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## Nitish Kumar Reddy is a star of Indian cricket, says Sunil Gavaskar

Legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar termed Nitish Kumar Reddy as the star of Indian cricket after the youngster scored his maiden Test hundred to rescue the side from a precarious...

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## India projected to witness 6.5 per cent real GDP growth in current, next fiscal: Report

India is projected to witness 6.5 per cent real GDP growth in the current and next fiscal (FY25 and FY26), according to a report on Saturday, which is in line with the expectation amid...

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## Officials have to submit leave applications online from January 1: Additional Collector Khimya Naik

Additional Collector Khimya Naik said that officials should submit leave applications through online from January 1...

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## Nation bids farewell to 'Architect of India's economic reforms' Dr Singh with State honours

New Delhi, Dec 28 : Former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh was laid to rest with full State honours at Delhi's Nigam Bodh Ghat on Saturday, as the

nation bid an emotional farewell to the stalwart Congress leader who was fondly known as the 'Architect of India's economic reforms'. **Continued on pg 02**



## Govt 'insulted' Manmohan Singh by performing his last rites at Nigambodh Ghat, alleges Rahul Gandhi

New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) : The Congress on Saturday accused the central government of "insulting" former Prime Minister Dr Manmohan Singh by performing his last rites at Nigambodh Ghat instead of a designated memorial site for national leaders. In a post on X, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi expressed his disappointment, stating, "The great son of Mother India.



## Satellite data, AI to be used for Rythu Bharosa, crop insurance schemes : Tummala

Hyderabad, Dec 28 (NSS): Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao has informed that the State government will implement Rythu Bharosa and crop insurance schemes effectively in the State using the modern technology, including Satellite data and Artificial Intelligence.

Tummala Nageswara Rao held a meeting at the Secretariat with representatives from various companies spe-

cializing in Remote Sensing data to discuss the implementation of advanced technology in the "Rythu Bharosa" scheme.

The initiative, scheduled to begin this Sankranti, aims to ensure accurate identification and assessment of cultivated lands.

The Minister has emphasised that investment support under the Rythu Bharosa would be provided exclusively to farmers cultivating the land.

He stated that agricultural field officers would record and update the details of cultivated lands regularly. To enhance precision, satellite data will be used to survey and map cultivated areas, crop types, and acreage at the village and survey number levels.

Continued on pg 02

## Telangana Assembly to hold special session to pay tribute to Manmohan

Hyderabad, Dec.28 (NSS): The Telangana Legislative Assembly will convene a special session on December 30 to pay homage to former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh, who passed away on Thursday at the age of 92. The session is scheduled to begin at 10 AM during which Members will observe a condolence meeting as a mark of respect for the late leader. Dr. Manmohan Singh, who served as India's Prime Minister for a decade, was widely recognised for his significant contributions to the country's economic.



## PJR worked for development of poor: CM Revanth

Hyderabad, Dec.28 (NSS): Chief Minister Revanth Reddy praised former minister and Congress leader late P. Janardhan Reddy (PJR) as a person who always stood by the poor people. The Chief Minister garlanded to the portrait on the occasion of PJR's death anniversary at his residence here on Saturday. On the occasion, Revanth Reddy said that PJR worked as a CLP leader from 1994 to 1999 and always fought for resolving the issues of people and was a strong voice for the Telangana cause.



## Hydra creating awareness among public : Hydra Commissioner

Hyderabad, Dec 28 (NSS) : Hydra Commissioner Ranganath today said awareness had been created among the people about illegal constructions. He said the five-month functioning of Hydra and the next year's action plan would be announced and added that 2,050 square km area within ORR would come under Hydra. Stating that Hydra has already saved 200 acres

of government land, Ranganath released the annual report of Hydra at a press conference held on Saturday. He said due to the measures taken by them, awareness had increased among the people about FTL, buffer zones and illegal constructions.



## Aadi Srinivas slams Kavitha's stance on BC reservations

Hyderabad, Dec 28 : Government Whip Aadi Srinivas has criticised BRS MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha, accusing her of exploiting the issue of Backward Classes reservations for political gain.

Addressing the media on Saturday, Aadi Srinivas questioned Kavitha's connection to BCs, alleging that her actions reflect superficial sympathy rather than

genuine concern. "BCs have the strength to fight for their own rights; they do not need her advocacy," Srinivas asserted.

He further questioned Kavitha's silence on BC issues during her party's 10 years in power. "Did she ever raise her voice for BCs then? If BRS truly cared, why didn't they support caste-based census or increase reservations for BCs in local bodies?" he asked. The Congress MLA lauded Congress initiatives under Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, highlighting the caste census as a model for the nation.

## Farmers deserve action, not empty promises, Harish writes letter to CM

Hyderabad, Dec 28: Former minister Harish Rao has written an open letter to Chief Minister Revanth Reddy, accusing the Congress government of betraying Telangana's farmers by failing to fulfil its election promises. He demanded immediate action to establish red gram procurement centers and pay ₹400 bonus per quintal promised during the election campaign. "Farmers are struggling, and the government's silence is unacceptable.



## ED issues notice to KTR in formula E-car race case

Hyderabad, Dec 28 (NSS):The ED has issued notices to BRS working president KTR in the sensational formula e-car racing case. The ED has asked him to appear before it for questioning on January 7. The ED also sent notices to IAS officer Arvind Kumar, who is A2 in this case and former HMDA Chief Engineer BLN Reddy, A3 in the case. The ED asked the two officials to appear before it for questioning on January 2 and 3, 2025. On the other hand, the High Court heard the quash petition filed by KTR in this case on Fri-



day. The court ordered that KTR not be arrested until December 31. The ACB also filed a petition to lift the non-arrest order against KTR. The High Court has ordered KTR and the State government to file a counter-affidavits in the case. Meanwhile, the ACB has handed over the details of the Formula E car racing case to the Enforcement Directorate (ED). The ACB handed over the records of the finance ministry, details of HMDA payments.

## Two-day Nation Building & Peace Conference was organised by Dahinchu Agni Ministry in association with The American University USA

Hyderabad, Dec 28 (TIM Bureau) : Two-day Nation Building & Peace Conference was organised by Dahinchu Agni Ministry in association with The American University USA (AUGP) & United Nations University For Global Peace USA (UNUGP) where Prof. Dr. Madhu Krishan, Eminent Scientist & Chairman cum Chief Chancellor of AUGP & UNUGP USA was the Chief Guest & Hon'ble Tourism Minister Durgesh

was the guest of Honour and MLA adireddy Srinivas was a special Guest. As a part of the Christmas celebrations dahinchu agni ministries have donated 2000 clothing items to pastors and over 1000 to those in need. More than 300 pastors were anointed and several bishops were concentrated during the event. In his address, Prof. Dr. Madhu Krishan informed the gathering that recently he honoured Hon'ble Prime Minister of India Shri Narendra Modi Ji with ATAL NOBEL PEACE

AWARD 2024, from his The United Nations University For Global Peace USA on the eve of celebration of the Birth day of Former Prime Minister of India Late Atal Bihari Vajpayee for his incredible services to India for making India sustainable developed & Strong Nation and inn continuation honoured Archbishop Dr Arul Thomas Garu with Prestigious Awards, "Best Nation Builder Award 2024 for his selfless services for the past 33 years. He also informed about the appre-



ciation lesser he got from Donald Trump office that His prayers and services contributed a lot in his victory. Deligates from many districts and States participated in two days Conference in Rajahmundry Hon'ble Minister of Tourism Mr. Durgesh expressed that the love of christ is best demonstrated through oractical social

services MLA adireddy srinivas remarked that the rmteachings of christ would safe guard the world and foster peace and harmony. Medapathi Sharimila Reddy, Ex-Chairperson of the AP State Housing Corporation, highlighted that Christianity is not merely a religion to proclaim, but a lifestyle to live by. The meeting was graced by His Excellency Prof. Dr. Sir Madhu Krishan. Dahanichu Agni's Founder and CEO, Bishop Dr. Thomas, Dr. Sheba Thomas, Dr. Jeyashelan Garu, Fr. Innaiah Bellamkonda, lion club Christ offer sis. Catherine, and Krishma were also present.

**SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED**  
Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032  
Administrative office: 6th Floor (level 2), Building No.Q2, Aurum Q Parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710.

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised officer of **Shriram Finance Limited, (Shriram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shriram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shriram Finance Limited, by its Incorporation Certificate dt. 13-11-2022)** a corporate body registered and incorporated as a company under the Indian companies Act 1956, is doing Non-Banking financial activities, having its Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No. 14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032 and having its administrative office at 6th Floor (level 2), Building No. Q2, Aurum Q Parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710, under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices.

The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules, on this **27<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.**

BORROWER NAME AND ADDRESS	Amount Due as per Demand Notice
1) Satya Prasad Muppidi S/o. Rajesham, Age:49 Years, Occ: Business (M/S. Sahasra Matching Center), H.No:19-6-405, Laxminagar, Godavarihikani, Ramagundam, Karimnagar, Pincode:505209. <b>And Also At: Satya Prasad Muppidi S/o. Rajesham, Age:49 Years, Rcd Road House Bearing No.19-6-405/1, Admeasuring To An Extent Of 108.80 Sq. Yards Or 91.06 Sq. Mtrs., Out Of Sy.No.660, Situated At Laxminagar Locality Of Godavarihikani Of Jangam Revenue Shivar, Ramagundam Mandal, Peddapalli District. 2) Muppidi Shalini W/o. Satyaprasad, Age:46 Years, Occ:House Wife, H.No:19-6-405, Laxminagar, Godavarihikani, Ramagundam, Karimnagar, Pincode:505209. 3) Potharaju Bhaskar S/o. Venkataswamy, Age:44 Years, Occ:Badli Worker (GDK-11 Incine), EMP Code:1007291, H.No:3-3-534, Ramnagar, Godavani Khani, Ramagundam, Karimnagar, Cell:9059196015, Pincode:505209.</b>	<b>Rs. 29,11,255/- (Twenty Nine Lakhs Eleven Thousand Two Hundred and Fifty Five Rupees Only)</b>

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY - GDV/KRTF221290006** (Property holder Name is **SATYA PRASAD MUPPIDI**, Mortgage deed dated 30.11.2022 Registered as Document No 8976/2022 on the file of the office of Sub-Registrar at Peddapalli.

**SCHEDULE OF PRESENT IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:** RCC roofed House bearing No. 19-6-405/1, admeasuring to an extent of 108.80 Sq. yards or 91.06 Sq. Mtrs., out of Sy.No.660, Situated at Laxminagar locality of Godavarihikani of Jangam Revenue Shivar, Ramagundam Mandal, Peddapalli District, bounded by: EAST : Open place of G. Vishwanatham, WEST : 10 feet wide Common way, NORTH: H.No. 19-6-428 of N. Raja Goud, SOUTH: H.No. 19-6-404 of M. Shankar & Way

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

Date : 27-12-2024  
Place: PEDDAPALLI  
Sd/-Authorized Officer  
SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED



## Pending wages of panchayat workers should be paid

Rajannasirisilla, Dec 28 (TIM Bureau) : Telangana Gram Panchayat Employees and Workers Union CITU staged a dharna in front of the Collectorate on Saturday demanding payment of pending salaries of panchayat workers. When a token strike was called to

solve the problems of gram panchayat workers, the gram panchayat workers gathered in a large scale and took up agitation. On this occasion, GP Union District President Mallyala Narsaiah and District Secretary Annaldas Ganesh said that the government,

which has taken up many agitations to solve the problems of panchayat workers, has not lost its attention. The state cabinet meeting to be held on 30th of this month is expected to discuss and take a decision on the problems of gram panchayat workers. Oth-

GP Union District Secretary Annaldas Ganesh  
Dharna in front of the Collectorate under CITU

erwise, they warned that they will go on an indefinite strike after January 5. CITU District President Egamanti Ellareddy, District Assistant Secretary Gurijala Sridhar, GP Mandal Presidents Boora Srinivas Goud, Anja Goud, Varkolu Mallaiah, Narapuram Narsaiah, Lokini Srinivas, Nyatha Narsaiah, Bejugam Rajasekhar, Mudugam Anil, Naresh and others participated in this dharna.

**Canara Bank** REGIONAL OFFICE HYDERABAD SOUTH: #4-1-954, 3rd Floor, Abids, Beside Hollywood Footwear, Hyderabad-500001. Ph: 8332940061. E-Mail: rohyd3rec@canarabank.com

**SALE NOTICE**

E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Properties under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 8(6) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002. Notice is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the constructive/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Canara Bank Branches are mentioned below will be sold on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" for recovery of dues to the Canara Bank plus unapplied interest and bank charges thereon are mentioned below:

**Date & time of the e-Auction is on 29-01-2025, 11:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M. (With unlimited extension of 5 minutes duration each till the conclusion of the sale). The Earnest Money Deposit shall be deposited on or before 28-01-2025 at 11:00 pm. (portal https://ebkraj.in)**

1) **NAGARAM BRANCH - HYDERABAD:-** Name and Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagee(s): Borrowers: 1) Smt. Barigela Balamani, H.No.10-121, Ambedkar Nagar, Ghatkesar Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana-501301. 2) Barigela Mahender, H.No.10-121, Ambedkar Nagar, Ghatkesar Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana-501301. **Guarantor: Sri Powder Shekar, S/o Venkatesh, H.No.10-121, Ambedkar Nagar, Ghatkesar Mandal, Medchal Malkajgiri District, Telangana-501301. Total Liabilities as on (28-12-2024): Rs.24,17,885.11 (Rupees. Twenty Four Lakhs Seventeen thousand eight hundred eighty five and eleven paise only) plus unapplied interest w.e.f. 28-12-2024 and Bank charges. The amounts remitted after issuance of Demand notice are duly accounted.**  
**Details and full description of the property:** All that Residential House No.10-121 (Southern Part), in Survey No:s: 433, 434 & 435 Admeasuring 150 Sq.Yards or 125.4 Sq.Mtr having Plinth Area of 404 Sq.Ft with RCC situated at Ambedkar Nagar, Ghatkesar Village and Grampanchayat, Ghatkesar Mandal, Medchal-Malkajgiri District, Telangana-501301. **Bounded by: North: H.No.10-121 Northern Part, South: 7' Wide Road, East: 10' Wide Road, West: 22 Wide Road.**  
**Reserve Price: Rs.48,82,500/-, EMD: Rs.4,88,250/-, Bid Multiples: Rs.10,000/-**  
EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited by way of Demand draft in favour of Authorized Officer, Canara Bank, Nagaram BRANCH OR shall be deposited through RTGS/NEFT/Fund Transfer to credit of account of Canara Bank, Nagaram BRANCH, A/c No: 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0013096 on or before 28.01.2025. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website (www.canarabank.com) or may contact C.Rangith Kumar Nagaram Branch, Canara Bank. Ph. No.7382609003 during office hours on any working day.

2) **UPPAL BRANCH - HYDERABAD:-** Name and Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagee(s): Borrowers: 1. M/s Hymavathi Laboratories, Prop: Sri. K.Yashwanth Saroj Chowdary, Plot No.26/B, Biotech Park Phase III, Karakapatta Mulugu Mandal, Siddipet, Telangana. 2. Sri. K.Yashwanth Saroj Chowdary (Legal Heir of Late Kumbha Hymavathi), S/o Late K.Ranga Rao, 28-194(Old) 19-1-71, Dara Vari Rice Mill Road, Janga Reddy Gudem, West Godavari District-534447. **Guarantors: 1. Late Smt. Kumbha Hymavathi, W/o Late K.Ranga Rao, 28-194(Old) 19-1-71, Dara Vari Rice Mill Road, Janga Reddy Gudem, West Godavari District-534447. Kumbha Yogesh Bhusan Chowdary (Legal Heir of Late Kumbha Hymavathi), S/o Late K.Ranga Rao, 28-194(Old) 19-1-71, Dara Vari Rice Mill Road, Janga Reddy Gudem, West Godavari District-534447. Total Contractual liabilities as on (27-12-2024): Rs.1,30,59,103.77 (Rupees. One Crore thirty Lakhs fifty nine thousand one hundred three and seventy seven paise Only) plus unapplied interest w.e.f. 27/12/2024 and Bank charges. The amounts remitted after issuance of Demand notice are duly accounted.**  
**Details and full description of the property:** All that House No.17-13-424/Old Door No.19-01-71, Sy.No.340 Extent 300 Sq.Yds situated at Daravani Rice Mill Street, Jangareddygudem Village & Municipality, Jangareddygudem Mandal, West Godavari District. Property in the name of Late Kumbha Hymavathi. **Property Bounded by: North:** Kattulla Vijay Laxmi, **South:** 60 Feet Panchayat Road, **East:** 45 Feet Panchayat Road, **West:** 45 Konkala Durga Rao and Others.  
\* The Property is under Symbolic possession of the bank.  
**Reserve Price: Rs.93,06,000/-, EMD: Rs.9,30,600/-, Bid Multiples: Rs.10,000/-**  
EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited by way of Demand draft in favour of Authorized Officer, Canara Bank, Uppal OR shall be deposited through RTGS/NEFT/Fund Transfer to credit of account of Canara Bank, Uppal Branch, and A/c No 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0000670 on or before 28/01/2025 at 5:00pm. or "EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited in e-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (E-bkray) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website (www.canarabank.com) or may contact V.SRINIVASA RAO Branch Hyderabad, Canara Bank, Ph. No. 944023680 during office hours on any working day.

3) **SHAH ALI BANDA BRANCH - HYDERABAD:-** Name and Address of the Borrower(s)/ Guarantor(s)/ Mortgagee(s): Borrowers: M/s J.K.Pharma Prop. Kola Prasad, S/o Venkateswrlu, H.No.9-7-35, Marthi Nagar Colony, Santosh Nagar, Champapet, Hyderabad-500059. Sri Kola Prasad, S/o Kola Venkateswrlu, Flat No.402, G.R.R. Grandeur Apartment, Venkateswra Colony, Hastinapuram, Hyderabad-500070. **Guarantor: Kola Vijaya Lakshmi, W/o Kola Prasad, Flat No.402, G.R.R. Grandeur Apartment, Venkateswra Colony, Hastinapuram, Hyderabad-500070. Kola Devi Venkateswrlu, S/o Kola Prasad, Flat No.402, G.R.R. Grandeur Apartment, Venkateswra Colony, Hastinapuram, Hyderabad-500070. Total Liabilities as on (28-12-2024): Rs.27,56,238.78 (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakhs Fifty Six Thousand Two Hundred Thirty Eight and Seventy Eight Paise Only) plus unapplied interest w.e.f. 27-12-2024 and Bank charges. The amounts remitted after issuance of Demand notice are duly accounted.**  
**Details and full description of the property:** All that piece and parcel of the Finished Flat No.402 in Fourth Floor, with a Plinth Area of 1240 Sq.Feet (Including Common Areas and Car Parking 100 Sq.Feet in Stilt Floor/Cellar Floor as per the Draw System) along with an undivided share of land admeasuring 50 Sq.Yards or equivalent to 41.80 Sq.Mtrs., (Out of 1016.66 Sq.Yards), Residential Building Known as "GRR GRANDEUR", on Plot Nos.87, 88, 94 and 95, in Survey Nos.60/L, 60/M, 60/R and 60/Q, in Ward No.8, Block No.3, Situated at KARMANGHAT VILLAGE, Saroornagar Revenue Mandal, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation, Under L.B.Nagar Circle, Ranga Reddy District, Registration Sub-Registrar at L.B.NAGAR, and bounded by:- **Boundaries For Flat No.402: North:** Open to Sky, **South:** Open to Sky, **East:** Staircase and Corridor, **West:** Open to Sky. **Boundaries For Entire Land: North:** 30' Wide Road, **South:** 40' Wide Road, **East:** Plot Nos: 89 and 93, **West:** Plot Nos.86 and 96.  
**Reserve Price: Rs.60,12,000/-, EMD: Rs.6,01,200/-, Bid Multiples: Rs.10,000/-**  
EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited in e-Wallet of M/s PSB Alliance Private Limited (E-bkray) portal directly or by generating the Challan therein to deposit the EMD through RTGS/NEFT in the account details as mentioned in the said challan. Or EMD amount of 10% of the Reserve Price is to be deposited by way of Demand draft in favour of Authorized Officer, Canara Bank, Shah Ali Banda Branch OR shall be deposited through RTGS/NEFT/Fund Transfer to credit of account of Canara Bank, Shah Ali Banda Branch, A/c No: 209272434 IFSC Code: CNRB0013031 on or before 28.01.2025. For detailed terms and conditions of the sale please refer the link "E-Auction" provided in Canara Bank's website (www.canarabank.com) or may contact SHAIK SHAKEER Shah Ali Banda Branch, Canara Bank. Ph. No. 9440905025 during office hours on any working day.  
**The property can be inspected, with Prior Appointment with Authorised Officer, on 27.01.2025 between 11.00 AM and 3.00 PM.**  
\* No Known Encumbrances to the Knowledge of the Bank. Mode of Auction: Online Electronic Bidding. Details of Auction Service Provider: M/s PSB Alliance (Ebkraj), Contact: 8291220220, Email: support.ebkraj@psballiance.com, Website: https://ebkraj.in/  
Date: 27-12-2024, Place: Hyderabad Sd/- Authorised Officer, Canara Bank.

## Officials have to submit leave applications online from January 1 : Additional Collector Khimya Naik

Rajanna Sirisilla, Dec 28: (TIM Bureau) : Additional Collector Khimya Naik said that officials should submit leave applications through online from January 1. "On Saturday, Additional Collector Khimya Naik participated in a training program conducted for employees on registration of leave grant applications through e-HRM portal in the conference hall of the Samarigata District Collectorate.



On this occasion Additional Collector Khimya Naik Speaking, as per the orders of Sirisilla District Collector, the officers and staff working in the government departments of the district are on leave. He clarified that the applications should be submitted only through the online portal https://e-hrms.gov.in from the new year. The government offices in the district should use the e-office login

## Nation bids farewell to 'Architect of India's economic reforms' Dr Singh with State honours

Continued From pg 01  
Earlier, amid poignant slogans of "Manmohan Singh Ji Amar Rahe" and "Jab Tak Suraj Chand Rahega, Manmohan Singh Ka Naam Rahega," the mortal remains of Dr Singh were transported from the Congress headquarters to the cremation ground in a flower-adorned Army vehicle. Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, along with Dr Singh's family members, was present in the vehicle, reflecting his respect and admiration for the late leader. President Droupadi Murmu, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar, and Prime Minister Narendra Modi, along with Union Ministers Amit Shah, Rajnath Singh, and J.P. Nadda, and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, were present at Nigam Bodh Ghat to pay their last respects to the economic wizard. Foreign dignitaries, including Bhutan Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay and Mauritius Foreign Minister Dhananjay Ramful, also attended the solemn ceremony. The former Prime Minister received a final salute from the armed forces and the customary 21 gun salute in his honour.

## Satellite data, AI to be used for Rythu Bharosa, crop insurance schemes : Tummala

Continued From pg 01  
Furthermore, the Minister highlighted the government's readiness to adopt advanced technology for future initiatives such as crop insurance, monitoring crop health, identifying pests and diseases at an early stage, and assessing crop losses due to natural disasters like floods and cyclones. During the meeting, company representatives presented previous project outcomes and shared details about cultivation in two sample mandals, categorised by crop and village, through a Power Point presentation.

**SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED**  
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Administrative office: 6th Floor (level 2), Building No.Q2, Aurum Q Parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710.

**SYMBOLIC POSSESSION NOTICE**

Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorised officer of **Shriram Finance Limited, (Shriram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shriram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shriram Finance Limited, by its Incorporation Certificate dt. 13-11-2022)** a corporate body registered and incorporated as a company under the Indian companies Act 1956, is doing Non-Banking financial activities, having its Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No. 14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai - 600 032 and having its administrative office at 6th Floor (level 2), Building No. Q2, Aurum Q Parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710, under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices.

The Borrowers having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrowers and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with rule 8 of the said Rules, on this **26<sup>th</sup> day of December, 2024.**

BORROWER NAME AND ADDRESS	Amount Due as per Demand Notice
1) Mallesh Sidi S/o. Rajesham, Age:43 Years, Occ:Trading(M/S. Sri Maha Laxmi Harware And Electricals), H.No:5-94, Dandepally, Madaripet, Luxutti Pet, Mancherla, Pincode:504206. <b>And Also At Mallesh Sidi S/o. Rajesham, Age:43 Years, The House Bearing No.2-50/4 Along With Open Land, Admeasuring To An Extent Of 4719 Sq.Yards Or 3945.55 Sq.Mtrs., In Sy.No.230, Situated At Madatpet Village, Dandepalli Mandal, Mancherla District. 2) Siddi Venkatesh S/o. Mallesh, Age:23 Years, Occ:Business, H.No:5-94, Madaripet, Dandepally, Luxutti, Mancherla, Pincode: 504206. 3) Donda Rajarao S/o.Suraiah, Age:41 Years, Occ:Business(Fire Services &amp; Contractor), H.No:3-62/1, Rampoor, Kamamamidi, Mancherla, Adilabad, Pincode:504207.</b>	<b>Rs. 96,50,315/- (Ninety Six Lakhs Fifty Three Hundred and Fifteen Rupees Only)</b>

**DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY - MMCRLTF2303270012** (Property holder Name is **MALLES SIDI**, Mortgage deed dated 27.03.2023 Registered as Document No 762/2023 on the file of the office of Sub-Registrar at LuxuttiPet.

**SCHEDULE OF PRESENT IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:** The house bearing No.2-50/4 along with open land, admeasuring to an extent of 4719 Sq.yards or 3945.55 Sq.Mtrs., in Sy.No.230, situated at Madatpet Village, Dandepalli Mandal, Mancherla District, Registration District: Mancherla, Sub-District: LuxuttiPet, bounded by: EAST: 33 feet Road, WEST: Land of Appani Mounika, NORTH : Land of Kandala Alivelu, SOUTH : Land of Siddam Pushpalatha

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

Date : 26-12-2024  
Place: LUXETTIPET  
Sd/-Authorized Officer  
SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED



## Odisha : Senior IAS officer

### Bishnupada Sethi transferred in major reshuffle

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Amidst the allegations over his involvement in a high-profile bribery case, senior IAS officer Bishnupada Sethi has been removed from his position as Principal Secretary to the Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities Department with additional charges of Odia Language, Literature & Culture Department and the ST&SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department. As per an official notification, the state government on Saturday appointed the 1995-batch IAS officer Sethi as the Officer of Special Duty (OSD) of the General Administration & Public Grievance department. The state government has also declared the post of Officer on Special Duty, GA & PG department equivalent in status and responsibility to the post of Principal Secretary provided in the IAS

Cadre of the State. On the other hand, in 1997 Odisha-cadre IAS officer Sanjeeb Kumar Mishra, on repatriation from Central Deputation, was appointed as principal secretary to the ST&SC Development, Minorities & Backward Classes Welfare Department. Mishra will be in the additional charge of principal secretary to the Social Security & Empowerment of Persons with Disabilities and the Odia Language, Literature & Culture departments. Sethi's name surfaced in the high-profile bribery case after the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) issued summonses to the senior bureaucrat to appear before it for questioning. Though Sethi has not yet appeared before the central agency, his drivers have already been grilled by the CBI in connection with the bribery case.

## Kejriwal did not fulfill promise of giving Rs 2,100 to every Delhi women: State Congress chief

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Ahead of the Assembly elections in Delhi early next year, the State Congress President Devender Yadav on Saturday criticised former Delhi Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) convenor Arvind

Kejriwal for announcing last week that every registered woman in Delhi will receive a monthly payment of Rs 1,000, which after elections get over will rise to a payment of Rs 2,100. Yadav also targeted Kejriwal further for not fulfilling AAP's poll promise of

sending Rs 1,000 to women in their bank accounts in Punjab, which was announced three years ago. Speaking about the AAP's pre-poll promise of attracting women voters ahead of the Delhi Assembly polls, Kejriwal said: "To avail of this benefit.



## One Nation, One Election a transformative initiative of PM Modi : Bihar BJP chief

**Patna, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Bihar BJP President and Revenue and Land Reforms Minister, Dilip Jaiswal, claimed the concept of 'One Nation, One Election' is a transformative initiative with significant benefits for the country. He described the move as visionary and in alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's efforts to strengthen democracy and promote national development.

## Siddaramaiah misused police authority in MUDA case, claims K'taka BJP

**Bengaluru, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Karnataka BJP claimed on Saturday that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has misused the police authority to silence the complainant Snehamayi Krishna in the Mysuru Urban Development Authority (MUDA) case. Karnataka BJP chief B.Y. Vijayendra commenting on the High Court issuing a stay on the FIR against Snehamayi Krishna, said that Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has consistently misused his power to prevent investigations against

him, knowing that the allegations against him might be proven true. "As the petitioner, Snehavayi Krishna, has pointed out, the Congress-led Karnataka government, having failed to lure or pressure him, has resorted to the shameful tactic of using police force to silence him. The BJP party urges the Governor to take immediate action against the officials who are dancing to the Chief Minister's tune," he said. He also claimed that it is evident to those observing the investigation that the Chief Minister has influenced the Lokayukta. "In this context, as the



petition seeking a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) probe in the High Court reaches its final stage, the Chief Minister is visibly disturbed," he said. He claimed that in an attempt to silence the complainant, Snehamayi Krishna, the Chief Minister has misused police authority by directing officials to file a false complaint and arrest him.

## Samajwadi Party to contest BMC elections alone in Maharashtra : Abu Azmi

**Nagpur, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Samajwadi Party (SP)'s Maharashtra unit President Abu Azmi said on Saturday that the party will contest the upcoming Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) elections without aligning with any other party in the state. Asked about distancing himself as formerly being a part of the opposition Maha Vikas

Aghadi (MVA) alliance, Azmi said: "We are secular people. Babri Masjid was demolished but the court considers the people who committed this act as criminals, while some people from the MVA hail the court's judgment. This is against the spirit of the Constitution and the Samajwadi Party cannot align with such people. This matter was discussed with SP President Akhilesh Yadav that the

party will contest BMC elections alone." Regarding the issue arising in the Winter session of the Maharashtra Assembly, the SP leader said, "On Tuesday we raised the issue of bus drivers in the state. As many as 43 people were injured and eight died in a bus accident in Kurla. It was revealed that the driver was not trained to drive properly. At the same time, one person died in an

accident in my area Mankhurd Shivaji Nagar Assembly constituency. Many people on social media said that liquor was being purchased and kept under the seat of the bus. This is sheer negligence and people are losing their lives. We demand to blacklist the company which is training the drivers and file a murder case against it." Commenting on Nationalist Congress Party (NCP-SP) leader

Sharad Pawar's displeasure over Cabinet expansion in Maharashtra, Azmi said: "Ajit Pawar is a part of the ruling MahaYuti alliance. He is the Deputy Chief Minister, but is nowhere to be seen." Regarding the displeasure about the cabinet posts given to the ministers in Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis-led MahaYuti government in Maharashtra, the SP



leader said: "This decision rests with the Chief Minister. They (BJP-Shiv Sena-NCP combine) will know very well what is best for them.

## Several families in MP's Shahdol get pucca houses under PMAY, thank PM Modi

**Shahdol (Madhya Pradesh), Dec 28 (IANS) :** Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, one of the key schemes of the Modi government, has proved a boon for the poor and marginalised sections of the society. Several families in Madhya Pradesh's Shahdol have got pucca houses built under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Some of them spoke to IANS and thanked PM Modi for the scheme.

Beneficiary Sunita Sondhia expressed her gratitude to PM Modi. She said, "I have got the benefit of Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana. Earlier the condition of my house was not good and I had to face a lot of problems, but now due to this scheme, the condition of the house is far better." "I came to know about this scheme through the councillor. I believe that this is a good scheme, which has been started in the interest of the public. I express my gratitude to PM Modi," she told IANS.



## Situation in Meghalaya is alarming : Conrad Sangma war on drugs

**Shillong, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad Sangma on Saturday said that the state government is at war against the consumption of drugs since the situation is alarming in the hill state. The Chief Minister inaugurated the Police Station of the Anti-Narcotics Task Force (ANTF) at the Meghalaya Police R a d i o

Organisation Training School in Shillong in the presence of Deputy Chief Minister Prestone Tynsong and Health Minister Ampareen Lyngdoh. Conrad Sangma said, "The government is on a war and a fight against drugs, as the situation is alarming and is having a detrimental impact on the society, especially the youth." He said that the government is concerned and have taken a collaborative efforts through different departments to address the issue of drugs. "Different departments have collaborated to combat the challenges of drug menace, to choke supply chain, distribution network, health concerns, social aspect and overall rehabilitation," the Chief Minister added. The police station will function as the main hub for monitoring and coordination of the police consisting of Superintendent of Police (ANTF), Addl. Superintendent of Police/Dy. Superintendent of Police, Inspector and Sub-Inspectors. Sangma further said that the departments involved are being revamped to tackle this menace and have a humanitarian approach to victims.



## Goa CM's wife files Rs 100 cr defamation case against AAP MP Sanjay Singh

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Sulakshana Sawant, the wife of Goa Chief Minister Pramod Sawant, has filed a Rs 100 crore defamation suit against Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leader Sanjay Singh for allegedly naming her in a "Cash-for-Jobs Scam" in Goa during a press conference earlier this month. Sulakshana Sawant filed the defamation suit in the Civil Judge Senior Division Court in Bicholim, Goa, against Sanjay Singh. According to an official press note, the allegations claim that Sanjay Singh linked Sulakshana Sawant to a "Cash-for-Jobs Scam" in Goa, claiming she was involved in corrupt practices.

"These statements were broadcast live on multiple national and regional news channels and shared widely on social media platforms like YouTube, where they have garnered significant views," said the allegations. The defamation suit asserts that these false accusations were made without any credible evidence.

## Explore opportunities for organising trade fairs at state level: Haryana Chief Secy

**Chandigarh, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Haryana Chief Secretary Vivek Joshi on Saturday directed the Trade Fair Authority of Haryana (TFAH) to explore opportunities for organising trade fairs at the state level in collaboration with foreign countries with support from the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA). These trade fairs will showcase the cuisine, culture, and products of the partner countries, alongside the products manufactured by the state's local industries. Presiding over the 35th governing body meeting of the HTFA here, Joshi, who also serves as the Chairman of the Trade Fair Authority of Haryana, emphasised the need to boost local industries. He directed officials to develop a comprehensive plan for organising district-level trade fairs to provide crucial platforms for local artisans and traders to market and sell their products.



OPINIONmail



CAN BERNIE SANDERS AND ELON MUSK JOINTLY BRING DOWN U.S. MILITARY BUDGET?

Leftwing Democratic senator Bernie Sanders is a veteran self proclaimed socialist who has been consistently fighting for drastic cut in the budget of the U.S. military since his election as a young senator from Vermont decades ago. In the November elections, he won his seat for the fourth time for another six year term. The maverick senator has all through opposing the high allocations of the US funds to the war efforts supporting Israel and Ukraine. However, all his efforts failed and the massive funds inflows continued. But this time, he has got unusual support from his political enemy Elon Musk, the richest man in the world and a key adviser to the President elect Donald Trump. Musk has been made co-chair of the Department of Government Expenditure along with Vivek Ramaswamy which is primarily meant to cut the unnecessary government expenditure in the departments. While the new Trump government may use the recommendations to do away with a large number of jobs, one focus-that is n cutting to size Pentagon that Musk is stating, has got big approval from Bernie Sanders. In fact, Trump also has mentioned in his recent interviews how Pentagon's present high budget is a big waste and this can be drastically reduced. Elon Musk has gone far ahead and he is saying some the things which Sanders has been saying for the last two decades. Musk is mentioning of military having excessive funds engaging in endless wars.

"Today in America, 60% of our people live paycheck to paycheck, 85 million people are uninsured or underinsured and 21.5 million households are paying more than 50% of their income on housing," Sanders began. "We have one of the highest rates of childhood poverty of almost any developed country on Earth, and 25% of older adults are trying to survive on \$15,000 a year or less. "In other words, the United States has fallen far behind other major countries in protecting the most vulnerable, and our government has failed millions of working families.

"But while so many Americans are struggling to get by, the United States is spending record-breaking amounts of money on the military. In the coming days, with relatively little debate, Congress will overwhelmingly pass the National Defense Authorization Act, approving close to \$900 billion for the Department of Defense. When spending on nuclear weapons and 'emergency' defense spending is included, the total will approach \$1 trillion. We now spend more than the next nine countries combined.

In an interview with 'Politico', Sanders says "I don't often agree with Elon Musk, but he is right when he says the Pentagon 'has little idea how its annual budget of more than \$800 billion is spent.'" "Very few people who researched the military-industrial complex doubt there is massive fraud, waste and cost overruns in the system," Sanders continued. "Defense contractors routinely overcharge the Pentagon by 40%, and sometimes more than 4000%.

"In October, RTX—formerly Raytheon—was fined \$950 million for inflating bills, lying about labour and material costs, and paying bribes to secure foreign business. In June, Lockheed Martin was fined \$70 million for overcharging the Navy for aircraft parts, the latest in a long line of similar abuses. As a result of massive consolidation in the industry, a large portion of the Pentagon budget now goes to a handful of huge defense contractors like Lockheed Martin, RTX, General Dynamics and Northrop Grumman." The contractors spend their billions of defense dollars on dividends and stock buybacks—\$61 billion—to rich investors while pocketing \$57 billion in profits since 2022, he added. "These companies—like the drug companies, insurance companies, Wall Street and the fossil fuel industry—spend millions on campaign contributions and lobbying. In the recent election cycle, defense contractors spent nearly \$251 million on lobbying and contributed almost \$37 million to political candidates.

(By Nitya Chakraborty)

EDITORIAL  
the indian mail



UNBRIDLED IMPORT OF GOLD WIDENS TRADE DEFICIT TO A RECORD HIGH

One of the rationales brought forward by the Union Government of India for its pro-gold policy measures in the Budget 2024-25 was to address the vulnerabilities of the Indian Rupee, but today on December 17, 2024 it fell to a record low of Rs 84.93 per dollar in the morning trade. Another reason given that the gold would become more affordable, but its rate reached a record high of Rs 77,600 per 10 gram. Moreover,

import of gold soared over four times widening the trade deficit to a record high at \$37.9 billion in November. The latest data shows that gold worth \$14.9 billion were imported in November 2024 compared to \$3.5 billion a year ago in November 2023, making it the second largest in India's import basket with a share of 21 per cent just after petroleum. The gain from non-oil exports were just wiped out in gold imports spending. Precious foreign currencies are being spent on gold recklessly. Import of India reached all-time high in value almost \$70 billion in November. The record merchandise trade deficit sharply widened to \$37.84 billion from \$27.14 billion in October last month, and from \$21.31 in November 2023. Officials of the Union Ministry of Commerce have attributed the surge in gold imports to a steep rise in global prices and its safe haven status at a time when shock

market remains volatile. Lower customs duty on gold tremendously contributed to the import of gold. Import duty on gold was slashed in the Union Budget 2024-25 to 6 per cent from 15 per cent since July 1, 2022. It was a record low since June 2013 when it was 8 per cent. It was increased to 10 per cent on August 13, 2013; to 12.88 per cent on July 6, 2019; slashed to 10.75 per cent in February 2, 2021; and increased to 15 per cent on July 1, 2022. Let us have a look at rate of rupee per dollar during the last one decade under Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It was Rs 54.78 per dollar in 2013, but fell to Rs 72.15 in 2019, Rs 75.45 in 2021, Rs 81.62 in 2022, and Rs 84.93 in the morning trade on December 17, 2024. While reducing import duty on gold it was said by the government that it would reduce the prices of gold and would become more affordable to common people, which could boost the domestic demand and exports. However, it did not happen, despite an initial drop in gold prices by about 9 per cent from an all-time high of Rs 74,000 per 10 gram to Rs68,000. Within weeks gold prices started rising again and today it is selling at Rs 77,600 per 10 gram. Gold prices in 2010 in India was Rs 18,000 per 10 gram in 2010.

How much development has taken place in Geeta Colony? People react to Delhi govt claims

Ahead of the Assembly elections to be held in Delhi next year, the ruling Aam Aadmi Party has claimed to have fulfilled their promises regarding development works. However, the opposition parties BJP and Congress have described these claims as "hollow". Regarding the claims of the Delhi government, IANS spoke to the residents of Geeta Colony, which comes under the Krishna Nagar Assembly. Local resident Pramod said, "The Aam Aadmi Party MLA has constructed a road in the area. However, the Municipal Councilor has not paid much attention to the cleaning of drains. An aware voter knows which department comes under whose jurisdiction."



MAIN POLITICAL PARTY BNP IS IN A CONFRONTATION MOOD WITH DR. MOHAMMAD YUNUS

Current Chief Adviser to the Bangladesh Care taker Government, Dr Mohammad Yunus as a Nobel-winning economist, is known to have many friends in high places, starting from Mrs Hilary Clinton. Unfortunately, he has not yet succeeded in influencing too many people in Bangladesh on present indications, four months after taking over in his new job as the top policymaker. It would not have mattered very much if Dr Yunus was not catapulted to the top political job in volatile Bangladesh post the August 5 anti-Hasina upsurge. But

as the veteran economist takes his first baby steps in the furnace of Bangladeshi politics, his inability to communicate with people has turned out to be a major load. Worse, his missteps in running the administration are beginning to embarrass even his mighty international backers. More than other countries the US and the UK are worried about the continuing misgovernance in Bangladesh under Yunus. Could it be that the 84 year old economist has bitten off more than he can chew, trying to run a country that is known to turn ungovernable at times? His 'performance' so far speaks

for itself: As of now, Bangladesh has not only rubbed up India, its most important and closest neighbour, the wrong way through a series of provocative moves and decisions—even, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party(BNP) the most powerful political entity at the moment, is upset with him. Ironically the BNP was the main plank of Yunus's support as he took over power from his bete noire Sheikh Hasina. Islamic fundamentalist forces including the Jamat-e-Islami and the Hifazat-e-Islam also welcomed him as a saviour, not having a credible contender for power on their own.

DOCTORS AROUND THE WORLD WARN OF CATASTROPHIC SITUATION

The ongoing wars in different parts of the world is a cause of serious concern. The recent Russia Ukraine war which began on 24th February 2022 is not coming to an end. The consequences are dire for civilians as well. According to a recent state-

ment by Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky some 43,000 Ukrainian soldiers have been killed and 370,000 injuries had been reported. According to United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) nearly 4 million people have been driven from their homes and are internally displaced and 6.8 million people have



crossed into neighbouring countries in the region including Poland, Hungary, Moldova or other

countries globally. Nearly 20 million people now require urgent humanitarian aid.



## Netanyahu denies agreeing to Palestinian statehood in talks with Saudi Arabia

**Jerusalem, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed that he would not permit the establishment of a Palestinian state, rejecting reports that Israel had agreed to a "path toward Palestinian statehood" as part of efforts to normalise relations with Saudi Arabia.

"Prime Minister Netanyahu has acted and continues to act against the establishment of a Palestinian state," his office said on Saturday in a statement, describing the reports as "completely false".

The statement added that such a move would "endanger Israel's security".

Israeli media earlier reported that a concession on Palestinian state-

hood was being considered as part of ongoing negotiations for a normalisation agreement with Saudi Arabia, Xinhua news agency reported.

Meanwhile, the Saudis also strongly deny the report, saying there has been no breakthrough. "The notion that the kingdom's leadership has somehow modified its longstanding commitment to the establishment of an independent Palestinian state is equally baseless," a statement issued to reporters by an unnamed Saudi official said.

"The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia will continue to work towards ending the war in Gaza and helping the Palestinian people achieve their right to an independent

state," the statement added.

Netanyahu, who has long regarded formal ties with the kingdom as a key strategic objective, dismissed the reports.

Israel captured the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip in the 1967 Middle East war. Palestinians seek to establish an independent state in those territories. Netanyahu's comments come amid mounting international criticism of Israel's military campaign in Gaza, launched in October.

The offensive has drawn global condemnation, with Netanyahu and senior Israeli officials facing war crimes accusations at the International Criminal Court in The Hague.

## UN calls for de-escalating youth violence in South Sudan

**Juba, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) on Saturday called on authorities in South Sudan's Jonglei State and Greater Pibor Administrative Area (GPAA) to redouble efforts to reduce tensions between youth from both sides.

Nicholas Haysom, the UN Secretary-General's special representative for South Sudan and head of UNMISS, said immediate and targeted interventions by authorities and communities are needed to ensure clashes do not erupt.

"UNMISS condemns repeated criminal activity in these areas and urges all par-

ties to refrain from further confrontation," Haysom said in a statement issued in Juba, the capital of South Sudan.

The statement followed allegations of attempted cattle raids in Gumuruk County and along the west bank of the Nanaam River on December 14, as well as persistent reports of youth mobilisation. Officials of the GPAA said youth from Jonglei attacked villages and raided thousands of cattle before fleeing across the Gadiang border.

The Jonglei government, however, has since denied the allegations that state youth were involved in the Saturday attack and cross-border mobilisation, Xinhua news agency reported.

Haysom said these reports of youth mobilisation in Jonglei and

GPAA and the consequent potential for widespread conflict are alarming, noting that despite the UN mission's efforts to engage communities, these cycles of mobilisation for violence persist.

"We have intensified our patrols and continue to encourage relevant stakeholders in both Jonglei and Greater Pibor to de-escalate the situation. But our peacekeepers cannot be everywhere," said Haysom, calling on the authorities, security actors, political parties, faith-based and traditional leaders, youth, and community members to find dialogue-based ways to resolve issues collectively.



## US raids Houthi military building in Yemen's capital

**Sanaa, Dec 28 (IANS) :** A US military warplane made an airstrike on the Defence Ministry building in the Houthi rebel-held Yemeni capital of Sanaa late on Saturday night. The Houthi-run al-Masirah TV said the 'US aggression' took place overnight, noting that the group vowed to retaliate by targeting "US interests and shipping in the Red Sea." Local residents reported seeing several ambulances entering the facility late on Friday night as Houthi fighters cordoned off the area in downtown Sanaa until dawn on Saturday.

The US Central Command confirmed in a statement that it conducted a "precision airstrike against a key command and control facility operated by Iran-backed Houthis within Houthi-controlled territory in Sanaa, Yemen."

## Gunman in UnitedHealthcare CEO murder indicted in New York City

**New York, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Manhattan District Attorney Alvin L. Bragg Jr. and New York City Police Department

Commissioner Jessica S. Tisch have announced the indictment of Luigi Mangione, 26, for the murder of UnitedHealthcare CEO

Brian Thompson in Midtown of Manhattan. Mangione is charged in a New York State Supreme Court indictment with one count



## US-backed Kurdish forces propose 'demilitarised zone' near Syria-Turkey border

**Damascus, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The commander of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF), Mazloum Abdi, has said that his forces are willing to propose a "demilitarised zone" in the border city of Kobani in the northern countryside of Aleppo. He made the remarks on Saturday on the social media platform X, expressing SDF's readiness to establish a buffer area in Kobani, with the redeployment of security forces under US supervision and presence, Xinhua news agency reported.

This move, he said, aims to "address Turkish security concerns and ensure lasting stability in the region".

In a separate statement, the SDF accused Turkey of preparing an offensive against Kobani, claiming that Turkish forces and allied fighters have massed heavy weapons near the city. The US-backed Kurdish forces have withdrawn from Manbij, a strategic city in northern Aleppo province that they had controlled since capturing it from Islamic State in 2016. Earlier on Saturday, the US said it had brokered an extension of a ceasefire between pro-Turkish fighters and Syrian Kurds at the flashpoint town of Manbij and was seeking a broader understanding with Ankara. The announcement comes amid fears of an assault by Turkey on the Kurdish-held border town of Kobani, also known as Ain Al-Arab.

## Top Russian general killed in bombing, Moscow says had exposed 'West's crimes'

**Moscow, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Russia's Radiological, Chemical, and Biological Defence Forces chief, Lt General Igor Kirillov, was killed in a bomb blast in southeastern Moscow early on Saturday, with top Russian leaders blaming Ukraine for the crime, reports said. Russian authorities reacted strongly to the incident, saying that he had constantly exposed the West's "crimes" in Ukraine and elsewhere.

The blast occurred around 6 a.m. outside a residential building on Ryazansky Avenue in southeastern Moscow as Kirillov and his aide were leaving the premises to board an official vehicle, RT reported.

Russian investigators said an IED, containing TNT, was likely attached to an electric



scooter near the building's entrance and was most probably detonated remotely, by a radio signal or mobile phone, it added. The blast shattered windows, damaged the building's entrance, and destroyed the vehicle. A criminal investigation under charges of murder, terrorism, and illegal weapons trafficking has

been launched and Investigative Committee chief, Aleksandr Bastrykin, is personally supervising the case. Investigators suspect Ukrainian special services were behind the attack, as per daily Kommersant, citing Kirillov's regular military briefings.



## South Korean gov't to hold extraordinary Cabinet meeting this week to review contentious bills

**Seoul, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The South Korea's government will hold an extraordinary Cabinet meeting later this week to decide whether to recommend acting President Han Duck-soo to veto contentious bills, a policy coordination minister said on Saturday.

## Cyclone Chido kills seven, impacts nearly 35,000 in Malawi

**Lilongwe, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The death toll from Tropical Cyclone Chido's remnants in Malawi rose to seven, with nearly 35,000 people stranded, the African country's Department of Disaster Management Affairs (DoDMA) said on Saturday. DoDMA Commissioner Charles Kalemba said in a statement that a total of seven deaths have been recorded in five districts, while approximately 34,741 people from 7,721 households have been affected, marking a sharp rise from Monday's report of 1,800 affected families. According to the statement, the department also registered 16 injuries, and at least 20 councils in the southern and central regions, including the national capital of Lilongwe, have experienced "mild to severe damages". The cyclone left a trail of destruc-

tion as it blew off roofs of dwelling houses and public infrastructure on the way. The Malawian government, through the DoDMA, Malawi Red Cross Society, and other agencies, has deployed standby resources for search and rescue exercises.

Schools in southern Malawi, which were suspended Monday, reopened Tuesday after the authorities decided that it was safe to do so. The Department of Climate Change and Meteorological Services said in a statement.





## Odisha: ASI begins repair work of Ratna Bhandar of Jagannath Temple

**Bhubaneswar, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) on Saturday began the repair and renovation work of the Ratna Bhandar or treasure trove of the Jagannath Temple at Puri. As per the schedule, the cleaning and staging works were carried out on the first day. "The scaffolding work of the inner chamber of the Ratna Bhandar was completed today. A 20-foot-high temporary platform has been

set up for the repair and renovation work. Around 20 persons were engaged in the work. No work will be conducted on Wednesday owing to some special rituals of the holy triad. The deplastering of the inner chamber will start from Thursday," said senior ASI official, DB Garnayak. The repair work is being carried out as per the Standard Operating Procedure issued by the state government. The Law Minister

Prithviraj Harichandan said the ASI has assessed that the repair and renovation work will be completed within a three-month period. However, the government has asked the ASI to finish the work at the earliest before the three-month timeline it has sought. He informed the media persons that the process of inventory of ornaments in the Ratna Bhandar will begin after the repair work.

## Maha : MSRTC to add 1300 new buses to its fleet

**Mumbai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Maharashtra State Road Transport Corporation (MSRTC) has announced a special New Year gift for its passengers. The state-owned transport service will add over 1,300 new buses to its fleet in a significant move aimed at addressing long-standing bus shortages. In the past few years, the MSRTC has witnessed a decline of 11 lakh daily commuters due to a reduced number of buses. Before the COVID-19 pandemic, the corporation had approximately 18,500 buses in its fleet, with 15,500 buses ac-

tively serving around 65 lakh passengers daily. However, the pandemic and subsequent maintenance issues led to a shortfall of nearly 1,000 buses, reducing the active fleet to around 14,500 and bringing daily passenger numbers down to 54 lakh. This shortage persisted despite increasing demand, resulting in financial losses for the corporation. To reverse this trend, MSRTC has decided to include around 1,300 new buses on a rental basis. Approximately 450 of these buses will be deployed in regions such as Mumbai-Pune, Nashik-Sambhajinagar, and Nagpur-Amravati, among others. These buses are expected to start opera-

tions in the new year. This initiative is anticipated to not only help MSRTC recover from its financial losses but also ensure affordable transportation for the economically weaker sections of society. Passengers travelling across Maharashtra will benefit from improved services without feeling the pinch of rising costs. With this expansion, MSRTC aims to restore its position as a reliable and widely used transport service. For the millions who depend on the iconic "Lal Pari" buses, this announcement is indeed a New Year's gift from the state corporation.



## ERCP an important project, will benefit people of Rajasthan: BJP's Ankit Chechi

**Jaipur, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi was on a visit to Rajasthan on Saturday. During his visit, an agreement was made regarding the Eastern Rajasthan Canal Project (ERCP). BJP leaders and workers welcomed this decision of the government in conversations with IANS. Ankit Chechi, the state president of BJP's Youth Wing in Rajasthan, stated, "This was a major issue for Rajasthan. The central and state governments have been working continuously to resolve this problem. Now, through the ERCP, the state is working to-



wards providing water to the entire state. This was an important issue that will benefit the people of the state." BJP supporter Deepak Karwasara told IANS, "This is a historic moment for the people of Rajasthan as an agreement has been made regarding water between Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh.

## Army, Manipur Police recover five IEDs weighing 21.5 kg

**Imphal, Dec 28 (IANS) :** In a significant development, the Indian Army and Manipur Police in a joint operation recovered five IEDs with a total weighing of 21.5 kg at multiple locations in Imphal East district on Friday, officials said. A defence spokesman said on Saturday night that acting on specific intelligence of the presence of explosives at Maphitel Ridge in Imphal East district, the Indian Army and Manipur Police launched a search operation and recovered five IEDs with a total weight of 21.5 kg at multiple locations. A 25-meter cordtex was also recovered along with the

IEDs, which ranged from 3.5 kg to 5.5 kg. He said that the explosive detection dog and Bomb Disposal Squad of the Army played a crucial role in the detection and recovery of these IEDs. This critical recovery prevented a major threat to saving innocent lives, the spokesman said. He said that the operation marks the synergy between the forces and is a significant achievement. The Indian Army and local law enforcement agencies remain steadfast in their commitment to thwart subversive activities in the state of Manipur, the spokesman said. The security forces in a different operation recovered one SMG Carbine with one magazine, one country-made cannon (Pumpi), 10 7.62 x 39 mm

rounds, six 5.56mm rounds and five 9 mm rounds from Phaileng in Kangpokpi district. A Manipur police official said that heavy security measures are taken up in all vulnerable locations and security

convoy is provided in sensitive stretches in order to ensure free and safe movement of the vehicles along the Imphal-Jiribam National Highway (NH-37).



## Maha : Woman delivers baby girl at Chalisgaon railway station with RPF's help

**Nagpur, Dec 28 (IANS) :** A pregnant woman delivered a healthy baby girl at the Central Railway (CR)'s Chalisgaon station in Jalgaon district, with prompt help from the Railway Protection Force (RPF) jawans, an official said on Saturday. The happy incident took place when the woman passenger, whose identity was not provided, was travelling on the Igatpur-Bhusaval MEMU train. The Deputy Station Manager, Chalisgaon, got a call informing about a woman who had gone into labour pains on the train and asked to make suitable arrangements for

her. A team of RPF jawans, including a woman Sub-Inspector, with assistance from other passengers, carefully de-trained the woman at Chalisgaon station. Coincidentally, a doctor on the same train also rushed to the woman's help and she safely delivered a female infant at the Chalisgaon station, as the people around cheered and rejoiced. Soon, they were rushed to the Chalisgaon Civil Hospital Trauma Care Centre for further medical care and now both mother and her baby are said to be in good health. The RPF, under 'Operation Matrushakti' has been rendering

all kinds of assistance to pregnant women in childbirth during such emergencies. They make provisions for medical facilities en route, at stations, rushing the concerned pregnant woman to the nearest hospital, arranging for other medical needs, informing the relatives, etc. This year, from January to November (2024), 'Operation Matrushakti' helped out women passengers in 15 such emergency medical situations on different trains, including three each in the Mumbai and Pune divisions, one in the Nagpur division.



## Two elderly men shot at in Manipur by unidentified gunmen

**Imphal, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Two elderly men were shot in their legs by unknown armed attackers in Imphal East district on Saturday night. Police said that unidentified gunmen attacked the two persons -- Takhelchangbam Hemanta (55) and Yengkhom Kesho (56) -- at the Kongba river bank under the Heingang police station area. The unknown armed attackers reportedly arrived at the spot and opened fire on the two men, targeting their legs before fleeing the scene. The locals who witnessed the attack quickly came to the rescue of the injured individuals. They were promptly transported to the Imphal East District Police, who took the necessary steps to ensure they received medical attention.

## Bihar Police demolish houses of absconding criminals in East Champaran

**Patna, Dec 28 (IANS) :** In a significant move, the Bihar Police used the controversial bulldozer and demolished the houses of over 100 absconding criminals in East Champaran on Saturday. An official said that the police teams arrived at the homes of approximately absconding criminals with pending warrants and began demolition actions using JCB machines. The operation, led by SP Swarn Prabhat, is part of a district-wide campaign aimed at attachment and confiscation of property belonging to absconding criminals. Several accused individuals have surrendered in the state owing to tough police action. SP Swarn Prabhat supervised the operation in parts of Motihari city. In one notable instance, he

directed the attachment of the property belonging to Vishwanath Vishwas, a known criminal in the locality. Commenting on the case, SP Swarn Prabhat said that action is being taken against those who failed to comply with prior court orders and surrender despite receiving notices. "The attachment and confiscation measures serve as a stern warning to the accused while showcasing the administration's commitment to law enforcement and accountability," he said. SP Swarn Prabhat said that all 50 police station heads, circle inspectors, and DSPs in the district are actively participating in the attachment and confiscation campaign. As part of this operation, 10 to 12 warranties have surrendered.



## India projected to witness 6.5 per cent real GDP growth in current, next fiscal: Report

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** India is projected to witness 6.5 per cent real GDP growth in the current and next fiscal (FY25 and FY26), according to a report on Saturday, which is in line with the expectation amid a resilient economy and strong fundamentals. The latest 'EY Economy Watch December 2024' projected that combining the real GDP growth of first two quarters of FY25 at 6.7 per cent and 5.4 per cent, respectively, with

RBI's revised growth estimates for 3Q and 4Q FY25 at 6.8 per cent and 7.2 per cent, respectively, "the annual FY25 real GDP growth may be estimated at 6.6 per cent". "However, if the turnaround in GoI's investment expenditure remains subdued, Q3 growth may be 6.5 per cent or less," the report mentioned. The real GDP growth eased to 5.4 per cent in the July-September quarter (Q2 FY25), compared to 6.7 per cent in the preceding quarter. The available high frequency data for October



and November point to a mixed picture regarding the growth momentum of the Indian economy. Headline manufacturing PMI witnessed a softer expansion of 56.5 in November compared to 57.5 in October. Services PMI, however,

remained nearly stable at 58.4 in November 2024, close to its level of 58.5 in October 2024, on account of strong international demand and improving business confidence.



## Sales value of housing units in India sees 16 pc jump at Rs 5.68 lakh cr in 2024

**Mumbai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The overall sales value of housing units saw a 16 per cent yearly jump in 2024 – from approximately Rs 4.88 lakh crore in 2023 to about Rs 5.68 lakh crore this year, according to a report on Saturday. The housing sales in the top seven cities stood at nearly 4,59,650 units in 2024, against 4,76,530 units in 2023, according to the report by Anarock Group. Mumbai Metropolitan Region (MMR) witnessed the highest sales of nearly 1,55,335 units in 2024, registering a 1 per cent yearly rise. Pune followed with about 81,090 units sold. MMR and Bengaluru saw the maximum new launches, together accounting for an almost 50 per cent of the new supply in the year. "Compared to 2023, 2024 saw a

21 per cent rise in the average price in the top seven cities. Average residential prices hikes will stabilise in the coming year, though there will be steady growth amid increased input costs and high demand," said Anuj Puri, Chairman, Anarock Group. 2025 will also see generous new supply infusions by listed developers, who have significant inventory lined up, he mentioned. Among budget categories, luxury housing demand and new supply increased exponentially in 2024 as homebuyers demand continued the post-pandemic trend of bigger, better homes by branded developers. The new luxury supply addition across the top 7 cities rose by 24 per cent in 2024 against 2023 and there is no reason to expect luxury housing demand to taper off in 2025, the report mentioned.



## India to see record-breaking IPO fundraising in 2025 exceeding Rs 2 lakh crore

**Mumbai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** India is on track to become the world's third-largest economy by 2027 with a \$7 trillion GDP target by 2030, a report said on Saturday, predicting record-breaking IPO fundraising in the country next year.

## Not only India, US, China, and Canada also fined Deloitte for violating audit standards

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Global audit firm Deloitte has been fined about Rs 2 crore by the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA) for alleged lapses in auditing Zee Entertainment Enterprises Ltd (ZEEL). This is not the first time Deloitte has been fined for auditing lapses. In the last five years, many other countries including the US, China, and Canada fined Deloitte for ignoring audit standards. In China, Deloitte's operations faced regulatory scrutiny from domestic and international authorities. In September 2022, the US Securities and Exchange Commission imposed a fine of \$20 million on



Deloitte's Chinese affiliate. The fine was imposed on the firm for asking its clients to do their audit work on their own, which was a direct violation of auditing standards. Following this, in March 2023, Chinese regulators imposed a fine of 211.9 million yuan (\$30.8 million).

## Indian share market opens in green, Nifty above 23,800

**Mumbai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The Indian stock market opened higher on Saturday as buying was seen in the PSU bank, auto, financial service and metal sectors on Nifty. At around 9:37 am, Sensex was trading at 78,744.55 after gaining 271.68 points or 0.35 per cent, while the Nifty was trad-

ing at 23,812.50 after gaining 84.85 points or 0.36 per cent. The market trend remained positive. On the National Stock Exchange (NSE), 1,142 stocks were trading in green, while 795 stocks were in red. According to experts, "the market will be expecting both fiscal and monetary stimulus. These expect-

tations can keep the market in a consolidation phase in the near-term." "The market reaction after the Budget and monetary policy will depend on the policy initiatives," they added. Nifty Bank was up 400.60 points or 0.78 per cent at 51,633.60. Nifty Midcap 100 index was trad-



ing at 57,104.90 after rising 47 points or 0.08 per cent. Nifty Smallcap 100 index was at 18,765 after rising 32.35 points or 0.17 per cent. Akshay Chinchalkar of Axis Securities said, "The Nifty fell for the sixth day in seven, as early session gains failed to stick. Monday's bullish harami formation wasn't activated on Tuesday as prices failed to take out the prior day's high."



## Micro insurance premium in life segment crosses Rs 10,000 crore in India

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The micro-insurance premiums in the life insurance sector in the country has surpassed Rs 10,000 crore for the first time in FY24, according to industry data. Micro insurance helps people in the low-income group via offering affordable products.

According to data by the Insurance Regulatory and Development Authority of India (IRDAI), the new business premium (NBP) in life insurance's micro-insurance segment reached Rs 10,860.39 crore in FY24, up 23.5 per cent from Rs 8,792.8 crore in FY23.

While individual NBP declined 23.78 per cent to Rs 152.57 crore, the group NBP went up 24.61 per cent to Rs 10,707.82 crore.

According to the IRDAI data, the number of micro-insurance agents stood at 102,000 in FY24. Nearly 19,166 of them belong to public-sector life insurers and the rest to private ones. Among the micro-insurance agents, non-government organisations (NGOs)

## Over 42 lakh new investors join Indian stock market in November

**Mumbai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** A record 42,76,207 investors joined the Indian stock market in November, the National Stock Exchange (NSE) data showed on Saturday. In the July-September period this year, a total of 1,60,06,447 (over 1.6 crore) people joined the stock market, as India's equity markets soared to record highs. Benchmark indices Nifty and Sensex hit all-time highs of 26,277.35 and 85,978.25, re-

spectively, this year. The stock exchange also informed that till December 23 this year, the total number of registered investors stood at 21,02,25,329 (over 21.02 crore). Among states, Maharashtra currently leads with the highest number of accounts at over 3.7 crore, followed by Uttar Pradesh (2.28 crore), Gujarat (1.87 crore) and Rajasthan and West Bengal at over 1.2 crore each, as per the NSE data. In October, the total number of



client accounts at the exchange surpassed 20 crore for the first time, from 16.9 crore eight months ago. The unique registered investor base (with a unique PAN number) stood at 10.5 crore in October. According to the lat-

est SBI Research report, the country is witnessing at least 30 million new demat accounts being opened every year since 2021.



## Electronics goods emerge as fastest growing segment in India's exports

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Electronics goods have emerged as the fastest-grow-

ing segment in India's export basket as new manufacturing capacities have come up in the country

driven by the success of the Centre's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme. The country's electronic exports jumped by a robust 27.4 per cent to \$22.5 billion in April-November of 2024-25, from \$17.66 billion during the same period in 2023-24.

Electronic goods have moved up to third position among the top performers in India's export sector, next only to engineering products and petroleum, from sixth slot last year. Within the electronics sector, smartphone exports have recorded a 45 per cent increase in

exports as leading players such as Apple and Samsung expand production in the country. The PLI scheme and quick clearances by the government are proving to be a major success as global giants look beyond alienated China to set up alternative supply chains. Apple's entry into India, supported by its vendors Foxconn.



## Indian advertising, marketing sector sees a steady 9 pc hiring intent: Report

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The marketing and advertising sector in India is expected to see a steady 9 per cent hiring intent, according to a report on Saturday.

The report by TeamLease EdTech showed that the growth is driven by the surge in digital advertising, content marketing expansion, and data-driven marketing strategies.

The rise of e-commerce and digital platforms demanding targeted advertising is leading to a significant transformation of the sector.

The digital revolution has particularly impacted key sectors including FMCG, e-commerce, automotive, consumer durables, real estate, and tourism, which now command the largest share of advertising spend.



## Gauhati HC bans buffalo & bulbul fight during January

**Guwahati, Dec 28 (IANS) :** In response to petitions filed by People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA) India, the Gauhati High Court on Saturday quashed the Assam government's SOP of the previous year which had allowed buffalo and bulbul bird fights during a certain time of the year (in January). The petition was heard by Justice Devashis Baruah in the Gauhati High Court. The Court accepted PETA India's argument that the buffalo and bulbul fights violate the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act 1960 and that the bulbul fights additionally violate the Wildlife Protection Act 1972. The Court further held the SOP to be in violation of the judgment dated 7 May 2014 passed

by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in Animal Welfare Board of India vs. A. Nagaraja. As evidence, PETA India had submitted investigations into these fights which revealed that terrified and severely injured buffaloes were forced to fight through beatings and that starved and intoxicated bulbuls were made to fight over food. PETA India had also submitted numerous examples of fights being held illegally, outside the dates allowed via the SOP, arguing that allowing the fights at any time of the year was resulting in enormous animal abuse. "Buffaloes and bulbuls are gentle animals who feel pain and terror and do not want to be forced into bloody fights in front of jeering crowds," said PETA India Lead Legal Counsel, Arunima Kedia. "PETA India is grateful to the Gauhati High Court for prohibiting cruelty to animals in the form of fights which are clear violations of central law and supreme court orders."

## Delhi govt mandates power-saving ACs in all its buildings, BJP says cosmetic effort

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The Delhi government has forwarded a proposal to Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena mandating the use of energy-efficient air-conditioners, fans and other appliances compulsory in all its offices, officials said on Saturday. The Opposition BJP called it a cosmetic step that was "too little, too late". The proposal was moved under the initiative of Chief Minister Atishi, who also holds the power portfolio, said an official.



## Punjab DGP orders action for attack on police station

**Amritsar, Dec 28 (IANS):** Punjab Director General of Police (DGP), Gaurav Yadav, on Saturday visited the city and directed officers to take strict action against the perpetrators of the attack on a police station. The visit came a few hours after an incident reported at Amritsar's Islamabad police station at around 3 A.M. Chairing a high-level meeting, the DGP emphasised the need for officers to use both technical and human intelligence to detect and apprehend those responsible for the attack.

## Delhi L-G honours DDA officials for efforts during G20 Summit



**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Acknowledging the contribution of the Delhi Development Authority (DDA) in the holistic development of the city, Lieutenant Governor V.K. Saxena on Saturday honoured officials of the agency for their

role in the successful conduct of the G20 Summit last year. In his maiden visit to the DDA Head Office since taking charge as Chairman of DDA, L-G Saxena highlighted the remarkable contributions of the Authority in the recent past which has transformed its image. These include preparing Delhi to host global dignitaries during the G20 Summit, rejuvenating the Yamuna, creating recreational green spaces like Baansera and Asita for public use, and restoring significant historical landmarks such as Vasudev Ghat, Mehrauli Archaeological Park, and St. James Church.

## Allow work-from-home to staff: Gurugram DC to private institutions

**Gurugram, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Gurugram district administration on Saturday directed private companies in Gurugram to allow work-from-home to their staff in view of the high level of air pollution in the National Capital Region (NCR). Gurugram Deputy Commissioner Ajay Kumar in his order issued under GRAP-4, has said that private and corporate sector companies should allow work from home to their staff till further orders. "Under the compliance of the restrictions of Grape 4, instructions were given to conduct classes in hybrid mode in all schools except 10th and 12th classes," read the orders. Kumar has instructed all the concerned departmental officers to strictly implement the restrictions of Grape 4 in relation to the implementation of the fourth phase of Grape in Delhi NCR late on Monday night. Issuing the advisory in compliance with the instructions from the Air Quality Management Commission, Kumar said that continuous efforts are being made by the district administration to reduce pollution. The office timings of the government employees have been changed. Under the orders, the employees



will come to the office at 9.30 am and will provide their services till 5.30 pm. While the employees to come to the office in all the municipal bodies has been fixed at 8.30 am and the time to return has been fixed at 4.30 pm. All types of construction activities have been stopped and garbage burning has been banned. DC, citing the advisory issued by CAQM for citizens in the NCR

region, urged that children, the elderly and people suffering from respiratory, cardiac, cerebrovascular or other chronic diseases should avoid outdoor activities. "These orders will continue until the air quality improves. Companies should take this step and provide their cooperation to the district administration," read the advisory.



## As PM Modi launches Rs 46,000 cr projects in Rajasthan, beneficiaries heap praise on Centre's welfare schemes

**Jaipur, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday participated in the 'Ek Varsh Parinam Utkarsh' programme, celebrating the completion of one year of the Rajasthan government in office. He also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 24 projects related to Energy, Roads, Railways and Water worth over Rs 46,300 crore in Rajasthan. Addressing the public gathering in Jaipur, PM Modi spoke about the ERCP project, its impact on eliminating the water crisis in the state and schemes like Bima Sakhi Yojana, solar power panels and others. Many women beneficiaries of the Centre's welfare schemes spoke to IANS and elaborated on how these policies have brought a sea-change in their lives. They also expressed gratitude to PM Modi for initiating poor-friendly policies. Santra Devi, who reached the venue to listen to PM Modi's speech in Jaipur said, "Prime Minister is doing commendable work for the poor. There has been a lot of change in our lives. Earlier, we used to cook food on wood, now we are getting the facility of a gas stove and cylinders under Ujjwala yojana."

## TN Police again arrests YouTuber 'Savukku' Shankar

**Chennai, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Tamil Nadu Police have arrested YouTuber and whistleblower 'Savukku' Shankar in a case related to the possession of ganja. Shankar was arrested in Chennai on Saturday after the Special Court for Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) cases in Madurai issued a non-bailable warrant earlier in the day for his failure to appear for proceedings in the case. Sources said that the Theni district police seized 2.5 kilograms of ganja from Shankar in May this year during a search operation. The Palanichettipatti police in Theni district subsequently filed a case against him. A special team of Chennai police apprehended Shankar at his office in T. Nagar and held him at the Teynampet police station before handing him over to the Theni district police. Along with Shankar, three of his associates accused of supplying ganja were also arrested.



## SC expunges adverse remarks made by Uttarakhand HC against advocate

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court has ordered the expunging of the adverse remarks made by a judge of the Uttarakhand High Court against an advocate. A bench of Justices B.R. Gavai and K.V. Viswanathan, hearing an appeal challenging certain adverse observations made by a judge of the Uttarakhand High Court against the appellant, said: "The appellant is a lawyer by profession. He was neither appearing for any party in the matter nor was he indirectly connected." It stressed the necessity of the courts, including the highest court of the country, to observe the principle of natural justice. "Nobody can be condemned unheard," the apex court said. It held that "the approach of the Uttarakhand High Court in making the observations against the appellant without giving him any opportunity of being heard is totally unsustainable in law". In its impugned decision, the Uttarakhand HC had said that the false assurance extended by advocate Dushyant Manali, for the revisionist, would amount to professional misconduct. Taking a suo moto cognisance, the high court "referred the matter to the Bar Council to draw appropriate disciplinary proceedings against the advocate for the wrongful extension of information to the litigant due to which



the revisionist had preferred the revision at a belated stage, when the revisionist faced the order passed by the executing court in pursuance to the impugned decree which has been put to challenge in the present revision. "The Bar Council is directed to proceed strictly in accordance with the procedures governing the disciplinary proceedings of the Bar Council as well as under the provisions of the Advocates Act," it had ordered. Allowing the appeal, the Supreme Court said that the portion of the impugned judgment.

## Rapper Badshah fined Rs 15,500 for violating traffic rules in Gurugram

**Gurugram, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Rapper Badshah was fined Rs 15,500 for driving in the wrong lane in Gurugram, violating traffic rules. Badshah's convoy, comprising three cars, was reportedly plying on the wrong side of the road, violating traffic norms. Badshah, who was driving Mahindra Thar to reach Punjabi singer Karan Aujla's concert on December 28, was fined by the Gurugram Traffic Police. However, it is being said that the vehicle did not belong to the rapper and was registered in the name of a youth from Panipat.





## Zimbabwe cracks down on smuggling as festive season approaches

**Harare, Dec 28 (IANS)** : Zimbabwe is intensifying a campaign against the smuggling of goods through its borders as the festive season approaches, said Permanent Secretary for Presidential Affairs in the Office of the President and Cabinet Tafadzwa Muguti. Speaking at an anti-smuggling coordination meeting held in the national capital of

Harare, Muguti said Zimbabwe is losing up to 1 billion US dollars in revenue from smuggling along its borders. Smuggling of goods across the borders peaks during the Christmas and New Year holidays as Zimbabwean expatriates return home and bring goods mainly from South Africa and other neighboring countries. Smuggled products on the market

include a wide range of food items, clothes, drugs, beverages, fertilizers, cement, vehicles, electrical gadgets, and solar panels, among other goods, said Muguti, Xinhua news agency reported. To curb the illegal practices, the authorities launched an anti-smuggling campaign in November. Taskforce teams, including tax authorities, police, immigration



officials, local authorities, consumer protection bodies, and monetary authorities, were set up to deal with the situation. Muguti said smuggling affects the collection of customs and excise duties, discourages investment, and negatively affects employment levels and job creation as smuggled goods flood the market. "It has resulted in unfair competition which has curtailed growth of local industry, given the unfair advantage in the form of tax evasion that illicit traders have over legitimate businesses.



## South Korean gov unveils measures to boost corporate investment amid martial law debacle

**Seoul, Dec 28 (IANS)** : The South Korean government on Saturday unveiled a series of measures to stimulate corporate investment in key industries, aiming to address concerns that recent political turmoil could have long-term negative effects on the economy. The plan was introduced during a meeting chaired by Finance Minister Choi Sang-mok and attended by other economy-related ministers, amid rising concerns following the recent declaration of martial law and the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol, Yonhap news agency reported. "The breakthrough for overcoming internal and external challenges ultimately lies in corporate investment," Choi said. Under the plan, the government will provide various forms of support and incen-

tives to facilitate investment in seven large-scale projects worth a combined 9.3 trillion won (\$6.5 billion). The projects include an artificial intelligence cluster hub in Gwangju, just outside Seoul, and the construction of a cutting-edge secondary battery facility in Saemangeum, a 409-square-kilometre reclaimed area in North Jeolla Province. To accelerate progress, the government plans to fast-track administrative procedures by more than six months, allowing construction to commence early next year, Choi said. Additionally, tax incentives will be expanded. "We will revise regulations and improve institutional frameworks to create an investment-friendly environment.

## Israeli forces to remain on Mt. Hermon summit 'as long as necessary': Defence minister

**Jerusalem, Dec 28 (IANS)** : Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz said that Israeli forces would remain on the Syrian summit of Mount Hermon for "as long as necessary." During a visit to the area with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and senior security officials for a situational assessment, Katz said on Saturday, "We will stay here for as long as necessary," emphasising that the

military presence at the strategically significant summit "strengthens security," Xinhua news agency reported. "Mount Hermon's summit is Israel's eyes for identifying near and distant threats. From here, we can see Hezbollah positions in Lebanon to the right, and Damascus to the left," he said. Following instructions issued last Thursday, Katz said the military must "swiftly" complete its de-

ployment in the area, including "fortifications, defensive measures, and improving soldiers' conditions to prepare for a prolonged stay." Mount Hermon, located in the Golan Heights, was partially captured by Israel from Syria during the 1967 Middle East war and annexed in 1981, a move not recognised internationally. The mountain spans Syria, Lebanon, and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights. Its highest peak,



at 2,814 metres, lies in Syria, while the southern slopes and lower summit are located in the Israeli-occupied area.



## Cong worker dies during stir near UP Assembly, state chief seeks compensation

**Lucknow, Dec 28 (IANS)** : A Congress worker died on Saturday during the party's protest near the Uttar Pradesh Assembly in Lucknow. The body of the deceased identified as Prabhat Pandey, who had come to Lucknow to join the protest, was taken to the Civil Hospital.

## Tripura will soon be unemployment-free, says CM Saha

**Agartala, Dec 28 (IANS)** : Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha on Saturday said that the state would soon be unemployment-free as the state government is encouraging entrepreneurship. In the coming days, there would be no unemployment in the state as the government is providing jobs based on transparency and encouraging entrepreneurship, he said. "We are providing government jobs based on transparency. No one can claim that jobs are being provided unfairly. So far, more than 13,000 government jobs have been provided (since 2018), and almost every day, new announcements of jobs are being made," Saha told the media on the sideline of a government programme. He mentioned that new vacancies are being



created and filled up promptly. "However, it is not possible to provide jobs to everyone. For this, various initiatives are being taken to generate employment opportunities," said Saha. Sharing his experience of attending the Northeast Trade and Investment Roadshow in Mumbai on December 16, he said: "There, I spoke to investors and informed them about Tripura's diverse resources." "I highlighted various important sectors, including tourism, agriculture.



## Amid security concerns, MHA reimposes Protected Area Regime in 3 NE states

**Imphal, Dec 28 (IANS)** : The Manipur government on Saturday said that in view of the growing security concerns arising out of influx from neighbouring countries, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) has reimposed the Protected Area Regime in the state as well as neighbouring Mizoram and Nagaland, officials said. An official statement said that with this reimposition of the Protected Area Regime, the movement of foreigners visiting Manipur would be closely monitored, and they are required to obtain the necessary Protected Area Permits (PAP) in accordance with the Foreigners (Protected Areas) Order, 1958. The Manipur government would like to address certain claims made by an organisation identifying itself as the 'Kuki-Zo Council' recently, the statement said adding that upon investigation, it has been found that no such organisation exists in Manipur.

## Amid growth of unrecognised villages in Manipur, identification of migrants initiated : CM Singh

**Imphal, Dec 28 (IANS)** : Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Saturday said that the identification of illegal immigrants was initiated through proper constitutional provisions after satellite mapping indicated the growth of unrecognised villages in the state. Addressing

the inaugural function of the Naga community festival, RobvenaNi-2024, at Asufii Robvena Ground in Senapati district, the Chief Minister, without referring to the ethnic conflict, said that there have been some misunderstandings and unfortunate events leading to the loss of lives and properties.



## 'We can learn to perform best in adverse conditions from PM Modi', says MP CM

**Bhopal, Dec 28 (IANS)** : Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Saturday that the art of achieving excellence even in challenging situations can be learned from Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

## MP: Dream of pucca house fulfilled under PM-JANMAN scheme, says beneficiary Lalita

**Shivpuri (Madhya Pradesh), Dec 28 (IANS)** : Houses are being built in Madhya Pradesh's Shivpuri under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan (PM-JANMAN). These houses have essential amenities like tap water, electricity, roads and community facilities. Under the Pradhan Mantri Janjati Adivasi Nyaya Maha Abhiyan, the first JANMAN residential colony for the Saharia tribal community has been completed in Pohri block in the Shivpuri district. Built in Bodra Panchayat, this colony has 32 duplex-style houses. These houses include water, electricity, road and community facilities. Tribal woman Lalita's house was completed first. After her dream of getting a pucca house was fulfilled, she expressed her gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.



Lalita told IANS, "I had requested Prime Minister Narendra Modi to build a colony. PM Modi has fulfilled that demand. A very beautiful colony has been built. PM Modi does what he says. Beautiful houses have been built under the PM-JANMAN scheme."

## Waaf row: BJP walks out of Assembly demanding withdrawal of notification; Cong promises not touching farmers', temple lands

**Belagavi (Karnataka), Dec 28 (IANS)**: Raising the matter of the Waqf Board allegedly issuing notices to farmers' lands and religious institutions claiming ownership, BJP legislators in the Karnataka Assembly have demanded that the Congress-led government withdraw the gazette notification and staged a walkout on Saturday.





## Annual fund flow to farm sector jumped nearly 6-fold in 10 years

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** There has been a close to six-fold increase in the budget allocation for the Department of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare from Rs 21,933.50 crore during 2013-14 to Rs 122,528.77 crore in 2024-25, the Lok Sabha was informed on Saturday. The major schemes being implemented for farmers' welfare include the Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN), Pradhan Mantri Kisan Maandhan Yojana (PM-KMY), Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana (PMFBY), Modified Interest Subvention Scheme (MISS) and Agriculture Infrastructure

Fund (AIF), Minister of State for Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, Ram Nath Thakur, said in a written reply in the Lower House. He further stated that the Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has released a compilation of success stories of 75,000 farmers who have increased their income more than two times through the convergence of schemes being operated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare and allied ministries.

The minister explained that AIF was launched to address the existing infrastructure gaps and mobilise investment in agricul-

ture. AIF is a medium to long-term debt financing facility for investment in viable projects for post-harvest management infrastructure and viable farming assets, through interest subvention and credit guarantee support.

The Union Cabinet approved the progressive expansion of the AIF by expanding the scope of eligible projects. This includes allowing individual eligible beneficiaries for creation of infrastructure covered under 'viable projects for building community farming assets', integrated processing projects and convergence of PM KUSUM 'A'.

## Blast in police station: Akali Dal seeks Punjab CM's resignation

**Chandigarh, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) leader Bikram Singh Majithia on Saturday said Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann should own moral responsibility for the worsening law and order situation and resign as Home Minister.

He expressed shock at the manner in which the Amritsar police and its commissioner Gurpreet Singh Bhullar were engaged in a cover-up operation and were denying that a string of grenade attacks on police stations in Amritsar took place. A blast was reported at the police station on early Saturday.



## 25 white-backed vultures released in Haryana

**Chandigarh, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday released 25 white-backed vultures in nature from the Jatayu Conservation Centre, near Beed Shikargah Wildlife Sanctuary in Pinjore in Panchkula district.

Speaking at a function on the occasion of vulture releasing, he said that last month 404 vulture chicks were born at the centre which is equipped with eight nursery aviaries, six colony aviaries, eight holding aviaries, two display aviaries, four hospital aviaries and eight breeding aviaries. The centre is home to 378 vultures. He said the state has given special attention to the protection of the

endangered vulture species. To support this initiative, a Jatayu conservation and breeding centre has been established in Pinjore. Saini said in the 1990s the vulture population was in the crores, but it gradually decreased to lakhs. The primary cause of this decline was the use of diclofenac injections in livestock. "When vultures consumed the carcasses of these animals, the residual effects of the drug began to harm the vultures, pushing the species to the brink of extinction."

The Chief Minister said for vulture conservation the Bombay Natural History Society entered into an agreement with the state government.



## 10.97 lakh trainees under Centre's DDU-GKY scheme given jobs: Minister

**New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Under Deen Dayal Upadhyaya Grameen Kaushalya Yojana (DDU-GKY) a total of 16.9 lakh candidates have been trained and more than 10.97 lakh candidates or 65 per cent of the total have been placed in gainful employment from FY 2014-15 till November 2024, the Lok Sabha was informed on Saturday. Under DDU-GKY, placement in the domain where training is imparted is not mandatory. The top 15 sectors under which training was imparted include textiles, retail, electronics, tourism.

## Mizoram: NABARD's implementing flagship scheme to empower tribals & prevent unscientific farming

**Aizawl, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The NABARD has been implementing TRIBES (Tribal Resilience Initiative for Building Environmentally Sustainable Livelihoods), a flagship scheme, to empower tribal communities in Mizoram and to prevent unscientific shifting cultivation, officials said on Saturday. In Mizoram, where shifting cultivation (locally called jhumming) is deeply ingrained in Mizo culture, unscientific agricultural practice has posed environmental challenges due to reduced fallow periods and declining land productivity. Of Mizoram's 12 lakh population, 94.4 per cent are tribals. A NABARD official said that they sanctioned 13 TRIBES projects, reflecting its dedication to transforming tribals' livelihoods in the state. Out of the 13 projects, seven projects have been successfully completed, while six are ongoing, the official said, adding that a total of around 19 crore has been sanctioned, with around Rs 17 crore disbursed under the sanctioned projects.

The project supports a variety of crops, including orange, mango, litchi, areca nut, papaya, and banana, with turmeric, garden pea, and pineapple as inter-crops. Additionally, for landless farmers, piggery and poultry units have been developed to ensure diversified livelihood opportunities, the official said.



The projects are executed through Project Facilitating Agencies (PFAs) such as NEIDA, World Vision India – CADP, CODNERC, and Angel Business Promoters of Mizoram.

To ensure effective implementation and outcome, the projects are closely monitored at the district level by the DDMs and by consultants from NABARD Consultancy Services (NABCONS). The official said that for an all-inclusive development, mainstreaming tribals by improving their livelihoods is a necessity.

NABARD is actively engaged in supporting tribal livelihoods through various promotional and skill development programmes.



## Now, QR codes to tell groundwater levels in Gurugram villages

**Gurugram, Dec 28 (IANS) :** To make people aware of the falling groundwater level in Gurugram, QR codes are being installed in the villages under the Atal Bhujal Yojana.

On scanning the QR code, information about the groundwater level of the concerned village, village population, Sarpanch and other information will appear. QR codes are being installed at government schools, Panchayat Bhawan and Anganwadi centres of 153 villages in the district. Atal Bhujal programme is being run under the aegis of the Irrigation Department of Haryana. The central government started this campaign on December 25, 2019. The objective of this programme is to collect rainwater, raise the groundwater level.

## Security tightened along India-Bangladesh border in Tripura ahead of HM Shah's 3-day visit, NEC meeting

**Agartala, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Ahead of the 3-day visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah in Tripura and the 72nd Plenary Session of the North Eastern Council (NEC), security along the India-Bangladesh border and various parts of the state further tightened, officials said on Saturday. A Border Security Force (BSF) spokesman said that before the NEC plenary session, top officials led by Tripura Chief Secretary J.K. Sinha visited various bordering areas and districts and reviewed the prevailing security scenario and operational preparedness.

During the visit, various issues pertaining to effective border management including day and night intense domination of India-Bangladesh border by the BSF, joint operations with police and other intelligence agencies to prevent trans-border crime, action against touts facilitating illegal migration, destruction drive of



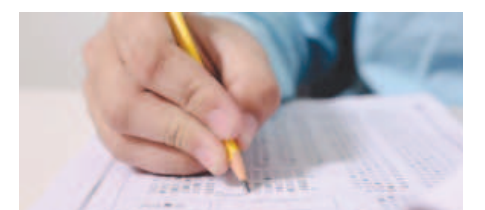
cannabis, security of border population residing ahead of the fence and plan for relocation of villages ahead of the border fence, road connectivity and supply of electricity to BOPs, and land acquisition cases were discussed in depth. The spokesman said that during the visit to BOP N.C. Nagar, Deputy Inspector General, Gokulnagar also briefed the senior officials about the current security scenario and extra steps taken to further strengthen border security. Director General of Tripura Police Amitabh Ranjan, BSF Additional Director General, Eastern Command, Ravi Gandhi, BSF Inspector General, Tripura Frontier, Ashwani Kumar Sharma accompanied the Chief Secretary during the visit to Dhalai and Sepahijala districts.

## High-level meet held ahead of 50-year statehood celebration of Sikkim

**Gangtok, Dec 28 (IANS) :** To finalise the roadmap for the 50 years of statehood of Sikkim, a high-level meeting was held on Saturday at the State Secretariat in Gangtok, officials said. The meeting was chaired by Chief Secretary V.B. Pathak and was attended by top IAS officers from various line departments and concerned government officials.

The objectives of the meeting were to review the departmental activities for

the statehood celebrations and to identify key sectors in need of investment and resource allocation. Various departments presented their detailed project plans and budget requirements for the celebration.



## Students hold protest in Patna demanding cancellation of BPSC exam

**Patna, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The controversy surrounding the 70th Combined Competitive Examination prelims of the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has escalated into a major protest by candidates here, on Saturday, demanding the cancellation of the examination.

While the BPSC has cancelled the exam at the Babu Examination Complex Centre in Patna due to issues like delayed question paper delivery, candidates are now questioning the integrity of the entire examination process. On December 28, the examination at this centre was disrupted due to a delay in receiving the question paper.



### Turkey takes additional measures at border gates to facilitate Syrians' return

**Istanbul, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Turkey has strengthened border infrastructure and measures to facilitate Syrians' return, the state-run Anadolu agency reported. The Ministry of Trade has been carrying out necessary procedures and actions at the Yayladagi Border Gate with Syria in the Hatay province to ensure border security, efficiently manage passenger procedures, and effectively combat smuggling. Xinhua news agency reported quoting Anadolu.

### World Bank says ready to participate in Lebanon's reconstruction

**Beirut, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The World Bank is ready to take part in Lebanon's reconstruction after the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict comes to an end, a senior official from the World Bank said. Jean-Christophe Carret, the World Bank's country director for the Middle East Department, expressed the bank's intention to collaborate with the Lebanese government on the country's reconstruction, Xinhua news agency reported quoting Lebanon's National News Agency. Carret made the remarks during a meeting with Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri, during which they discussed reconstruction projects and programmes, including debris removal, infrastructure rebuilding, and the rehabilitation of industrial and agricultural facilities. Berri praised the "World Bank's desire and readiness to respond and engage with Lebanon in rebuilding and addressing the consequences of the Israeli aggression." He also inquired about the details of the plan that the World Bank is preparing, stressing that "this plan must include land reclamation and securing loans for farmers, industrialists, and small business owners to enable them to rise again within a period not exceeding the end of this year." According to the World Bank, the physi-



cal damages and economic losses from the Hezbollah-Israeli conflict in Lebanon are estimated at \$8.5 billion. Lebanon's real GDP growth has been cut by an estimated 6.6 per cent in 2024 as a result of the conflict, bringing the cumulative decline in real GDP since 2019 to more than 38 per cent by the end of the year, according to the latest World Bank Lebanon Economic Monitor (LEM) released. The deepening contraction reflects the devastating impact of mass displacement, destruction, and reduced private consumption. It further exacerbates unresolved macroeconomic challenges and highlights the urgent need for comprehensive reforms and targeted investments in critical sectors as the only viable path forward post-conflict.

### Vanuatu earthquake death toll rises to 14

**Sydney, Dec 28 (IANS) :** At least 14 people have been killed and hundreds more injured after a major earthquake struck Vanuatu on Saturday. The Red Cross reported the updated death toll early Wednesday local time, citing government sources. Local media previously reported a death toll of seven, Xinhua news agency reported. The 7.3-magnitude earthquake struck Vanuatu's capital city of Port Vila on Tuesday, causing widespread damage. Several aftershocks hit the region following the initial quake, including one measuring a magnitude of 5.5 in the early hours of Wednesday morning, according to the US Geological Survey. The Fiji-based head of the Red Cross in the Pacific, Katie Greenwood, said on social media that more than 200 people have been injured. Australia's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said it is aware of several Australians in the region but Deputy Prime Minister Richard Marles said on Wednesday that none are believed to have been injured.



### Parental leave declines for 1st time in S. Korea amid falling marriages, childbirths

**Seoul, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The number of South Korean workers taking parental leave fell for the first time in 2023, reflecting a broader decline in marriages and childbirths, data showed on Saturday. According to the data compiled by Statistics Korea, a total of 195,986 workers took or began to take time off from work to take care of their children last year, down 3 per cent from a year earlier, Yonhap news agency reported. It marked the first annual fall since the agency began compiling relevant data in 2010.

The figures had shown consistent growth, supported by government initiatives. Under South Korean law, parents of children aged 8 years or younger, or those in the second grade of elementary school or below, are eligible for up to one year of maternity or paternity leave. To address the nation's prolonged ultra-low birthrate, the government provides financial assistance to employment insurance subscribers who take parental leave. In 2023, the country's total fertility rate -- indicating the average number of children a woman is expected to have in her lifetime --

dropped to 0.72, marking the lowest level since 1970, according to earlier data from Statistics Korea. The number of newly married couples in South Korea came to 974,000 in 2023, down from 1.03 million the previous year, according to separate data. Women accounted for 75.3 per cent of all workers who took parental leave last year, with the number of women taking maternity leave slipping 1.4 per cent from the previous year, the data showed. The number of male workers taking parental leave shed 7.5 per cent on-year to 50,455. The decline comes after the fig-



ure surpassed the 50,000 mark for the first time in 2022, following years of gradual growth. By age, women aged 30-34 years accounted for the biggest portion of all mothers who took maternity leave at 41.3 per cent, followed by those aged 35-39 at 33.5 per cent. Among male workers, those aged 35-39 years accounted for the largest portion of 38.2 per cent, followed by those in their 40s at 35.7 per cent. The agency noted the average age of parents taking parental leave has gradually increased, reflecting a trend of delayed marriage and childbirth.

### Czech President signs 2025 state budget

**Prague, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Czech President Petr Pavel announced that he had signed the 2025 state budget with a deficit of 241 billion crowns (10.1 billion USD). Pavel said on social media platform X that he had deliberated extensively before signing the budget and the decision was not easy, Xinhua news agency reported. The president said he had negotiated with Prime Minister Petr Fiala and Finance Minister Zbynek Stanjura, who gave him "their personal guarantees" that the deficit would not exceed the planned limits and that

the Budget Responsibility Act would not be breached. The Chamber of Deputies, the lower house of the Czech parliament, approved the state budget for 2025 earlier this month. Compared to this year's amended budget, the deficit will decrease by 41 billion crowns, with revenues projected to rise by 146 billion crowns and expenditures by 105 billion crowns, according to the Ministry of Finance. "Thanks to the approved budget, we will be able to invest at a record level next year, primarily in the construction of roads, highways and railways, but also in education, science and research. All



these investments have a common goal -- to support economic growth and, with it, the growth of citizens' wages," Fiala said on X. The draft budget, which was approved by the government and the Chamber of Deputies, faced criticism both from opposition MPs and leading economists, including the president's own economic adviser David Marek. It came under fire over unclear revenue estimates, particularly from emissions permit sales, and funding for non-teaching staff salaries in schools.

### US-India exchanging briefings on alleged plot against Khalistani: State Dept

**New York, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The panel set up by India to enquire into allegations about a murder-for-hire plot against a US-based Khalistani and US government agencies have been exchanging briefings, according to State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller. "We have been regularly briefing them on the results of our investigation", he said on Saturday at a briefing for foreign correspondents. And "not just the State Department but other agencies inside the United States Government" as well, "have been receiving reports from them (India) about their own commission of inquiry", he said. India had set up the panel last year to "look into all aspects of the matter" after the US filed charges against an Indian citizen, Nikhil Gupta, alleging that he was involved in a murder-for-hire plot in New York against Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, a Khalistani leader.

### Escalating fighting in Sudan prevents delivery of humanitarian aid: WFP

**Khartoum, Dec 28 (IANS) :** The World Food Programme (WFP) said that the escalating fighting in Sudan was preventing humanitarian aid from reaching famine-risk areas. "Fighting in Um Rawwaba, North Kordofan, has prevented a convoy from reaching famine risk areas in North and South Kordofan, including Kadugli and Dilling," Xinhua news agency reported quoting WFP's statement. The trucks were forced to return to a safer location and are waiting to be rerouted to other accessible areas in South Kordofan and Blue Nile state as the situation permits, it added.



### Sweden to significantly expand defence capabilities by 2030

**Helsinki, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Sweden's Parliament has approved a new defence plan, increasing the military budget from 125 billion SEK (11.42 billion US dollars) in 2024 to SEK 186 billion by 2030. Sweden is among the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) countries that are increasing defence spending the most, said Defense Minister Pal Jonson, as reported by Swedish broadcaster SVT. The plan prioritises expanding supplies of ammunition, missiles, and spare parts. It also maintains the current structure of the armed forces: four brigades for the army, seven corvettes and five submarines for the navy, and six fighter divisions for the air force.

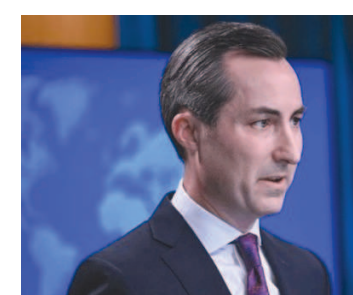


### South Korean President fails to appear before CIO for questioning over martial law

**Seoul, Dec 28 (IANS) :** South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol failed to appear before the Corruption Investigation Office (CIO) for High-ranking Officials on Saturday, defying a summons for questioning over his short-lived imposition of martial law. Yoon had been asked by a joint investigation team made up of the CIO, the police and the Defence ministry's investigation unit to appear at the CIO's office in Gwacheon, just south of Seoul.

### Bolivian ex-president says 'lawfare' aims to derail his run in 2025

**La Paz, Dec 28 (IANS) :** Former Bolivian President Evo Morales has said that he is the target of a "lawfare" campaign to prevent his candidacy in next year's presidential elections. The allegation came a day after the prosecutor's office issued an arrest warrant when Morales failed to appear to testify as part of an investigation into charges of human trafficking and aggravated statutory rape.



'Different look' Australia keen on carrying fearless approach to Ashes

Melbourne, Dec 28 (IANS) : After Australia's shock loss against South Africa in the semi-final of the Women's T20 World Cup, Aussie captain Alyssa Healy claimed that the team reflected on what went wrong on that night when the Proteas registered their first-ever win over defending champions in the tournament.



Pro Kabaddi makes debut in Australia as PKL Melbourne Raid lights up John Cain Arena

Melbourne, Dec 28 (IANS) : The John Cain Arena played host to a historic PKL Melbourne Raid, featuring a spectacular double-header that showcased kabaddi's finest talent from the PKL as well as from Australia. The evening witnessed two contrasting matches: a nail-biting encounter between the PKL All Star Masters and PKL Mavericks that ended in a thrilling 41-39 victory for the Mavericks. Meanwhile, the showpiece international clash between the Pro Kabaddi All Stars and the host nation's Aussie Raiders saw the All Stars emerge victorious with a commanding 46-28 scoreline. The PKL Melbourne Raid's opening match began with strong defensive displays before Saurabh Nandal's Super Raid gave the PKL All Star Masters an early lead. However, the PKL Mavericks re-

sponded with an ALL OUT, powered by two-point raids from Ajay Thakur and Pardeep Narwal. Despite this, the momentum shifted when Maninder Singh's Super Raid inflicted an ALL OUT on the Mavericks, giving the Masters a 22-19 lead at half-time. The second half saw Pardeep Narwal showcase his prowess with a Super Raid, helping the Mavericks close the gap. Though the Masters briefly regained the lead through Jai Bhagwan's Super Raid, Pardeep Narwal's Super 10 performance proved decisive.



Nitish Kumar Reddy is a star of Indian cricket, says Sunil Gavaskar

Melbourne, Dec 28 (IANS) : Legendary cricketer Sunil Gavaskar termed Nitish Kumar Reddy as the star of Indian cricket after the youngster scored his maiden Test hundred to rescue the side from a precarious situation in the ongoing fourth Test against Australia at Melbourne Cricket Ground. The batting all-rounder returned unbeaten on 105 at stumps on Day 3 after stitching a crucial 127-run partnership with Washington Sundar for the eighth wicket to take India to 385/9 in reply to Australia's 474. "This is the first Test hundred and he is going to score many more in the near future. I am expecting to see him among the runs in the future. He is a star of the Indian cricket," Gavaskar said on Star Sports. The former India captain added that the 21-year-old all-rounder has a bright future if he remains true to himself. "However, he will have to remember the sacrifices made by his father and other members of the family. Nitish is here because of the Indian cricket and he will have to make sure that he doesn't take Indian cricket for granted.

Sacramento Kings showed 'no class' in firing Brown: Nuggets head coach Malone

New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) : After Sacramento Kings head coach Mike Brown was fired following a disappointing start to the NBA season, Denver Nuggets head coach Michael Malone stated the franchise.



NZ v SL : Nissanka-Mendis century stand in vain as late collapse seals 8-run win for Kiwis

Mount Maunganui, Dec 28 (IANS) : A late batting collapse by Sri Lanka saw New Zealand register a thrilling eight-run victory in the first game of the three-match T20I series at the Bay Oval on Saturday. Pathum Nissanka and Kusal Mendis' 121-run opening partnership went in vain thanks to some great death bowling by the likes of Jacob Duffy, Matt Henry, and Zakary Foulkes. Sri Lanka won the toss and opted to field first in the T20I series opener and asserted dominance over the Black Caps in the opening overs. Tim Robinson (11) was the first to depart when he was caught and bowled by Binura Fernando in the fourth over. Robinson's opening partner Rachin Ravindra (8) soon followed him back to the dugout after he edged the ball into the safe hands of Mendis three balls later. Mark Chapman's attempts to clear the boundary in the first over after the Power-play ended up giving Kamindu Mendis catching practice at backward square. Things went from bad to worse

for the hosts when Glenn Phillips (8) and Mitchell Hay (0) were dismissed, trapped LBW on consecutive deliveries by Wanindu Hasaranga in the 10th over to leave them reeling at 65/5. Daryl Mitchell (62) and Michael Bracewell (59) rescued the struggling Black Caps as a 105-run partnership, the highest-ever for the sixth wicket by New Zealand in T20Is, propelled the team to a strong total. The duo were dismissed by Maheesh Theekshana in the final over but the damage was already done as Sri Lanka had a huge target of 173 in front of them. Nissanka (90) and Mendis (40) had the visitors



dominating the game and it seemed they would run away with it before the latter edged a bouncer by Duffy, in the 14th over, which was easily collected by wicket-keeper Hay. Kusal Perera (0) and Kamindu Mendis (0) both were dismissed in the penultimate and final delivery of the same over which caused the collapse. Despite fighting ef-

forts from Nissanka at one end, the Sri Lankan batting order kept giving away wickets as no batter besides the opening duo reached double-digit scores. Nissanka's wicket in the 19th over sealed the game for New Zealand as Sri Lanka ended their innings in underwhelming fashion at 164/8.



PM Modi meets World Chess Champion D. Gukesh, calls him 'India's pride'

New Delhi, Dec 28 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday met the newly-crowned World Chess Champion D. Gukesh, during which he also held an interaction with the 18-year-old Chennai resident, who scripted history earlier this month by becoming the youngest-ever World Champion in chess. Taking to X, PM Modi wrote: "Had an excellent interaction with chess champion and

India's pride, @DGukesh! I have been closely interacting with him for a few years now, and what strikes me most about him is his determination and dedication. His confidence is truly inspiring. "In fact, I recall seeing a video of his few years ago where he had said he would become the youngest world champion - a prediction that has now clearly come true thanks to his own efforts."

United Cup: Bencic/Stricker win deciding mixed doubles, lead Switzerland past France

Sydney, Dec 28 (IANS) : Belinda Bencic and Dominic Stricker defeated Elixane Lechemia and Edouard Roger-Vasselin 6-1, 7-6(4) on Saturday in a deciding mixed doubles clash to lead Switzerland past France 2-1 in Group D action. The Swiss maintained their chances of progressing to the knockout stages of the prestigious mixed-gender team competition, after Ugo Humbert defeated Dominic Stricker 6-3, 7-5 to pull France back level after Bencic had opened their campaign with a clinical 6-3, 6-1 win over Chloe Paquet in the women's singles. In the decider, the Swiss side appeared in cruise control after losing just 12 points in the first set of the mixed doubles but needed to work hard to ultimately prevail in 77 minutes. "I saw her matches when she played with Roger, so it was not easy for me," Stricker said, referring to countryman Roger Federer. "But we just had a good talk before the match and then we came out hot and it's super great to win that match and that tie." The winners will need to quickly recover for their next tie against Italy on Sunday evening



at Ken Rosewall Arena. France will face Italy on Tuesday. "So important [to earn the win] and it was a pleasure playing with Dominic," Bencic said. "It's so easy when he's on serve. I'm just chilling at the net, not touching the ball, so it's super cool to play with him and we had great energy on the court." Humbert gave France a chance to contest a 'live' mixed doubles match when he levelled the tie with a 6-3, 7-5 victory against Stricker. "It was the first match of the year, so it was not easy after the preseason. I worked well," Humbert said. "I felt much better at the end and I'm super happy about my win today." Humbert closed his 2024 season with the best tournament of his career. The lefty made his first ATP Masters 1000 final at the Paris Masters. Although the Frenchman did not play a perfect match against Stricker to begin the new season, falling behind by a break in the second set, he remained composed and battled through in straight sets.

Shreyanka among nominees for ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year

Dubai, Dec 28 (IANS) : India all-rounder Shreyanka Patil is among the nominees for the ICC Women's Emerging Cricketer of the Year award for 2024. Annnerie Dercksen (South Africa), Saskia Horley (Scotland) and Freya Sargent (Ireland) are the other candidates for the award, the International Cricket Council announced on Saturday. Patil's debut for India in December 2023 was just the beginning of an incredible year. The young bowler has been a consistent performer for India across white-ball formats.

