detailed checks, said officials. Delhi Police said in a statement: "We are following the usual SOP of undertaking detailed checks wherever such mails are received."

Govt creating national database for accurate count of the disabled

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : There are an estimated 2.68 crore persons with disabilities in India, which is 2.21 per cent of the total population, and the government is creating a National Database for Persons with Disabilities (PwD) for a more accurate count, the Parliament was informed on Saturday. The database would serve as a reliable platform to ascertain the estimate of PwD population in the country in due course, Minister of State for Health and Family Wel-

fare Anupriya Patel told Lok Sabha. She said that disability in movement, in hearing and in seeing are the three largest categories with 54.36 lakh, 50.72 lakh and 50.33 lakh persons, respectively. In reply to a question by Rani Srikumar of the DMK, MoS Patel said, the Department of Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities (DEPwD), Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment (MoSJE), relies on Census 2011 for data on the population of per-

sons with disabilities in the country. According to the Census 2011, in India, out of 121 crore population, there are an estimated 2.68 crore persons with disabilities, which is 2.21 per cent of the total population, said the MoS. As per the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act, 2016, there are 21 specified disabilities. The DEPwD has launched the Unique Disability ID (UDID) sub-scheme to create a National Database for Persons with Disabilities across the country, she said.



The government's data indicate that there are 19.98 lakh people with speech disability, 15.05 lakh have mental retardation and 7.22 lakh have mental illness. There are 21.16 lakh people with multiple

disabilities and 49.27 lakh are listed in the "Any Other" category of disability by the government, the MoS said. Elaborating on the plan to create a database for PwD, MoS Patel said that as per the

Rights of Persons with Disabilities (RPwD) Act 2016, there are 21 specified disabilities. "The DEPwD has launched the Unique Disability ID (UDID) sub-scheme with a view of creating a National Database for Persons with Disabilities across the country. Under the UDID project, certificates of disability and Unique Disability Identity cards are issued to Persons with Disabilities through competent medical authorities notified by respective State Governments/Union Territories," she said. The project aims to encourage transparency, and efficiency in the system of delivering government benefits to persons with disabilities.



BPSC denies implementation of 'normalisation' in upcoming exam

Patna, Dec 14 (IANS) : Amid a huge uproar over normalisation, the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has issued a detailed clarification, categorically denying the rumours. The Commission stated that the 'normalisation' process is neither mentioned in any clause of the advertisement for the 70th Combined Preliminary Examination nor proposed afterwards. It affirmed that the exam will be conducted in a single shift on (Saturday), from 12:00 noon to 2:00 p.m., and thus normalisation is ir-

relevant. Normalisation is a process aimed at addressing possible variations in the difficulty of different question papers across different shifts of an examination. In a statement issued by BPSC, the Commission expressed surprise at the spread of these rumours, suggesting that they were fabricated by certain "coaching operators and student leaders" to mislead candidates. BPSC urged candidates to disregard the misinformation circulating on social media and assured them of a transparent and

fair examination process. Despite the clarification, the situation remains tense in Gardanibagh Patna, the venue of Dharna. Many aspirants had already begun protesting based on the assumption that normalisation would disadvantage them. Educationists like Faizal Khan known as Khan Sir and Motiur Rahman Khan known as Guru Rahman joined the protests, criticising the perceived lack of communication from BPSC and advocating for candidates' rights.

193 cases pending before Constitutional Benches of SC

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : A total of 193 cases are pending before the Constitutional Benches of the Supreme Court, the Parliament was informed on Saturday. A maximum of 167 cases are pending before Three-Judge Bench, followed by 19 cases pending before Five-Judge Bench, 5 cases before Seven-Judge Bench and two before Nine-Judge Bench. These 193 cases are in addition to the others pending before Division Benches, Chamber-Judge and Registrar Court, estimated to be over 80,000. Minister of State (Independent Charge), for Law and Justice Arjun Ram Meghwal, in a written reply in Lok Sabha, said the disposal of cases is within the exclusive domain of the judiciary. However, as per information provided by the Supreme Court, numerous IT initia-

tives to streamline the day-to-day operations have been carried out by the top court to handle the increasing pendency of cases. Responding to a question by Kuldeep Indora of the Congress on reasons behind the accumulation of these cases, MoS Meghwal said, "There is no single conspicuous reason for pendency of cases. It is a multi-faceted situation. The increase in the population of the country, ease of access, and awareness amongst the public have contributed to the filing of fresh cases that are continuously increasing year after year. The pandemic, which set in around 2020, has also contributed significantly in increasing the



pendency in the last four years." Highlighting the Centre's efforts to augment judicial infrastructure, the MoS said, "As on date, Rs 11571.57 crore have been released since the inception of the Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) for Development of Infrastructure Facilities for the Judiciary in 1993-94." "The number of court halls has increased from 15,818 as on June 30, 2014 to 23,590 as on October 31, 2024, and the number of residential units has increased from 10,211 as on June 30, 2014 to 21,076 as on October 31, 2024, under this scheme," MoS Meghwal said. Highlighting efforts to speed up court proceedings, he said under Phase I and II of the e-Courts Mission Mode Project, information and communication technology (ICT) had been leveraged for IT enablement of District and Subordinate Courts.



Let's join the fight against drug menace, says Delhi L-G in video message

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : In a rare video message addressed to Delhi residents, Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena on Saturday urged citizens to join the fight against the drug menace as part of a month-long campaign launched on December 1. "The menace of drug abuse is a direct threat to India's demographic dividend -- our youth," said the L-G, who posted the video on his social media handle X along with the tagline: "Let's come together and strive for a #DrugFreeDelhi!" "Drug addiction has become a threat to our country and society, home and family. Crores of people, especially the youth, are treading the path of self-destruction by getting addicted to drugs," said the L-G who

reports to the Union Home Ministry and controls Delhi Police and the city's law and order. Calling drug trade an international conspiracy against the country, he said this illegal activity was aimed at weakening the country on the global stage. "We all need to counter the menace and it would be possible only when we personally say no to drugs," he said. Asking people to join the month-long drug-free Delhi campaign and contribute to nation-building, L-G Saxena told residents to encourage their friends addicted to drugs to try and quit the habit. "Our fight is not against the addict but against drugs," said Saxena in the video, carrying a logo of Delhi Police.

Conman who used long-lost son formula to rob families arrested by Ghaziabad Police

Ghaziabad, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Ghaziabad Police have arrested a man named Raju, who posed as the long-lost son of several families to commit theft and fraud. His long story of being kidnapped as a child enabled him to deceive families who had missing children, leading to their emotional and financial exploitation.

Raju arrived at the Khoda police station in Ghaziabad on November 24, claiming he had been kidnapped 30 years ago at the age of 8. According to his fabricated story, he was taken to Jaisalmer, Rajasthan, where he worked as a shepherd for a family before escaping and hitching a ride to Delhi in a truck, the police said. The police, acting in good faith, published his account in newspa-

pers, hoping to reunite him with his family. Soon after, a family identified him as their long-lost son and took him into their home with open arms. However, this was just the beginning of the unravelling of Raju's past exploits. The police said, "A few days after Raju's return, his family noticed changes in his behaviour and mood, which raised concerns. They contacted us. Act-



ing on these observations, we detained Raju for questioning." Meanwhile, as news of Raju's return home after 30 years spread through newspapers and TV channels, a family from Dehradun reached out to the police, claiming that Raju was their long-lost son.

Rebel Trinamool doctor-leader removed from West Bengal Medical Council

Kolkata, Dec 14 (IANS) : Rebel Trinamool Congress leader and former Rajya Sabha member, Santanu Sen, a medical practitioner by profession, has been removed as a state-government nominated member of the West Bengal Medical Council. Sen had turned a rebel over the recent incident of rape and murder of a junior woman doctor of R.G. Kar Medical College & Hospital in Kolkata in August this year and at that point in time, had made some comments

that posed an embarrassment for his party. Last month, Trinamool legislator and the Council President, Sudipto Roy, also a medical practitioner, sent a letter to the state Health & Family Welfare department seeking Sen's removal from that chair. In the letter to Principal Secretary, Health and Family



Welfare, Narayan Swarup Nigam, Roy stated that Sen should be removed from the body because of his absence in six consecutive meetings of the council since January 1, 2024, without proper excuse and hence, he should be deemed to have vacated his post. Finally, the Health & Family Welfare Department accepted the proposal of Roy and on Saturday.



BPSC students' protest : Patna Police deny reports of Khan Sir's detention

Patna, Dec 14 (IANS) : Amid the reports that educationist Faizal Khan (Khan Sir) was whisked away by the police when he joined the agitating BPSC candidates, Patna Police categorically denied any such development on Saturday.

Clashes reported in Syria's Dara amid murky situation in Homs

Damascus, Dec 14 (IANS) : Heavy clashes broke out Saturday in parts of Syria's southern Daraa province as local factions seized multiple government-held positions. Meanwhile, in central Homs province, the Syrian army asserted that its defenses remain solid despite opposition claims of troop withdrawals. Pro-government Sham FM radio said clashes erupted in eastern rural Daraa and near the Nassib border crossing with Jordan, though the militants had not entered the compound itself. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor, reported that factions in western Daraa took

over several government sites in the city of Nawa, including the local security branches. At least one civilian was killed, and government soldiers stationed in the targeted buildings were reportedly captured. In response, government forces shelled residential areas from their nearby positions, triggering panic among civilians, according to the Observatory, Xinhua news agency reported. Elsewhere in Daraa, the Observatory noted that the factions gained control of additional checkpoints, forcing army units to reposition. There are also unverified reports of government forces withdrawing some of their checkpoints in the region. Meanwhile, in Homs province, Sham FM reported that fighters

from Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) entered areas of the northern countryside, including the city of Al-Rastan and the town of Talbisa. No clashes were reported during these incursions, it noted. Despite opposition claims of an army withdrawal from Homs, a Syrian military statement denied such movements, affirming that troops remain deployed along "solid defensive lines" and have received reinforcements.



WHO joins investigation in Congo undiagnosed disease

Kinshasa, Dec 14 (IANS) : The World Health Organisation (WHO) is deploying experts to support health authorities in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) with investigations to determine the cause of a yet undiagnosed disease that has been reported in Panzi, a locality in Kwango Province in the southwest of the country. The WHO experts are joining the Congo response team and are on their way to Panzi, the WHO regional office for Africa confirmed in a statement on Saturday, Xinhua news agency reported. An initial local WHO team has been supporting the health authorities in Kwango since the end of November to reinforce disease surveillance and identify cases. "Our priority is to provide effective support to the affected families and communities. All efforts are underway to identify the cause of the illness, understand its modes of transmission, and ensure appropriate response as swiftly as possible," said WHO Regional Director for Af-



rica Matshidiso Moeti. According to the Congo public health ministry, 394 cases and 30 deaths have been reported so far in the Panzi health zone. Symptoms of the illness include headache, cough, fever, breathing difficulties, and anaemia. A respiratory pathogen such as influenza or Covid is being investigated as a possible cause, as well as malaria, measles, and others. Until laboratory test results are received, the cause remains unclear, said the WHO. Panzi is a rural community located more than 700 km from the capital of Kinshasa. Access by road is difficult, and the communication network is limited.



Russia sees rise in new year holiday hotel cost

Moscow, Dec 14 (IANS) : The average hotel cost in Russia for this year's New Year holidays increased by 19 per cent from the same period last year, the latest data from analytics firms showed. The mean cost of short-term rental apartments for the holidays in the 16 largest cities in Russia also rose by 16 per cent year on year to about 8,000 rubles (around 81 US dollars) per day, according to CIAN. Analytics, Xinhua news agency reported. The price rise is most noticeable in Moscow, where an apartment for a weekend costs 25.7 per cent more than during the

previous holiday season, the data showed. Analysts attributed the price increase to growing demand and limited hotel supply during the New Year holidays. TravelLine, an online hotel reservation provider, showed that the volume of hotel bookings in popular destinations during the New Year holidays increased by 6.9 to 25.2 per cent year on year. Thirty-three million tourist trips are expected across Russia in the winter season, up by 13.8 per cent year on year, Russian Minister of Economic Development Maxim Reshetnikov has said.

Dismiss petitions against the Places of Worship Act, Gyanvapi mosque committee urges SC

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Managing Committee of Varanasi's Gyanvapi Mosque has moved the Supreme Court, seeking the dismissal of the petitions against the Places of Worship Act, saying that consequences of declaring the 1991 Act unconstitutional are bound to be drastic and will obliterate the rule of law and communal harmony.

The mosque committee moved an application seeking intervention in the proceedings challenging the validity of the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991. It said that an Article 32 petition challenging a legislative enactment must indicate the unconstitutionality of the provisions based on constitutional principles and the rhetorical arguments seeking a sort of retribution against the perceived acts of previous rulers

cannot be made the basis for a constitutional challenge. "The Parliament, in its wisdom, enacted the legislation as a recognition of secular values of the Constitution. The applicant humbly submits that while this Hon'ble Court considers this challenge to the 1991 Act, the petition may be dismissed as being devoid of merits," the application added. It said that it was only after thorough deliberation and debate that



the Parliament, in its wisdom and legislative competence, enacted the 1991 Act as a conscious decision to let the past not haunt the future of the country and the 1991 Act is a legislation recognising the preambular values of secularism and fraternity.



Singapore's charity launches fundraiser for migrant workers with critical illnesses

Singapore, Dec 14 (IANS) : A Singaporean charity has unveiled a new initiative to support migrant workers facing critical illnesses, aiming to raise 410,500 Singapore dollars (about \$307,875) to assist 20 workers over the next two years. According to the fund's founders at a press briefing on Saturday, the CritiCare Fund for Migrant Workers seeks to bridge the financial gaps for workers whose insurance payouts fall short of covering treatment costs, Xinhua news agency reported. Donations will be managed by Ray of Hope, a registered charity overseen by Singapore's Ministry of Social and Family Development. Disbursement decisions will be made by a community-led council that includes doctors, civil society folks, employers, migrant workers and others. The council has estimated that each case will require approximately 20,000 Singapore dollars, setting aside an additional 10,500 Singapore dollars for administrative expenses. The team will also collect data on the incidence of critical illnesses among migrant workers.

British Indian Lord Rami Ranger's CBE honour annulled by King Charles III

London, Dec 14 (IANS) : King Charles III has annulled the Commander of the British Empire (CBE) honour of British businessman and Indian-origin peer of the House of Lords Raminder Singh Ranger for alleged breach of

parliamentary Code of Conduct relating to "bullying and harassment", an official said on Saturday. Lord Rami Ranger, as he is popularly known, is the founder of UK-based FMCG Sun Mark and Sea Air and Land Forwarding, an international marketing.



South African Airways pilots suspends strike

Johannesburg, Dec 14 (IANS) : South African Airways (SAA) pilots called off their strike after receiving a salary increment, the airline said. The SAA pilots started the strike Saturday following a breakdown in salary negotiations with the company. This resulted in the cancellation of nearly half the carrier's flights on that day, Xinhua news agency reported. The SAA said the strike was suspended Saturday morning after the pilots reached an agreement with the South African Airways Pi-

lots Association (SAAPA). The airline said they offered an additional one per cent salary increase, resulting in a total salary increase of 9.47 per cent for the pilots. "As part of the agreement that broke the deadlock in wage negotiations, engagements on a continuous enterprise improvement program will continue over the next eight weeks. We are committed to implementing work-life concessions that should enhance the productivity of our world-acclaimed pilots."



Italy vows to continue supporting Lebanon's army

Beirut, Dec 14 (IANS) : Italian Defence Minister Guido Crosetto stressed Italy's continued support for the Lebanese army during a meeting with his Lebanese counterpart Maurice Slim. "Italy will continue supporting the Lebanese army by organising more conferences to enhance its capabilities, especially at this critical stage,"

Crosetto said on Saturday. The two officials discussed bilateral relations, developments in Lebanon, military cooperation between the two countries, and the importance of the role played by the Italian unit within the framework of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), reports Xinhua, quoting Lebanon's National News Agency. For his part, Slim thanked Italy for its support to

Lebanon and its assistance to the army, stressing Lebanon's keenness to ensure the safety of UNIFIL and its continued execution of assigned tasks despite the Israeli attacks on its sites. "The army was and will remain keen to cooperate with UNIFIL, especially at this stage where the army plays a central role in maintaining security and stability in the south in close cooperation with UNIFIL," Slim said. The Lebanese minister highlighted the continued "hostile actions" carried out by the Israeli enemy, which constitute a flagrant violation of a ceasefire deal between the two sides while stressing Lebanon's commitment to UN Security Council Resolution 1701 in all its provisions. The ceasefire, brokered by the US and France, went into effect in late November, aiming to halt nearly 14 months of fighting between Israel and Hezbollah.



Bangladesh crisis: BJP MP writes to Nobel Prize Committee to reassess criteria for 'Peace Laureates'

Kolkata, Dec 14 (IANS) : In the wake of the ongoing crisis in neighbouring Bangladesh under the interim government there with Nobel Peace Prize winner Muhammad Yunus as the chief advisor, the BJP Lok Sabha member from West Bengal's Purulia constituency Jyotirmay Singh Mahato, on Saturday, sent a letter to the members of the Norwegian Nobel Committee to reassess criteria for future "Peace Laureates". In his letter, Mahato also requested the members of the committee to issue a statement denouncing the ongoing

violence against minorities in Bangladesh under Yunus's leadership as well as to incorporate mechanisms to ensure the recipients of the prestigious honour maintain the highest ethical standards throughout their lives. In the letter, the BJP Lok Sabha member has acknowledged that since the Nobel Committee's decision to award the Peace Prize is irrevocable he is requesting the committee to condemn the attack on minorities as well as to reassess the criteria for future "Peace Laureates".



Delhi HC asks Centre to consider framing guidelines to protect interests of Indians going abroad to study

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court on Saturday asked the Union government to decide on a representation seeking the formation of guidelines to protect the interests of Indian students travelling abroad for educational purposes. A bench of Acting Chief Justice Vibhu Bakhru and Justice Tushar Rao Gedela asked the Ministry of External Affairs to take a call on the representation made by the petitioner, NGO Pravasi Legal Cell. The petition said that students travelling abroad for educational purposes currently lack adequate legal protection leaving them vulnerable to fraud, exploitation, and various malpractices perpetuated by unregulated educational agents and foreign institutions. "The existing legal framework governing emigration, as provided under the Emigration Act of 1983, does not contain provisions specifically safeguarding

Indian students who seek education abroad," the petition added. Filed through advocate Basil Jason, the PIL said that in the absence of regulatory oversight, these students, while pursuing higher education outside India, are at substantial risk of becoming victims of exploitation. Section 2(f) of the Emigration Act, 1983, defines "emigration" as the departure of any person from India "with a view to taking up employment". This narrow definition excludes a substantial class of individuals, namely students, from its ambit and consequently, the protections available to emigrants travelling for employment are not extended to those travelling for educational purposes, the petition said. "The lack of statutory safeguards contravenes their fundamental rights to equality and protection of life and personal liberty.

1,425 Keralites, including 700 nurses, booked for swindling Kuwait bank

Kochi, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Kerala Police have registered 10 FIR's against Keralites who left Kuwait after availing bank loans. In all, there are around 1,425 Keralites, including 700 nurses, who have left Kuwait and have settled in other countries and the total outstanding loans that have not been repaid is to the tune of Rs 700 crore. A team of Kuwait officials was in the state capital city and after having a detailed discussion with top Kerala Police officials, the decision was arrived to register cases against those who left Ku-

wait without closing the loans. Based on the complaint, 10 FIRs have now been registered and the probe is led by an Inspector General of Police. The 10 FIRs that have been registered are in the districts of Kottayam and Ernakulam. The complainant in the case is a Kuwaiti national Muhammad Abdul Vassey Kamran and one case has been registered at the Kumarakom police station in Kottayam district. The Consumer Credit department of the Gulf Bank, Kuwait, located at Al-Qibla, Mubarak-Al Kabeer



Street, Safat, Kuwait, has given the loans. The scam surfaced after 2022 when the Kuwaiti bank authorities found out that there had been defaults in loan repayments and on further perusal it came to light that many of those who availed of these loans ranging from Rs 50

lakh to more than Rs one crore, have already left Kuwait to countries like the US, the UK, Canada and to states in India. Over the years the Kuwaiti currency (KD) has had the highest exchange rate and at present one KD fetches Rs 275, while one US Dollar fetches Rs 89.



Mandi residents being given formal training under PM Vishwakarma Yojana

Shimla, Dec 14 (IANS) : Under the Pradhan Mantri Vishwakarma Yojana, the labourers, masons and artisans of Himachal's Mandi district are being given formal training, in as many as 18 trades, to make them capable and proficient in multifarious disciplines. Institutes like National Institute of Technology (NIT) Hamirpur and IIT Mandi have been roped in for the initiative. Seven days of training is being given at the centre to doz-

ens of workers. Master trainers are also given training to improve their skills in about 18 trades. A daily stipend of Rs 500 is also being given to the beneficiaries apart from a PM Vishwakarma certificate, identity card, toolkit worth Rs 15,000 etc. A loan of Rs 3 lakh is also being provided at 5 per cent interest rate. Bhanu Marwah, Professor, Department of Architecture, NIT Hamirpur said that master trainers are being taught about use of modern equipment so that the results of construction activities are accurate. Professor Sandeep Sharma of the Department of Architecture said that a programme has been started to engage masons in which training is given in the Architecture Department of the NIT through the Office of the Deputy Commissioner.

Centre actively partnering to host investor summit in Assam : CM Sarma

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS) : Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said on Saturday that the Union government has been proactively associating with the state government for hosting the investor summit -- Advantage Assam 2.0 in February next year. In an X post, CM Sarma said, "The Union government is actively partnering with us to ensure #AdvantageAssam 2025 showcases the investment potential of Assam. Every Ministry has offered their unstinted support towards this effort." The top brass of the Central government, including Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, External Affairs Minister S. Jaishankar, and others have agreed to attend the summit.



IIT-Kharagpur faculty might move court over show-cause notices to professors

Kolkata, Dec 14 (IANS) : The faculty member of the Indian Institute of Technology-Kharagpur might move the Calcutta High Court against the decision of the authorities to serve show-cause notices to 86 professors of the institute, Indian Institute of Technology Teachers' Association (IITTA) sources said. The decision comes amid several members of this iconic institute of the country holding a sit-in-protest against the show-cause notice

as well as the decision to replace three departmental heads within the institute in the last two days. IITTA insiders claimed that the sit-in protest might also be followed by a hunger strike by some of the protesting faculty members of IIT-Kharagpur. The protesting faculty members have already sought the intervention of the Chairman of the Board of Governors in the matter. The show-cause notice was issued following a letter from the association to Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan in Sep-

tember this year, where the faculty members of IIT-Kharagpur accused the institute Director V.K. Tiwari of "favouritism and vindictiveness" in faculty selection. In the petition, the faculty members also requested the Union minister to ensure the appointment of a new Director after Tiwari's tenure ends in January next year. The show-cause notice was served after that and the replacement of the three departmental heads followed. These include Niloy Ganguly of the artificial intelligence (AI) department, Adrijit



Goswami from mathematics and Nihar Ranjan Jana, who was the chairperson of the central research facility (life science division) of the institute.

Waste management at Naga village Kisama a challenge as one lakh people visited Hornbill Festival

Kohima, Dec 14 (IANS) : Hundreds of Naga youths in an untiring effort are working ceaselessly to keep Naga Heritage Village, Kisama clean and healthy as over one lakh people including foreigners visited the place to witness the spectacular silver jubilee edition of the 10-day Hornbill Festival of Nagaland. According to the officials of Nagaland's Tourism and Art and Culture department, dur-

ing the first six days, over one lakh people including 1,750 foreigners and over 26,000 domestic tourists from different parts of the country enjoyed the cultural, traditional and customary extravaganza and performances of 17 Naga tribes and other communities of different northeastern states. A senior official of the Tourism Department on Saturday said that to keep Naga Heritage Village, Kisama clean, hygienic and attrac-

tive, hundreds of young and proactive youths are working round the clock cleaning up the famed Kisama. The Waste Management System has been in operation during the Hornbill Festival since Day one. The Waste Management involves three parties namely Human Matrix, Green Guard and Material Recovery Facility (MRF). The official said that the Human Matrix looks after the securities and collection of waste manage-

ment and facility services, while Green Guard are placed in all the logistic locations for easy access to waste management and the Zub Zub takes care of everything on the ground, segregation and rag picking, later the segregated waste are sent to Material Recovery Facility (MRF) where the segregated wastes are weighed and disposed of accordingly. The management said that most of the wastes collected are plastic water bottles in spite of its ban and asked whether



the concerned authority had come up with such a mechanism in tackling the use of single-use plastics

as per the government's standing order - 'Ban on SUP' (Single-Use Plastics).



Oil supplies to Czech Republic via Druzhba pipeline resume

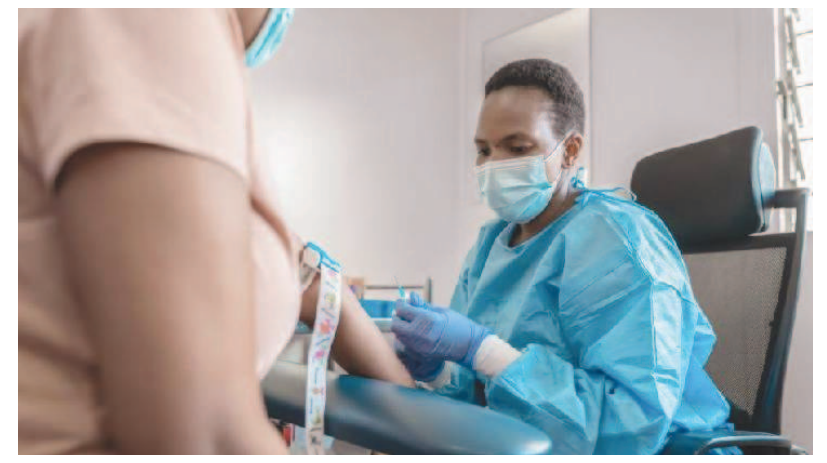
Prague, Dec 14 (IANS) : Crude oil deliveries from Russia's Druzhba pipeline to the Czech Republic resumed on Saturday after two days of interruption, according to Czech refiner Orlen Unipetrol. "Oil supplies were restored this morning and oil is flowing again through the Druzhba pipeline to the Czech Republic," Mariusz Wnuk, CEO of the Orlen Unipetrol Group, said on social media platform X. Oil via the Druzhba pipeline stopped flowing into the Czech Republic on Wednesday. Announcing the disruption.

Subsidiary of US consulting co. pays \$122 mn to resolve S. Africa bribery case involving Indian ex-executive

New York, Dec 14 (IANS) : A subsidiary of global consulting company McKinsey has reached a \$122.85 million settlement with US prosecutors in a South African bribery case involving a former Indian executive, according to officials. "McKinsey Africa has agreed to pay a criminal penalty of more than \$122 million" to resolve the case of bribery of "South African officials in order to obtain lucrative consulting business that generated tens of millions of dollars in profits," Principal Deputy Assistant Attorney General Nicole M. Argentieri said on Saturday. The Department of Justice (DOJ) said that between 2012 and 2016 the subsidiary of the global consultancy company McKinsey through its senior partner Vikas Sagar agreed to pay bribes to former officials of state-owned South African companies to get confidential information that netted the company \$85 mil-



lion in profits. It said that Sagar, 56, had separately pleaded guilty "to participating in a conspiracy to violate the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act" in a case before the federal court of the Southern District of New York in Manhattan. In court documents, federal prosecutor Damian Williams said Sagar would forfeit -- meaning the government will seize -- all his property traceable to the bribery scheme. Court papers identified Sagar as an Indian citizen with a green card who was living in South Africa.



Death toll from monkeypox in Africa rises to 1200 as cases exceed 62,000 : Africa CDC

Addis Ababa, Dec 14 (IANS) : The death toll from the ongoing monkeypox outbreak in Africa has reached 1,200, with the number of cases reported so far this year surpassing 62,000, according to the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). During an online media briefing Saturday evening, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya said 20 African countries had reported 62,171 monkeypox cases since the start of this year, of which 13,579 were confirmed, and the death toll had risen to 1,200. Data from the African Union's specialized healthcare agency show that during last week alone, the African continent reported 2,708 new cases, including 565 confirmed cases and 36 deaths,

Xinhua news agency reported. "If we compare from the first week of January to the final week of November 2024, we have an increase of more than 716 percent (compared to the entire 2023). If we continue with this trend, for sure, by the end of December, we will have more than 800 percent increase of cases compared to 2023," Kaseya said. "This is evidence that after the COVID-19 pandemic, monkeypox is the largest outbreak that Africa is facing." The Africa CDC chief added that the African continent is presently facing different monkeypox outbreaks, with the combination of four strains of the virus. "In some places, we have a combination of different clades, and this is what makes monkeypox more complicated in terms of appropriate response."

UNICEF seeks \$278 million to support South Sudanese children in 2025

Juba, Dec 14 (IANS) : The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) on Saturday issued an urgent appeal for \$278.2 million to support children in South Sudan in 2025 amid an escalating humanitarian crisis. UNICEF highlighted the worsening situation in South Sudan, where funding gaps have severely hampered the humanitarian response. "Approximately 9 million people, including 4.9 million children, 2.2 million women, and 1.4 million people with disabilities, will need humanitarian assistance," the UN agency said.

South Sudan is bracing for a challenging 2025, with deepening vulnerabilities, rising humanitarian needs, and significant reductions in aid budgets. The political landscape remains fragile following a two-year postponement of general elections initially scheduled for December, Xinhua news agency reported.

UNICEF noted that a convergence of crises, including extensive flooding linked to climate change, conflicts, disease outbreaks, economic deterioration, and an influx of refugees and returnees fleeing war in Sudan, has exacerbated the country's challenges.

From April 2023 to October 10, 2024, more than 826,000 people,



including 415,000 children, entered South Sudan, fleeing war in Sudan, according to the UN. South Sudan now hosts more than 484,000 refugees, with an estimated 2 million people internally displaced largely due to floods, intercommunal conflicts, and food insecurity. Children are particularly vulner-

able in this crisis, facing heightened risks of abuse, violence, exploitation, and psychological distress, UNICEF said. "Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the effects of ongoing conflicts, poverty, displacement and gender-based violence, including forced marriage."



Erdogan hopes Syrian opposition to march 'without accidents'

Istanbul, Dec 14 (IANS) : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan expressed hope on Saturday that Syrian opposition forces' march will "continue without accidents," the TRT World reported. "Idlib, Hama, Homs, and the target, of course, is Damascus. The opposition's march continues. Our wish is that this march in Syria continues without accidents or disasters," Erdogan told reporters in Istanbul after Friday prayers. The Turkish leader also voiced frustration with Syrian President Bashar al-Assad, whom he accused of rejecting dialogue. "We reached out to Assad, saying, 'Come, let's shape Syria's future together.' Unfortunately, we did not receive a positive response," Erdogan said.

Assad has previously indicated openness to dialogue with Ankara but insisted on respect for Syria's sovereignty and prioritizing counter-terrorism efforts as prerequisites for improved relations, Xinhua news agency reported. Ankara has long supported Syrian opposition forces seeking to oust the Iran and Russia-backed Assad government. However, Türkiye also views some regional actors as terrorists, including Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a former Al-Qaeda affiliate that is now leading the ongoing rebel offensive in Syria. "The ongoing troubled advances in the region are not unfolding as desired, and Türkiye does not wish for such developments," Erdogan said, without explaining further.



Signature collection to nominate presidential candidates ends in Belarus

Minsk, Dec 14 (IANS) : The signature collection to nominate presidential candidates ended in Belarus. Pickets to collect signatures to support persons seeking nomination as presidential candidates have

been held across Belarus since November 7. Initiative groups must collect at least 100,000 valid signatures, reports Xinhua news agency. Belarusian Central Elections Commission will check the signatures for authenticity within

10 days. The persons seeking nomination include incumbent Belarusian President Alexander Lukashenko, chairman of the Liberal Democratic Party of Belarus Oleg Gaidukevich.

Abandoned ships, crew on rise since pandemic: ITF

New York, Dec 14 (IANS) : As of mid-November, a record 282 ships carrying more than 4,000 seamen had been abandoned by their owners this year, according to the International Transport Workers' Federation, or ITF, a labour union. In 2023, the figure was 132 vessels. "The figure rose when supply chains became snarled during the pandemic and again when Western sanctions were imposed on Russian interests in 2022, causing a surge in illicit maritime trade.



Indonesia: Flash floods, landslides in West Java leave five dead, seven missing

Jakarta, Dec 14 (IANS) : Five bodies have been recovered, and seven others are missing after flash floods and landslides destroyed hundreds of houses and infrastructure in Indonesia's West Java province, an official said on Saturday. The natural disasters, which began on Tuesday, damaged 589 houses and forced

1,400 residents to evacuate in Sukabumi regency, said Hadi Rahmat, spokesperson for the provincial disaster management and mitigation agency. The disaster also caused the collapse of 10 bridges, disrupting residents' movements, Xinhua news agency reported. "Five victims' bodies have been found. The search for the miss-

ing is still underway. Previously, four people were reported missing, but now the number has risen to seven," Rahmat told Xinhua. Of the seven missing persons, five were victims of the landslides, while the causes of disappearance for the remaining two are unknown, Rahmat added. He noted that search efforts for the five landslide vic-

tims are focused on affected areas, while the search for the other two extends beyond these zones. According to him, two evacuation centres have been set up to accommodate evacuees and provide logistics, medicines, and other essential items. However, many survivors have opted to take shelter with relatives.



Don't really know what we did wrong in T20 WC final : Nonkululeko Mlaba

Bloemfontein, Dec 14 (IANS) : Ahead of the one-off Test against England, South Africa spinner Nonkululeko Mlaba reflected on the Women's T20 World Cup final loss to New Zealand and said still don't know what they did wrong. "We're still trying to find our feet, because we just don't really know what we did wrong," BBC Sport quoted Mlaba as saying. The spinner, who finished with 12 scalps only behind Melie Kerr's 15 in the

tournament, vowed to bring the trophy back home soon. "I felt like we had the World Cup but I don't know what happened to us on the day. But, we are going to come back and hopefully bring the trophy home soon." Mlaba was instrumental in South Africa's runners-up campaign in UAE including her 4-29 against West Indies in the group stages. Proteas were the front runners to lift the title in Dubai after their massive eight-wicket win over defending champions Australia in

the semifinal. However, fate backed New Zealand as South Africa fell 32 runs short of the winning target in the chase of 159. South Africa had little time to reflect on their recent setback, as their multi-format series against England began just weeks later. The series offers an opportunity for Mlaba to potentially earn her fourth Test cap when South Africa faces England in Bloemfontein on Sunday.



Stokes motivates his team to put in extra effort, says England pacer Potts

Hamilton, Dec 14 (IANS) : England pacer Matthew Potts credited captain Ben Stokes for motivating the team to put in extra effort after the dominating show on the first day of the third Test against New Zealand. At stumps, New Zealand were 315/9 as Potts and Gus Atkinson shared six wickets between them while Brydon Carse and Stokes grabbed two and one, respectively. All-rounder Stokes bowled 23

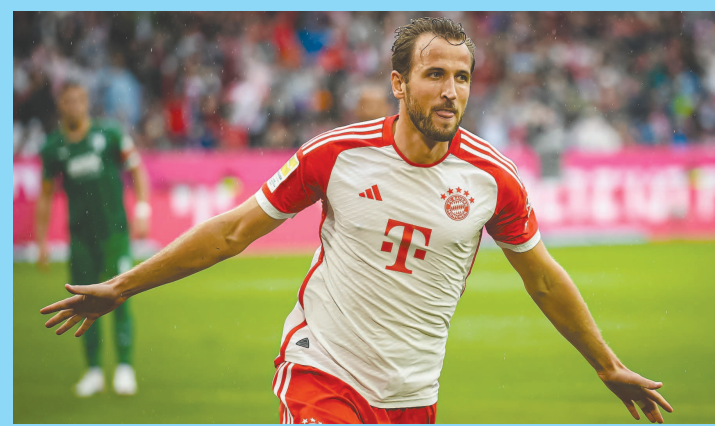
overs in Hamilton, his most in an innings since the summer of 2022. "He can be really proud of his efforts. He leads the team by example," Potts told BBC Sport. "He probably won't want to take the credit, but when we see him doing special things like that, it motivates you to put in that extra 1% for the team," he added. Stokes has faced limitations in his bowling due to injuries in recent years. After undergoing surgery on a long-standing left knee issue last year, he suffered a hamstring injury in August

shortly after regaining full fitness. In the ongoing three-Test series in New Zealand, where England holds an unassailable 2-0 lead, Stokes has resumed a full role as the fourth seamer. His efforts in Hamilton included a spell of 23 overs, matching his workload from the second Test against New Zealand at Trent Bridge over two years ago. "Massive plaudits to the skipper. He bowled three long spells there and one of them was eight overs of bouncers," Potts said.

Harry Kane to remain England's captain, confirms Tuchel

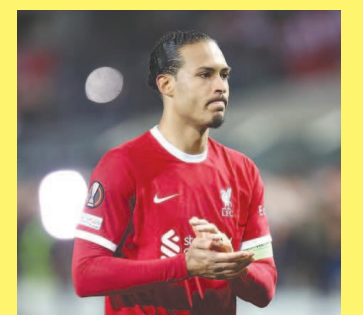
London, Dec 14 (IANS) : Thomas Tuchel, England's manager confirmed that Harry Kane would continue as country's captain, putting to rest any speculation about leadership changes under his reign. The Bayern Munich striker, who has been a cornerstone of England's recent successes, has retained Tuchel's

trust. The German tactician, who was unveiled as Gareth Southgate's successor in October, addressed the media on Friday following the 2026 FIFA World Cup qualifying draw. England will face Serbia, Albania, Latvia, and Andorra in Group K, with their campaign starting in March.



Gulbadin Naib fined for breaching Code of Conduct against Zimbabwe

Dubai, Dec 14 (IANS) : Afghanistan's Gulbadin Naib has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the second T20I against Zimbabwe in Harare on Friday. "Naib has been penalised for violating Article 2.8 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which pertains to showing dissent at an umpire's decision during an international match," the ICC statement said. The incident occurred during the 11th over of Zimbabwe's innings when an LBW appeal against Tashinga Musekiwa was turned down off.



Van Dijk rallies Liverpool ahead of Fulham clash, calls for maximum focus & attention

Liverpool, Dec 14 (IANS) : Skipper Virgil van Dijk feels nothing less than full focus and commitment will be enough for Liverpool to beat Fulham. The Reds host Marco Silva's team at Anfield on Saturday looking to consolidate their position as Premier League leaders.

ISL 2024-25: Mumbai City look to continue strong show in Kolkata against Mohammedan SC

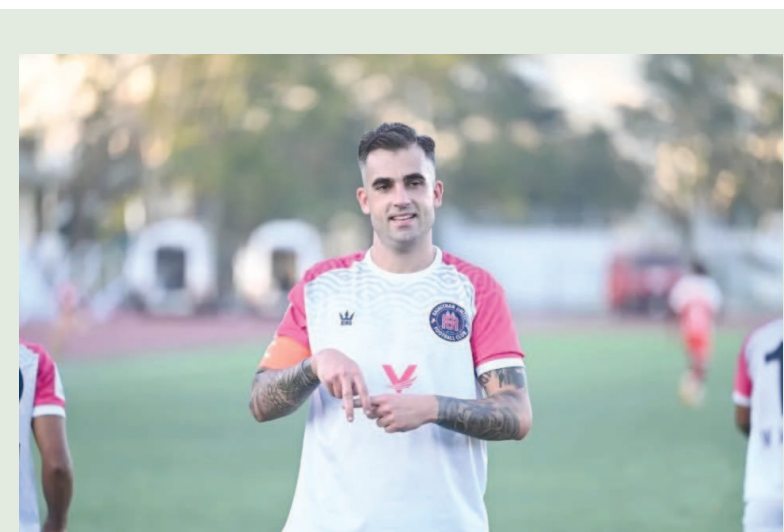
Kolkata, Dec 14 (IANS) : The Kishore Bharati Krirangan will host the first-ever Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 clash between Mohammedan SC and Mumbai City FC on Sunday. The Islanders come into this encounter on a strong run of form when facing new opponents in the ISL, having won their last four such games and having lost only 1 game in Kolkata in nine games. On the

other hand, Mohammedan SC are still searching for their first home victory this season, having fallen short of winning any of their five home fixtures (D1 L4). Their inability to keep a clean sheet in their own backyard has also hampered their prospects. The matchup thus represents a fixture between two contrasting narratives, i.e. Mumbai City FC's pursuit of



WPL 2025 auction provides a great opportunity to add impactful players, says RCB's Williams

New Delhi, Dec 14 (IANS): Ahead of 2025 WPL auction happening on Sunday, defending champions Royal Challengers Bengaluru head coach Luke Williams said the mini auction provides a great chance for them to add players who can be impactful in the tournament. RCB has retained captain Smriti Mandhana, Ellyse Perry, Richa Ghosh, Sabineni Meghana, Shreyanka Patil, Georgia Wareham, Asha Sobhana, Renuka Singh, Sophie Devine, Sophie Molineux, Ekta Bisht, Kanika Ahuja and Kate Cross ahead of the auction. They got England opener Danni Wyatt-Hodge via a trade from UP Warriorz for her existing fee of INR 30 lakh.



I-League 2024-25: Oyarzun's brace helps Rajasthan United to crucial win vs Aizawl FC

Aizawl, Dec 14 (IANS) Spanish recruit Alain Oyarzun led from the front as Rajasthan United FC came alive at the death to clinch a crucial 2-1 away win over a 10-man Aizawl FC in the I-League 2024-25 at the RG Stadium, here, on Saturday. For the visitors, Oyarzun con-

verted both the penalties in the 87th and 90+2 minutes. Aizawl had taken the lead in the 11th minute through an own goal from Abhash Thapa. The hosts were reduced to 10 men in the injury time of the match when Lalchhawnkima was given marching orders.