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LeBron reflects on turning 40, says he could play at high level for '5-7 years'

LeBron James, a player who has dominated the National Basketball Association (NBA) for two decades, turned 40 years old on Monday. While still being a top-ten player....

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Ola Electric's stock down 3 pc after fresh high-level exits

The share of Ola Electric fell around 3 per cent on Tuesday after some fresh high-level exits at the company, including its Chief Marketing Officer Anshul Khandelwal...

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Construction of sub-registration offices at corporate level : Ponguleti

Minister for Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has announced that in addition to the Reorganisation of sub-registrar offices....

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Uttam pushes for higher efficiency in irrigation dept, SLBC project prioritisation

Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS): Irrigation & Civil Supplies Minister Uttam Kumar Reddy has called on officials of the Irrigation department to prioritise achieving

greater ayacut with minimal expenditure while ensuring accountability.

Addressing a review meeting at Jala Soudha on irrigation projects in the Nalgonda Parliamentary constituency on Tuesday. **Continued on pg 02**



Make National Road Safety Month a grand success: Ponnam tells officials

Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS): Minister for Transport Ponnam Prabhakar has instructed the officials to make the National Road Safety Month, scheduled to be held from January 1 to 31, a grand success. The Minister held a Zoom meeting with officials from the Secretariat here on Tuesday and discussed on the steps to be taken to make the National Road Safety Month programme a success and to create widespread awareness among the people. **Continued on pg 02**

CM Revanth to chair Cabinet meet on Jan 4

Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS) : Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy will chair the Cabinet at the Secretariat at 4 PM on January 4. The Cabinet is expected to discuss several key issues.



Former Andhra minister Perni Nani booked in PDS rice case

Vijayawada, Dec 31 (IANS) : Andhra Pradesh Police have booked former minister Perni Venkataramaih, also known as Perni Nani, in the case relating to the alleged diversion of Public Distribution System (PDS) rice. Bandar Taluka Police Station in Krishna district included the YSR Congress Party leader as the sixth accused in the case.

The former minister is likely to be arrested in the case, in which his wife Jayasudha is the prime accused. While Jayasudha has already been granted anticipatory bail by a local court, the police arrested four other accused. The second accused Manasa Teja, the manager of Nani, Civil Supplies Department Assistant Manager



Koti Reddy, rice miller Borra Anjaneyulu and lorry driver Mangarao were all arrested. The four accused were produced before the Machilipatnam Special Mobile Judge late Monday night. The court remanded them to judicial custody for 12 days. The accused were subsequently shifted to Machilipatnam Sub-Jail.

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Let KTR enjoy new year : Komatireddy

Hyderabad, Dec 31 (NSS): Minister for Roads and Buildings, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, made some humorous remarks concerning BRS working president, KT Rama Rao, suggesting that Rao should take the time to enjoy himself for a couple of days.

The Minister's comments are particularly noteworthy given the recent intensified scrutiny by the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) regarding the Formula E car race case. Furthermore, the ACB has shared important information with Enforcement Directorate (ED) officials as part of the ongoing in-

vestigation related to this matter. In this context, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy's statements have taken on greater significance following the Congress leader's repeated assertions that KTR will be apprehended in connection with the Formula E car race.

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TPCC chief extends new year greetings



Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS): In extending new year greetings to the people of Telangana, Mahesh Kumar Goud, the President of the Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) and Member of the Legislative Council, on Tuesday expressed that the year 2024 would forever be marked by the support of leaders, fellow political colleagues, friends, and the media.



Chandrababu distributes pensions to beneficiaries

Amaravati, Dec 31 (NSS): AP CM Chandrababu today toured Yellamanda in Palnadu district and distributed Pensions to the beneficiaries. He himself went to the houses of the beneficiaries and understood their difficulties. Later, he addressed a gram sabha.

Speaking on the occasion, he said for the last five years, people had not been able to go out. "Now we are coming to door to door and providing pensions. "I am working hard for five crore people. Five crore people are my high command," Chandrababu said.

The NTR Bharosa pension distribution program will be held in the State from Tuesday morning.



Vinod Kumar writes to Education Commission about Sainik schools in State

Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS): BRS senior leader and former MP Vinod Kumar has written a letter to Telangana Education Commissioner Akunuri Murali about establishing Sainik Schools in Telangana. He thanked the latter for the initiatives undertaken during the first 100 days of his tenure as Chairperson of the Telangana Education Commission. While Andhra Pradesh has three Sainik Schools, Telangana lacks even a single one. "Our former Chief Minister

K. Chandrashekar Rao had raised this matter with the then Defence Ministers, Late Manohar Parrikar and Arun Jaitley. Additionally, I, along with my fellow MPs, repeatedly raised this issue in Parliament between 2014 and 2019. As a result, the Defence Ministry allocated one Sainik School to Telangana.

However, under the new policy, the Ministry clarified that the responsibility for land pooling, infrastructure.

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HC reserves verdict in KTR's case

Hyderabad, Dec.31 (NSS): The arguments in the Telangana High Court on a petition filed by BRS party working president KT Rama Rao seeking quashing of the case filed by the ACB against him in the Formula E-car race case have come to an end. The High Court has reserved its verdict on the petition. The High Court issued important directions to the ACB in this regard.

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Uttam pushes for higher efficiency in irrigation dept, SLBC project prioritisation

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he warned of stringent action against inefficiency, stating that negligent officials would face suspension rather than transfers. The meeting was attended by Roads & Buildings Minister Komatireddy Venkatreddy, MLAs Balu Naik, Nenevath (Devarakonda), Mandula

Samel (Thungathuri), Bathula Laxma Reddy (Miryalaguda), Principal Secretary Irrigation Rahul Bojja, Special Secretary Prashant Patil, ENC Anil Kumar, and other senior officials. The ministers reviewed ongoing and proposed projects, emphasising timely completion and effective management. Uttam Kumar Reddy stressed the

importance of responsibility among employees, urging them to reside at their designated postings and work hard so that the government achieved its goals. Based on complaints from CE Nalgonda and local MLA, Executive Engineer Lakshman was suspended, setting an example of zero tolerance towards neglect and inefficiency. He warned officials that

negligence would lead to suspensions and that all employees should perform with commitment and integrity. He directed officials to stay in districts where projects are being implemented, conduct live on-ground reviews, and adhere to tight schedules with result-oriented tasks. Uttam Kumar Reddy highlighted

the challenges inherited from the previous government, describing the irrigation sector as being in a "chaotic state" due to a lack of proper planning, manpower, infrastructure, and organisational structure. He revealed that 700 Assistant Executive Engineers (AEs), including graduates from premier institutions like IITs and IIITs,

were recruited to address these gaps. Additionally, 1,800 Laskar staff were hired through outsourcing, and the Telangana State Public Service Commission was directed to fill more vacancies. He emphasised the importance of young talent in streamlining irrigation projects and strengthening the sector.

CAN FIN HOMES LTD
Branch Address: MIG 58, First Floor, Phase 2, P.R.Pally, Sangareddy, Bypass Road, 502001. Tel: 08455-277550.

DEMAND NOTICE
Under Section 13 (2) of "The Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (No. 54 of 2002)"

To, 1) Mrs. Dappu Aruna W/o. Ramesh, 2) Mr. Dappu Ramesh S/o. Durgaiyah, H.No. 1-92, Nalthur Madharam, Sangareddy-502319.

No. 1 & 2 amongst you have availed a housing loan from our branch against the security of mortgage of the following asset belonging to Borrower No.1 of Amongst you. An amount of Rs.20,39,917/- is due from you, to Can Fin Homes Ltd. as on 29-12-2024 together with future interest and charges at the contracted rate.

DETAILS OF THE MORTGAGED ASSET:
All that the house being Plot No.14 in Survey No.237/AA, Nalthur Village, Madharam Jimnaram, Sangareddy-502319. Admeasuring 96.8 Sq.Yds (Plinth Area 850 Sft). Bounded on the: East: Plot No.15, West: Plot No.13, North: GP Road, South: Road.

Registered demand notice was sent to Nos. 1 & 2 amongst you under Section 13 (2) of the SARFAESI Act, 2002, on 31-12-2024. As you have failed to adhere to the terms of the sanction, the account is classified as a **Non Performing Asset on 29-12-2024** as per the NHB/RBI Guidelines. Hence this paper publication. You are hereby called upon to pay the above said amount with contracted rate of interest thereon from 29-12-2024 within 60 days from the date of this notice, failing which the undersigned will be constrained to initiate action under SARFAESI Act to enforce the aforesaid security. Further, the attention of borrowers / guarantors is invited to the provisions of Sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available to them to redeem the secured assets.

Date: 01-01-2025 Sd/- Authorised Officer
Place: Sangareddy Can Fin Homes Ltd.

Former Andhra minister Perni Nani booked in PDS rice case

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The case was registered in connection with the missing PDS rice from a buffer warehouse owned by Jayasudha. An official of the Civil Supplies Department had complained to the police about alleged irregularities in the storage of 248 tonnes of ration rice.

The warehouse in Potlapalem village was registered in his wife's name and was later rented to the Civil Supplies Department as a buffer godown. The facility was under the supervision of Perni Nani and his son Krishna Murthy alias Kittu. During a recent inspection, authorities discovered that 7,577 bags of PDS rice stored

in the warehouse were missing. Summons were issued to Jayasudha, Nani and Krishna Murthy. However, they failed to appear before investigating officials. Jayasudha later approached a court, which granted her anticipatory bail. Perni Nani was added to the list of the accused after police gathered evidence against him during questioning of the four arrested accused.

Make National Road Safety Month a grand success : Ponnampalli tells officials

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The meeting also discussed the latest situation in the Transport department and Telangana State Road Transport Corporation (TGSRTC).

He called for large-scale awareness programmes on road safety to make the National Road Safety Month a success. The Minister suggested that banners be placed in all 97 RTC depots and 62 transport offices across the Telangana State to create awareness about safety rules. Ponnampalli advised the Transport department officials to ensure that elected representatives, MLAs and MLCs, IAS and IPS officers participate in each constituency as part of Road Safety Month.

He suggested that RTC and Transport department officials should work in coordination with road safety to create awareness on traffic awareness in every

school. Officials were instructed to organise awareness rallies, training classes, workshops, seminars, eye check-up camps, and awareness programmes for drivers on road safety with school students.

Stating that the Transport department is already undertaking several initiatives to reduce the increasing number of road accident deaths, he directed the officials to complete 50 traffic awareness parks to be set up in every school by January.

The Minister also inquired about the action plan for new buses in the RTC and asked about the progress of the bus depots, including the new jobs to be recruited in the Corporation, which have already been sanctioned for Peddapalli and Eturu Nagaram depots. Special Chief Secretary Vikas Raj, JTCs, DTCs, RTOs, RTC EDs, and RMs were present in the meeting.

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 Finance Company Limited name Changed as Shriram Finance Limited, by its Incorporation Certificate dt.30-11-2022) 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(2) 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 28th day of December 2024.

BORROWER NAME AND ADDRESS	Amount Due as per Demand Notice
1. Mohammed Tajuddin alias Mohammed Iqbal S/o. Mohammed Rukmoddin, Aged About 52 Years, Occ: Business, O/o. "IQBAL FURNITURES", Sadashivpet, R/o. H.No.4-6-63, Parthakeri, Sadashivpet Mandal, Sangareddy Dist - 502291.	Rs.41,88,278/- (Rupees Forty One Lakhs Eighty Eight Thousand Two Hundred and Seventy Eight only)
2. Neel Srikanth S/o. Shankar, Aged About 33 Years, Occ: Desg: Senior Executive, O/o. Docoline Health India Private Limited., Madhapur, R/o. H.No. 4-8-55/2, Manjeera Nagar, Sangareddy Dist-502001 Borrowers/Co-borrower/Guarantors/Legal heirs	

DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY - CDNGRTF1709270001. All That the Part of Open Plot in Sy. No. 974/U, admeasuring 293.33 Sq. yards situated at Ward No.4, Block No.1, Guru Nagar Colony, Under Sadashivpet Town & Municipality, Medak Dist and bounded as follows : North: Open Place of Padmashali Sangam (Boundary Wall), South: Municipal B.T.Road, East:5'00" Wide Lane, Hanuman Temple (Pathaperumandlu Compound), West: Part of Sy.No.974/U of Others.

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 : 28-12-2024 Sd/-Authorized Officer
Place: SADASHIVPET, SANGAREDDY SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED

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.

DEMAND NOTICE
Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/ mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD, (Formerly known as Shriram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shriram Transport Finance Company Limited name Changed as Shriram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002, calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices.

The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same.

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

NAME OF THE BORROWER(S)/ CO-BORROWER(S)/GUARANTORS	NPA DATE
1) Sayyad Khaja Mohiddin, S/o Sayyad Ahmed Mohiddin @ Alias Mohiddin @ Alias Sayyad Ahamedh Mohiddin, Age: 48 Years, Occ: Self Employee, R/O: Address-I: Flat No: 402, Block No- A2, Indu Aranya Pallavi Apartments, Bandlaguda, Uppal, Rangareddy-500068, Address-II: P/No: 48/B, Road No:4, Bandlaguda, Anand Nagar, Nagole, Rangareddy-500068, B/O: Proprietor Of 'M/S Global Associates(Coal Business)', At# 2-4-134/1, Snehapuri Colony, Alkapuri, Uppal, Rangareddy, 2) Sayyad Ayesha Begum, W/o: Khaja Mohiddin, Age: 47 Years, Occ: House Wife, R/O: Address-I: Flat No: 402, Block No- A2, Indu Aranya Pallavi Apartments, Bandlaguda, Uppal, Rangareddy-500068, Address-II: 12-1-304/48, Anand Nagar, Road No:4, Bandlaguda, Nagole, Rangareddy-500068. 3) Saleha Begum, D/o: Mohammed Ali @ Alias Mohammad Ali @ Alias Mohd Ali, Age: 38 Years, Occ: Self Employee, R/O: Address-I: H.No: 3-6-780/33, Road No.14, Himayath Nagar, Hyderabad-500029. Address-II: # Flat No:201, 2nd Floor, Amberpet, M S Enclave, Ramanthapur, Rangareddy, B/O: Proprietor Of 'Saheli Beauty Parlour', Borrowers/Co-Borrower/Guarantors/Legal Heirs	13.11.2018
	DATE OF DEMAND NOTICE 20.11.2024
	OUTSTANDING AMOUNT Rs.80,23,513/-
	LOAN AMOUNT Rs.20,00,000/-

PROPERTY ADDRESS OF SECURED ASSETS : ATAPTFF1712110003- Description Of The Immovable Property - Schedule "A" : All That The Piece And Parcel Of Open Plot Nos. 163, 226, 252 And 272 (Residential Zone), In Survey Nos. 154, 155 And 157, Admeasuring 800 Sq. Yards, Or Equivalent To 668.8 Sq. Meters, Situated At "Saibaba Nagar", Nemeragomula Village, Bibinagar Mandal, Yadadri Bhongir Revenue District, And Bounded As Follows:- Boundaries Of Plot No.163, Area 200 Square Yards As Follows: North: 25' Wide Road, South: Plot No.162, West: Plot No.164. Boundaries Of Plot No. 226, Area 200 Square Yards As Follows: North: 25' Wide Road, South: Plot No. 227, East: Plot No. 225, West: Plot No.228. Boundaries Of Plot No. 252, Area 200 Square Yards As Follows: North: Plot No.251, South: 25' Wide Road, East: Plot No.253, West: 25' Wide Road, Boundaries Of Plot No. 272, Area 200 Square Yards As Follows: North: Plot No.271, South: Plot No. 273, East: Neighbour's Land, West: 30' Wide Road.

ATAPTFF1712110003- Description Of The Immovable Property - Schedule "B" : All That The Piece And Parcel Of Open Plot Nos. 137, 138, 279, 285 And 286, In Survey Nos. 154, 155 And 157, Admeasuring 1018 Sq. Yards, Or Equivalent To 851.04 Sq. Meters, Situated At "Saibaba Nagar", Nemeragomula Village, Bibinagar Mandal, Yadadri Bhongir Revenue District, And Bounded As Follows:- Boundaries Of Plot No. 137 And 138, Area 400 Square Yards As Follows: North: 25' Wide Road, South: Plot Nos. 108 And 109, East: Plot No. 136, West: Plot No. 139. Boundaries Of Plot No.279, Area 200 Square Yards As Follows: North: Plot No.278, South: Plot No.280, East: Neighbours Land, West: 30' Wide Road. Boundaries Of Plot No.285 And 286, Area 418 Square Yards As Follows: North: Plot No.284, South: Neighbour's Land, East: Neighbour's Land, West: 30' Wide Road.

In the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules there under.

Please note that under Section 13 (13) of the said Act, no Borrower shall, transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of his secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.

Date : 30.12.2024 Sd/-Authorized Officer
Place: HYDERABAD Shriram Finance Limited



Construction of sub-registration offices at corporate level : Ponguleti

Hyderabad, Dec 31 (NSS): Minister for Revenue, Housing, Information and Public Relations Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has announced that in addition to the Reorganisation of sub-registrar offices, modern facilities at the corporate level will be built with CSR funds to provide government services to the people in a more efficient and transparent manner. The Minister held a meeting with the District Collectors and Registrars of Rangareddy, Hyderabad, Medchal-Malkajgiri and Sangareddy at the Secretariat here on Tuesday. The officials were ad-

vised to reorganise the Sub-Registrar offices and construct new buildings with these two aspects in mind, with the aim of serving the people and providing them with better facilities. "Currently, there are 144 sub-registrar offices in Telangana, of which only 37 are in their own buildings, while the rest are in rented buildings. To change this situation, we will construct all sub-registrar offices with modern facilities at the corporate level in a phased manner," Ponguleti said.

Let KTR enjoy new year : Komatireddy

Continued From pg 01

The Minister added that KTR ought to be allowed to celebrate New Year's Day, noting that the situation would be addressed on January 3 and 4.

Minister for Irrigation, Uttam Kumar Reddy, and Minister for Roads and Buildings, Komatireddy Venkat Reddy, convened a meeting with officials from the Irrigation department at Jalsaudha here on Tuesday and discussed the progress of irrigation projects under the Nalgonda Lok Sabha constituency. During the review meeting, Minister Komatireddy Venkat Reddy voiced his frustration regarding the officials' attitudes. He noted that the SLBC project has been a longstanding aspiration for the residents of Nalgonda and cautioned that negligence on the part of the officials could result in the contractors refraining from their duties.

"The contractors should fulfill their responsibilities. The officials must not approach the tasks without due diligence," he stated.

The Minister emphasized that if the officials commit themselves to their work, the project could be completed within the designated timeframe. "The SLBC project is designed to irrigate 4 lakh acres. Both the SLBC and Brahmanavellam projects are of utmost priority to me. Upon the completion of the SLBC, it is anticipated that visitors from around the world will come to witness it. Therefore, it is essential for the officials to approach this project with a profound sense of responsibility," Minister Komatireddy pointed out.

Vinod Kumar writes to Education Commission about Sainik schools in State

Continued From pg 01

1, construction and recurring expenses would lie entirely with the State government. This marked a departure from the earlier model, where the Ministry of Defence managed these schools.

In response to this policy shift, the KCR Government took proactive steps, writing to the Ministry, to completely support the Sainik School allocated to the State instead of Telangana State Government bearing the complete expenditure.

Despite these efforts, there has been no clear communication regarding the status of the proposal. Sainik Schools play an instrumental role in preparing young aspirants for entry into the National Defence Academy (NDA) and training them for leadership roles in the Army, Navy, and Air Force. The absence of

such an institution in Telangana deprives our youth of these valuable opportunities.

Revanth Reddy, the current Chief Minister, also met with Rajnath Singh, the present defence minister to reiterate this demand. Therefore, I request the Commission to elicit the views of the Government of Telangana and provide clarification on the following points:

Whether the present Telangana Government under the leadership of Revanth Reddy, is willing to bear all expenses related to the establishment of a Sainik School in Telangana as desired by the Defence ministry or whether the State Government is prepared to explore ways to secure grants from the Ministry of Defence for the infrastructure, maintenance and recurring expenditure of these schools.

HC reserves verdict in KTR's case

Continued From pg 01

The ACB has been ordered not to arrest KTR till the verdict is pronounced. It had earlier extended the interim order to not arrest KTR.

KTR had filed the petition in the High Court seeking quashing of the cases registered against him by the ACB in the Formula E-Car racing case. A bench of Justice Laxman heard the petition on Tuesday. Senior advocate Siddharth Dave argued on behalf of KTR. He said Section 409 did not apply to KTR in this case and added that there was no misap-

propriation of funds in the Formula E-car race case.

"KTR did not use those funds for his own purposes. KTR did not get a single rupee in the entire transaction. If you apply 409 to KTR, there is a possibility of confusion. No minister in the country will sign files anymore. We will provide examples of all the cases from the Bombay High Court so far," he said. He also said KTR had taken the decision as a State minister and added that it was through banking channels that the funds went to the organizing company.



NF Railway signs MoU with IRCON for maintenance of electrification infrastructure

Guwahati, Dec 31 (IANS): For the first time in Indian Railways, Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) has embarked upon a novel initiative for maintenance of electrification infrastructure, including Overhead Equipment's and Power Supply Installation by collaborating with IRCON, officials said on Tuesday. NFR Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO), Kapinjal Kishore Sharma, said that NFR General Manager Chetan Kumar Shrivastava and IRCON International Limited Chief Managing Director H. M. Gupta signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on Thursday. He added that the MoU would provide maintenance of Overhead Equipment (OHE) and Power Supply Installation (PSI) in the Lumding and Tinsukia divisions of the NFR. The CPRO said that electrification

works of the Lumding and Tinsukia divisions are progressing at a rapid pace with most of the sections already electrified and the balance of 425 RKM set to be commissioned by June next year. Due to the rapid commissioning of the sections, maintenance of electrification works has grown manifold which needs trained and experienced railway personnel for scheduled maintenance and breakdown attention as electric traction is directly related to train operations, Sharma added. He said electrification work in NFR is at a new stage and railway authorities have decided to rope in IRCON for the maintenance and breakdown attention of the sections for a period of two years as a contract addition which marks an exemplary step towards systemic maintenance.

National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing draft silent on MSP: Punjab

Chandigarh, Dec 31 (IANS): Noting the draft policy of the National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing is silent on the minimum support price (MSP), the most crucial for the state farmers, Punjab on Tuesday said it "is minutely studying it and is in no mood to leave any of its clauses unconsidered". A team of officers and agriculture experts "is even decoding the message in between the lines", a state gov-

ernment statement said. Punjab Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khudian, along with Punjab Mandi Board Chairman Harchand Singh Barsat and officers, conducted a brainstorming session with 'arthiyas' (commission agents) and rice millers of the state seeking their inputs and suggestions on the draft of the policy. During the discussions, it came to the fore that the draft policy "is totally silent on the MSP, which is the most crucial for the farmers

and the clause regarding promoting the private markets will lead to overshadowing the Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC) markets", the statement said. The meeting apprehended that once the APMC markets fall into disarray, it would lead to exploitation of the farmers and traditional traders. The minister said the rural development fund (RDF) and market development fund (MDF) "are crucial for maintaining state's extensive agricultural infrastructure, especially market infrastructure and maintaining roads connecting these marketing yards to villages". He appealed to the 'arthiyas' led



by Vijay Kalra and Ravinder Singh Cheema and millers led by Tarsem Saini to send their inputs and concerns to the Punjab Mandi Board so that it could be incorporated in the reply to be sent to the Union government. Minister Khudian reiterated the state government is committed to protecting the interests of the farmers of the state and will do everything possible to safeguard the farmers' rights.

MP govt pays homage to Guru Gobind Singh's sons' martyrdom on 'Veer Bal Diwas'

Bhopal, Dec 31 (IANS): 'Veer Bal Diwas' was observed in Madhya Pradesh, with the state government paying homage to the exceptional bravery and sacrifice of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, who stood for justice, truth, and righteousness. On this occasion, people from the Sikh community and others visited gurudwaras and other places programmes were organised by government departments and people across the state and paid their homage to Guru Gobind Singh. Chief Minister Mohan Yadav and several other senior BJP leaders and Cabinet ministers participated in programmes in their respective areas in the state and paid their homage to Guru Gobind Singh and his four sons. The Chief Minister visited a Gurudwara in Hamidia road in Bhopal and offered his prayer. Later, he attended a programme organised by the state government at Bharat Bhavan in Bhopal to pay homage to Guru Gobind Singh and his martyred sons. "Guru Gobind Singh and his entire family sacrificed their lives to protect religion and culture. The stories of your valour, courage and bravery will always inspire us Indians to sacrifice everything for the protection of religion and service to humanity," CM Yadav said. State BJP President V.D. Sharma and the party's organisation secretary



Hitanand Sharma were also accompanied by CM Yadav. The Madhya Pradesh government has also decided to include the story of Guru Gobind Singh's sons' bravery in the school syllabus to teach children. Responding to the state government's decision to include chapters on the martyrdom of the sons of Guru Gobind Singh, Harvinder Singh, Gurudwara Parbandhak Committee, Hamidia Road, Bhopal, said, "It's a welcoming step from Madhya Pradesh government. Guru Gobind Singh's Sahibzadas sacrificed their lives for humanity and 'dharma'. It gives us a lesson to respect our dharma." Gurveer Singh, another Gurudwara Parbandhak committee member, told IANS, "We are thankful for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to observe 'Veer Bal Diwas' on December 26. But, we will request the government to name it 'Veer Shahjada Diwas' instead of 'Veer Bal Diwas'.



Draw inspiration from sacrifices of Sahibzadas: Haryana CM

Chandigarh, Dec 31 (IANS): Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini, on the occasion of Veer Bal Diwas, called upon the people to draw inspiration from the sacrifices made by the Sahibzadas, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh. Addressing the gathering at the state-level Veer Bal Diwas function in Kurukshetra, he urged parents to teach their children the values of courage, sacrifice.

'Won't wear slippers till DMK rule in TN ends', says Annamalai

Chennai, Dec 31 (IANS): Tamil Nadu BJP President, K. Annamalai has hit out at the DMK and said that he won't wear sandals and walk barefoot until the latter is removed from power in the state. He was addressing the media on Tuesday at Coimbatore. He accused the DMK government of the deteriorating law and order situation in the state. BJP leader Annamalai also said that he would undertake a fast for 48 days and visit all the six holy abodes of Lord Murugan. He also lashed out against the state police for leaking the FIR in the sexual assault case at Anna University.

He said that the leak was intentional and led to the revealing of the identity of the 19-year-old rape victim, who is also an engineering student at Anna University. He alleged that the accused Gnanashekar was not on the list of criminals of the Tamil Nadu Police despite being involved in several crime cases. BJP leader Annamalai said that this was due to Gnanashekar's proximity to the DMK leaders. The Tamil Nadu BJP President, who is also a former IPS officer, said that the accused Gnanashekar was a DMK functionary and provided evidence of it.



African Wild Cat rescued by BSF along India-Bangladesh border

Kolkata, Dec 31 (IANS): As part of its continuing efforts to curb all kinds of crimes along the India-Bangladesh border, the Border Security Force (BSF) said it has rescued a Serval, or African Wild Cat, being smuggled from India to Bangladesh in West Bengal's Nadia district on Tuesday, and handed it over to the state Forest Department for rehabilitation. "The rescue was possible due to the alert troopers of the 56 Battalion posted at the Bhattupara Border Outpost.

On Wednesday evening, a jawan on patrol spotted 3-4 persons approaching the IBB Road (on Indian territory) with a heavy load. He immediately alerted his fellow jawan over the radio set. On being challenged by the two jawans, the miscreants dropped a wooden box and fled, taking advantage of the darkness and dense papaya plantation. On checking the box, the BSF personnel found the Serval inside. They then carried the box, along with the animal, to the Bhattupara BOP for necessary action," BSF DIG, South Bengal Frontier, and spokesperson N.K.

Pandey said. Praising the efforts of the BSF personnel, he said: "The prompt and decisive action of our vigilant jawans is yet another example of BSF's unwavering commitment to safeguard the nation's borders and prevent trafficking of all kinds. The rescue of the Serval is not only a victory in the fight against wildlife trafficking but also a testimony to the effectiveness of our border security protocols." The BSF, over the last few months, has rescued several exotic species of animals, including an Alpaca and Golden Pheasants, that



were being smuggled across the border. The Serval, the sole member of the genus Leptailurus, is found in sub-Saharan countries outside rainforest regions.

Anna University rape case: BJP says accused belongs to DMK student wing

Chennai, Dec 31 (IANS): Tamil Nadu BJP President K. Annamalai has alleged that Gnanasekaran, a biryani vendor arrested in the Anna University rape case, is a habitual offender and serves as the deputy organiser of the DMK's Saidai East student wing.



First phase of Sabarimala pilgrimage sees increase of four lakh pilgrims

Sabarimala (Kerala), Dec 31 (IANS): There has been a record turnout of pilgrims at Kerala's Sabarimala temple, where the first phase of the two-month-long 2024-25 pilgrimage ends on Tuesday. Compared to the first phase of the 2023-24 festival season, this time there has been an increase of 4,07,309 pilgrims and the total number touched 32,49,756, up from 28,42,447 in 2023-24. The two-month-long season is spread between two phases, phase one began on November 16 and will close on Monday evening (December 26). Phase two will commence on December 30, with the most important day of the pilgrimage

being on January 14, and then, it will close after a few days. This time, the temple authorities have decided to regulate the number of pilgrims who are allowed to have darshan every day to 70,000, which includes 60,000 who have to book online and 10,000 who are given spot bookings. To manage the milling crowds, the timings also have been altered as the temple opens every day at 3 a.m. and closes at 1 p.m. and then,



opens again at 3 p.m. and closes at 11 p.m. Situated on the mountain ranges of the Western Ghats at an altitude of 914 metres above sea level, Sabarimala temple is four kilometres uphill from Pamba in the Pathanamthitta district, which

is around 100 km from the state capital. The temple, which bars the entry of women who have attained puberty, is accessible only on foot from the Pamba River. As per practice, before setting off to the holy shrine.

OPINIONmail

DECODING DISSANAYAKE'S
INDIA VISIT: ARE DELHI-COLOMBO
TIES BACK ON TRACK?

Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake's recent trip (15-17th Dec 2024) to India is an important moment in strengthening the ties between the two neighbouring countries. This visit highlights the growing bond and cooperation between India and Sri Lanka. This was his first official trip abroad since becoming President in September, showing his dedication to strengthening economic relations with India while also tackling worries about China's growing role in Sri Lanka. In his meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Dissanayake thanked India for helping stabilize Sri Lanka's economy during its 2022 crisis. He also shared his vision for working together on economic growth, focusing on sustainable development and recovery. The visit ended with a joint statement that highlighted various plans for working together, including partnerships in energy and efforts to strengthen regional security. India's plan to provide liquefied natural gas (LNG) to Sri Lanka and work on renewable energy projects shows its continued support in helping Sri Lanka expand its energy options. One key announcement was the plan to build an energy pipeline linking India and Sri Lanka, with support from the United Arab Emirates.

This pipeline, along with plans to develop Trincomalee (a port city in Sri Lanka) into a regional energy hub, shows India's aim to strengthen its presence in the Indian Ocean while helping Sri Lanka meet its urgent energy needs. Both countries also stressed the need to restart the passenger ferry service and repair important infrastructure, like the Kankesanthurai port (located in northern Sri Lanka, about 60 km from India), to improve connectivity between the two nations. India's ongoing efforts to support housing, transportation, and digital infrastructure in Sri Lanka reflect its "Neighbourhood First" policy and its SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region) initiative. The agreements and announcements bring hope for the economic recovery of Sri Lanka and stronger ties between the two nations. However, there are concerns about how they might affect Sri Lanka's independence and control over its economy in the long run.

Criticism has emerged within Sri Lanka, particularly from the Frontline Socialist Party (FSP), a group that broke away from the Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP). The FSP now plays a significant role in the ruling National People's Power (NPP) coalition. Under the leadership of President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, the NPP has brought a fresh direction to Sri Lanka's political landscape. The rise of the JVP and its coalition, the NPP, marks a major shift in the country's governance. However, the FSP has raised concerns about certain agreements, arguing that they could favour India while negatively impacting Sri Lanka's local workforce, resources, and sovereignty. These criticisms could slow down the progress of the Dissanayake administration. This is notable since his party had frequently criticized former President Ranil Wickremesinghe for his agreements with India. The FSP has expressed concern about plans to turn Trincomalee into an Indian economic hub, warning that this could force over 7,000 families to leave their homes. There are growing concerns about large areas of land being given to foreign projects and the possibility of India getting rights to explore resources in places like Mannar (known for its oil and gas reserves) and Kuchchaveli (famous for its beaches and tourism). People fear this could lead to Sri Lanka's natural resources being used in ways that do not benefit its citizens. Another major worry comes from the revival of the Economic and Technology Cooperation Agreement (ETCA), which Dissanayake had strongly opposed in the past. The FSP has claimed that ETCA's rules for opening up trade in services could allow many Indian professionals into Sri Lanka's job market, possibly taking away opportunities from local workers. With India's large workforce, especially in fields like medicine where many local doctors are already unemployed, Sri Lanka may end up struggling to safeguard jobs for its skilled workers.

(By Girish Linganna)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

VENGEANCE AT THE HEART OF
BJP'S FIR AGAINST LoP RAHUL GANDHI

The Winter Session of Parliament went its way after days of pandemonium. Some would say to a "wintry end", what with the ice-cold vibes between the Modi government and the Opposition led by LoP Rahul Gandhi, especially after the BJP-led NDA government filed an FIR against a combative Leader of the Opposition. Moreover, Rahul has got a tremendous push since Priyanka Gandhi Vadra joined him on the Opposition benches after her massive election victory from Kerala's Wayanad parliamentary constituency. Priyanka is the third Gandhi family member in Parliament, including Sonia Gandhi in the Rajya Sabha, which is unprecedented and a record.

Is there a chance the presence of this Gandhi troika unnerved the treasury benches enough to make

the Modi-led government commit unforced errors, finally capping the slate with the deliberate FIR against LoP Rahul Gandhi? How about Union Home Minister Amit Shah, did he go off-kilter and stopped thinking right, committing a mistake that was staring him in the face, nay eyes?

No Indian politician worth his political salt would have cast BR Ambedkar in bad light, unless he was a mental misfit. Whatever blunder Amit Shah committed, whether intentionally or unwittingly, he cannot truly correct. Like the saying goes, once an arrow is shot and words are uttered, neither of the two can be retrieved. Shah, after the effect, defended himself by saying his entire statement should be heard together and not just the "12 second clip" that the Congress presented to a public revering BR Ambedkar, especially the Dalit and the Extremely



Backward Class castes, for both of whom, Ambedkar is "God". Amit Shah with, perhaps, the devil taking hold of him, elevated 'God' to the level of Ambedkar and that didn't go down well with the Congress. Shah forgot that some mortals become immortal when their intellect rises to divine heights. For the oppressed mortals, the children of lesser gods, there was no God other than Dr. BR Ambedkar. To be fair, at least to look fair, Amit Shah, like some apologists for the Union Home Minister say, committed a "slip of the tongue", but there's no test to

give him a clean chit and Amit Shah, for all his Home ministerial clout, cannot give himself one even with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on his side. Guess what, the situation was ripe for vengeance to take a hand and the Congress believes Rahul Gandhi is being targeted for taking Amit Shah to the cleaners after his mortal mistake. Also, for the BJP, Amit Shah has to be defended, come what may, but how? How about by turning the tables on Rahul Gandhi? The melee of BJP MPs at the 'Makar Dwar', post Shah's faux pas, presented opportunity.

NEW WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT IN
BAWANA THREATENS LIVES OF DELHIITES

A new waste-to-energy incineration plant is set to be established in Bawana to burn 3,000 tonnes of mixed municipal solid waste daily per day. Currently, Delhi burns 7,250 tonnes of garbage daily across plants in Okhla, Tehkhand, Ghazipur, and Bawana, with plans to expand the capacity of these plants by an additional 5,000 tonnes daily.

In total, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) aims to burn 15,250 tonnes of waste every day within the next three years, surpassing the city's projected daily waste generation of 13,122 tonnes. Amidst these developments, the new waste-to-energy incineration plant in Bawana has received attention through a public notice issued by the Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC). Titled 'Proposed Waste to Energy Project (30 MW) adjacent to TSDF for Hazardous Waste, Sector 5, Bawana, Delhi, 110039', the project is scheduled for a public hear-



ing on December 27, 2024.

During this hearing, stakeholders will have the opportunity to voice their opinions. The DPCC has also invited suggestions and objections regarding the project, with a deadline for submission by December 26, 2024. However, there has been a lack of effective outreach in the Bawana area, and many residents are unaware of the hearing. This insufficient publicity has raised concerns about local participation and transparency.

This initiative has sparked growing concerns about Delhi's waste management practices and the potential environmental impact of expanding waste-to-energy plants across the city.

As Delhi's three landfills are operating well beyond capacity, they are unable to take in more waste. So there has been a shift in recent years to rely on waste-to-energy plants based on incineration technology that are set up and operated by private companies. Designed to incinerate municipal solid waste and generate electricity, such plants were introduced in India after being challenged in other countries due to health, environmental and livelihood concerns. These plants burn waste to produce steam.

YELLOW TAXIS
OF KOLKATA
AT THE END OF
THEIR ROAD

Introduced in the 1960s, the yellow Ambassador taxis, which had come to be synonymous with Kolkata, are at the end of the road. Come March, 2025 most of this nearly 7,000 fleet will be off the road following a Supreme Court order of 2009 together with the fact that Ambassador cars have ceased to be produced.

These yellow cabs became a part and parcel of the city, driving passengers from one end of the metropolis to another. They also found a place on the silver-screen, whether it was Satyajit Ray's Calcutta trilogy, Aparna Sen's directorial debut '36 Chowringhee Lane' or the whodunit 'Kahaani' starring Vidya Balan. Way back in 1958, Hindustan Motors started manufacturing Ambassador cars from its Hindmotor factory.

LABOUR MILITANCY ERUPTS
IN NEW YORK IN RUNUP TO THE HOLIDAYS

In the run-up to the holiday season, the diverse, working-class New York City borough of Queens seemed to suddenly erupt with labour militancy. Both the Amazon Teamsters and the Association of Flight Attendants (AFA) took action on December 19 to demand the same thing: that management come to the table with good-

faith bargaining that could lift the living conditions of tens of thousands of working New Yorkers and their families.

The Teamsters began their strike and picket at 6 a.m. at Amazon's DBK4 facility in Maspeth, joining with seven other Amazon locations across the country. Hundreds of Amazon workers and their allies held signs that read "Amazon: obey the law" and

"Amazon is unfair" while chanting and walking a picket that stretched across the garage ramp. Members of other unions, such as the New York State Nurses Association and SEIU 32BJ were present to support them, as well as community activists and a who's-who of Queens progressive politicians.

People's World spoke with Antonio Rosario, Teamsters Local 804 and shop steward for DBK4, about why the workers decided that now was the time. "Amazon refuses to negotiate with the union after we've shown majority recognition in multiple facilities. This is one of the facilities where we reached a supermajority." The reason for Amazon workers seeking a union are clear to Rosario. "The average driver here [at DBK4] makes between \$22 and \$23 an hour," he explains. "We've got UPS drivers doing the same job, delivering packages, making over \$45 an hour, with

pension, with benefits. If Amazon can make billions of dollars, and so can UPS, they can pay—and they're making more than UPS, I can promise you that."

New York City Comptroller Brad Lander, a candidate for mayor next year, was also out on the picket line. "Amazon is union busting, refusing to recognize the union, refusing to bargain in good faith, refusing to give them the contract they deserve," he told People's World. "We keep this wall of shame in the Comptroller's office that looks at all the companies who do business in New York City, who violate labour law, who cheat their workers of their wages, who have unsafe conditions. Amazon is up at the top of the wall of shame." Lander told People's World that Amazon has five times more Unfair Labour Practice (ULP).

Mongolia to enhance support for wool, cashmere, leather processing industries

Ulan Bator, Dec 31 (IANS) : Mongolia is seeking to strengthen its support for the wool, cashmere, and leather processing industries, according to a statement from the presidential press office on Tuesday. As part of the national campaign "White Gold," initiated by President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh, the Ministry of Food, Agriculture, and Light Industry, in collaboration with 10 major commercial banks, signed a financing agreement on Thursday. Under the agreement, enterprises in these sectors are expected to receive 788.9 billion Mongolian tugriks (over 231 million US dollars) in circulating capital and concessional investment loans in the coming year alone, the press office announced. Within the framework of the national campaign, which will run until 2028, Mongolia aims to significantly enhance its cashmere processing capacity. The Asian country is expected to increase the level of full cashmere processing from the current 20 percent to 40 per cent, and expand exports from 398 million US dollars to 690 million US dollars under the framework of the campaign.



South Korea : Main Opposition submits bill to impeach acting President Han, vote up for tomorrow

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : South Korea's main Opposition Democratic Party (DP) submitted an impeachment motion against acting President Han Duck-soo and reported it to a parliamentary plenary session on Tuesday. The decision came shortly after Han said he would not appoint justices to the Constitutional Court until the rival parties reached a compromise. The DP has vowed to impeach Han unless he approves their appointments, as the opposition-controlled National Assembly passed a motion grant-

ing parliamentary consent to three justice nominees. A majority of lawmakers associated with the ruling People Power Party boycotted the vote. If appointed, the three nominees will fill vacancies on the court's nine-member bench, where six justices are currently seated, to deliberate President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment trial.



FTA with Philippines set to bolster South Korea's trade portfolio : Trade Minister

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : South Korean Trade Minister Cheong In-kyo said Tuesday that South Korea's bilateral free trade agreement (FTA) with the Philippines, set for implementation next week, will help the country further bolster its trade portfolio and contribute to maintaining a stable supply chain. Cheong made the remark during a conference with business representatives, aimed at briefing them on ways to utilize the bilateral FTA, which is set to take effect Tuesday, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy. "As the multilateral trade regime under the World Trade Organization weakens, the significance of FTAs continues to grow," Cheong said. "Accordingly, an FTA with the Philippines, our key trade partner, will help South Korea bolster its trade portfolio."

China vows to smash 'Taiwan independence' moves

Beijing, Dec 31 (IANS) : A Chinese military spokesperson on Tuesday condemned US arms sales to Taiwan and vowed to smash any "Taiwan independence" separatist plots and foreign interference. Zhang Xiaogang, a spokesperson for the Ministry of National Defence, made the remarks at a press conference when asked to comment on reports of the arrival of a new type of battle tanks purchased by Taiwan from the United States. "We urge the US side to abide by the one-China principle and the three China-US joint communiqués, earnestly honour its commitment not to support 'Taiwan independence,' immediately stop arming Taiwan, and cease its dangerous moves that undermine peace and stability across the Taiwan Strait," Zhang said. Seeking independence by soliciting US support is doomed to failure, and resorting to force to resist reunification leads nowhere, he added, Xinhua news agency reported. "Several pieces of US weaponry won't be the



'magic straw' that can save a drowning man; they are nothing but easy targets on the battlefield," Zhang said. "The People's Liberation Army will comprehensively improve its combat readiness, enhance its capability to fight and win, and firmly smash any 'Taiwan independence' separatist plots and foreign interference," he added. On Wednesday, China had denounced the "negative Taiwan-re-

lated content" included in the recent US National Defence Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2025. Chen Binhua, a spokesperson for the State Council Taiwan Affairs Office, made the remarks at a press conference, adding that the inclusion of such content was an attempt by the United States to further arm Taiwan and stir up trouble in the Taiwan Strait.



South Korea: Investigators summon Yoon to appear for questioning Sunday in martial law probe

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : The South Korea's anti-corruption investigation body on Tuesday summoned President Yoon Suk Yeol to appear for questioning this weekend over his brief imposition of martial law. The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) issued the summons ordering Yoon to appear at its office in Gwacheon, just south of Seoul, at 10 a.m. Sunday. This marked the CIO's third summons after Yoon ignored two previous summonses, including one for questioning on Christmas Day. The CIO has teamed up with the police and the defense ministry's investigation unit to look into allegations Yoon incited an insurrection.



Dara Sakor airport in Cambodia's Koh Kong opens to domestic charter flights

Phnom Penh, Dec 31 (IANS) : The newly-built Dara Sakor International Airport in southwest Cambodia's Koh Kong province opened to domestic charter flights on Tuesday. An ATR72-turboprop plane, departed from the Phnom Penh International Airport, successfully landed at the airport and was welcomed by a traditional water salute, marking the first travel by air to the coastal province of Koh Kong. Mao Havannall, minister in charge of Cambodia's State Secretariat of Civil Aviation (SSCA), commended the Coastal Airport Investment Co., Ltd. (CAI) for investing in the project, saying this truly reflected the confidence of investors in Cambodia's peace, political stability and potential for business. "This is another milestone in the development of the civil aviation sector in Cambodia," he said in a speech during the welcoming ceremony of the first domestic charter flight to the airport, Xinhua news agency reported. He added that the new airport would contrib-

ute significantly to the development of economy, tourism and industries in Koh Kong province in particular and in Cambodia in general. SSCA's Undersecretary of State and Spokesperson Sinn Chanserey Vutha said last week that the airport, covering the parcel of 218 hectares in the first phase, was invested by the CAI in the amount of about 200 million US dollars. Located in the districts of Kiri Sakor and Botum Sakor, the airport is capable of handling seven million passengers per annum in a medium term and its capacity will be increased to 20 million per year in a long term from 2030 to 2050, he added.



5-yr survival rate for cancer patients in S. Korea reaches 72.9 pc : Report

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : The five-year relative survival rate for cancer patients, reflecting their likelihood of living compared with the general population, stood at 72.9 per cent, South Korea's health ministry said Tuesday. The latest findings from the 2018-2022 period represent a significant increase from 54.2 per cent recorded during the 2001-2005 period, suggesting cancer patients tend to live longer, likely due to more people undergoing medical examinations, according to the Ministry of Health and Welfare, Yonhap news agency reported. The survival rate for thyroid cancer reached 100.1 per cent, meaning its patients showed a tendency to live longer than the general population. Prostate cancer followed with 96.4 per cent, trailed by breast cancer at 94.3 per cent.

Japan Airlines' system restored after cyberattack

Tokyo, Dec 31 (IANS) : Japan Airlines (JAL) said Tuesday that its network system has been restored after a cyberattack earlier in the day disrupted luggage services and delayed some flights. JAL said ticket sales for both domestic and international flights have now been resumed after a temporary halt, adding that no personal information was leaked and no damage was caused by computer viruses. The network disruption occurred at 7:24 a.m. local time, causing problems with baggage check-ins and delays for a dozen flights at several Japanese airports, the airline said. At 8:56 a.m. local time, JAL blocked the data transmission device that was causing the system failure, Xinhua news agency reported. JAL told police that it may have been the victim of a distributed denial-of-service, or DDoS attack, in which networks are overwhelmed by massive amounts of data from multiple sources over a short period, according to investigative sources. The company said it was working to counteract the cyberattack and determine its source. Earlier in the day, passengers at Tokyo's Haneda airport were seen checking their phones and speaking with staff, while there was no significant confusion at Narita airport in Chiba Prefec-



ture. A man in his 30s, travelling from Haneda to Ishigaki Island in Okinawa, expressed concern, saying, "I was able to check in fine, but it's worrying that there's trouble." Meanwhile, a man in his 60s, headed to Matsuyama in Ehime Prefecture, commented, "It's a nuisance during the busy year-end period." Meanwhile, cyberattack occurs when there is an unauthorised action against computer infrastructure that compromises the confidentiality, integrity, or availability of its content. The rising dependence on increasingly complex and interconnected computer systems in most domains of life is the main factor that causes vulnerability to cyberattacks, since virtually all computer systems have bugs that can be exploited by attackers.



Afghanistan won't tolerate any aggression, warns Kabul after Pakistani airstrikes that killed 46

Kabul, Dec 31 (IANS) : Acting Afghan Foreign Minister Amir Khan Muttaqi on Tuesday issued a stern warning to Pakistan, urging Islamabad to learn the lessons of history before targeting Afghanistan. "Afghans will not forget the invasion of their territory, and Pakistani rulers should adopt a measured policy," several reports quoted Muttaqi as saying on Tuesday afternoon during an event marking the 45th anniversary of the Soviet invasion. During his speech, the foreign minister warned Pakistan to "learn from the fate of the Soviet Union and the United States", emphasising that Afghanistan will never accept invasions.



Madhya Pradesh to translocate 14 tigers to Gujarat, Chhattisgarh, Odisha

Bhopal, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Madhya Pradesh government will translocate 14 tigers to Rajasthan, Odisha and Chhattisgarh under the animal exchange programme. According to the state Forest Department, four tigers will be relocated to Rajasthan, two to Odisha,

and eight to Chhattisgarh. The big cats will be transferred from tiger reserves in Madhya Pradesh's Bandhavgarh, Panna, Kanha, and Pench. The tigers and tigresses will be translocated under the supervision of an authorised veterinarian.



Congress should do some introspection: BJP's Rohan Gupta amid fresh INDIA bloc rift

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : As the AAP warned the Congress of expulsion from the INDIA bloc unless it takes action against senior leader Ajay Maken for his remarks against former Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, BJP leader Rohan Gupta on Tuesday slammed Congress for its repeated blaming EVMs (Electronic Voting Machines) for its electoral defeats, urging the party to introspect instead.

Killers of Beed sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh should be hanged: Maharashtra minister

Mumbai, Dec 31 (IANS) : Amid demands for his exclusion from the Maharashtra Cabinet in connection with the murder of Beed Sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh, newly appointed Food and Civil Supplies Minister Dhananjay Munde on Tuesday broke silence, saying that the killers of the sarpanch should be hanged. After meeting Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis, Munde, who took the charge his department, told reporters: "It has been my demand since day one that the killers of the young Sarpanch of Massajog Santosh

Deshmukh and whoever was behind them should be hanged. It has also been my demand since day one that the investigation in this case should be completed, the charge sheet should be filed immediately, the case should be tried in a fast-track court and justice should be given to Deshmukh's family as soon as possible." "The murder of a young sarpanch in Beed district is extremely unfortunate and equally horrific. Therefore, no one can be supported in this case, even if he is close to anyone. Therefore, the government will not support anyone in this case. The police investigation is underway at full speed to find out the root cause of this



case," said Munde, who is under fire from various sections. Anti-corruption crusader Anjali Damania has targeted Dhananjay Munde over the brutal murder of Santosh Deshmukh. She claimed that there is "solid evidence" of the financial relationship between Munde and Walmik Karad, who she alleged runs a mafia empire in the district.

Congress centenary session: Fake Gandhis flaunting themselves in Belagavi at taxpayers' expense, says Kumaraswamy

Mandya (Karnataka), Dec 31 (IANS) : Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel, H.D. Kumaraswamy, on Tuesday launched a scathing attack on the Congress, alleging that "fake Gandhis are flaunting themselves in Belagavi at the expense of taxpayers' money". Speaking to the media during a DISHA meeting in Karnataka's Mandya, the Union Minister criticised the Congress for the Mahatma Gandhi centenary celebrations in Belagavi.

"The Congress government is planning programmes under Mahatma Gandhi's name and is spending crores on their centenary events. However, I did not see Mahatma Gandhi's photo anywhere in the posters at the event. Instead, massive cutouts of fake Gandhis have been put up," he remarked. "What we see today is not the original Congress, but a fake Congress. The Congress conducting these programmes in Belagavi is that very fake Congress. After Independence, Mahatma Gandhi himself suggested dissolving the Congress party. That Congress no longer exists.

What we have now is 'Alibaba and 40 thieves' Congress," Union Minister Kumaraswamy said. He clarified that he had no objection to programmes convened under Mahatma Gandhi's name. "He (Mahatma Gandhi) fought a united struggle to achieve Independence. But has Gandhi's vision of Ram Rajya been realised in today's governance? Has his dream of Gram Swaraj been fulfilled?" he added. "The Central government has released Rs 448.29 crore from the 15th Finance Commission's grants to develop villages through panchayats.

However, despite months passing since the funds were released, they have still not reached the panchayats," he lamented. He also expressed concern about the poor state of government hospitals in the state. "The condition of government hospitals is pathetic. Due to the lack of quality treatment, there have been repeated deaths of mothers and infants. There are no doctors or nurses in these hospitals. Over two lakh government posts are lying vacant. How can governance be effective in such a situation?" Union Minister Kumaraswamy asked. He

criticised the state government's guarantees, saying, "The government keeps harping about guarantees every day. Let them give people another Rs 2,000, I have no objection. But they are imposing exorbitant taxes. They've taken loans of Rs 2 lakh crore to provide these Rs 2,000 payments. Who is going to repay this debt? Isn't it the common people who will ultimately bear this burden?" Union Minister Kumaraswamy expressed grief over the death of three soldiers from Karnataka in an accident in Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch dis-



trict where an Army vehicle plunged into a gorge. "I am deeply saddened to learn about the death of soldiers in this accident. Among the deceased, three soldiers were from Karnataka. May God give strength to their families to bear this loss.

J&K: Anganwadi workers train under 'Poshan bhi, Padhai bhi' scheme in Poonch

Poonch, Dec 31 (IANS) : A training camp organised under the aegis of the Ministry of Women and Child Education in Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir, saw dozens of Anganwadi workers getting trained for successful implementation of 'Poshan bhi, Padhai bhi' scheme in their respective towns and villages. Many volunteers and Anganwadi workers (AWW) as well as helpers (AWH) were trained by Delhi-based trainers on how to take forward the Centre's programmes for early childhood care along with their education in remote locations. A couple of them also spoke to IANS and explained how the path-breaking scheme will serve even those children, living in the remotest part of the country.

Khan Shamim Bano, hailing from a remote location in J&K told IANS, "The Prime Minister has launched many schemes including 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao'. Through the Nav Chetna and Adharshila schemes, the focus is on providing quality education to children in far-off locations while ensuring their nutritional growth." Tajim Krishi hailing from Mandi (Poonch) said that many trainers came from Delhi and gave training to local educators under the Poshan project from December 7 to 26. "It is a very innovative and good scheme of the Central government to impart education to children. This model encourages tutoring children while mixing it with sporting activities," she added.



Scores of Anganwadi workers having received 15-day training will now move to their respective towns and villages, with a stipulated goal of taking this to their remote locations. The 'Poshan Bhi, Padhai Bhi' scheme was launched by the Ministry of Women and Child Development

and focuses on integrating education with nutrition for a child's holistic development, and aims to bridge the gap in remote and rural locations. CDPO officials supervise and monitor training sessions for the seamless execution of the programme and adherence to its objectives.



'Ajay Maken works at BJP's behest': AAP seeks Congress expulsion from INDIA bloc

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), a member of the opposition INDIA bloc, on Tuesday issued a stern ultimatum to the Congress, demanding action against its Delhi leader Ajay Maken within 24 hours, else the party would push for the Congress' removal from the alliance. AAP leaders Sanjay Singh and Delhi Chief Minister Atishi, at a press conference here, demanded clarification from the Congress leadership and immediate disciplinary measures against Maken. Accusing him of making anti-AAP statements, they alleged that Maken has been acting at the behest of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Ajay Maken crossed all limits on Wednesday by calling Arvind Kejriwal, Delhi's most popular leader, anti-national," Singh said. He further accused the Congress of orchestrating smear campaigns against the AAP in collusion with the BJP, adding that the Youth Congress

has even filed a complaint against Kejriwal and CM Atishi. Singh claimed that in the Lok Sabha elections, AAP campaigned for Congress candidates as part of the INDIA bloc's strategy, yet Congress has been working against the alliance's spirit. "It appears that Congress' candidates list in Delhi comes directly from the BJP office. Funds for their candidates are also allegedly provided by the BJP," he alleged. Doubling down on the allegations, Atishi stated that sources have revealed BJP funding for Congress candidates in Delhi. "Sandeep Dikshit and the Congress candidate from Jangpura, Farhad Suri, are receiving BJP support. It's now evident that Congress has a nexus with BJP in Delhi elections," she claimed. "Ajay Maken's baseless and outrageous allegation of calling Arvind Kejriwal anti-national reflects Congress' true intentions.

AAP has accepted defeat in Delhi : Congress

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Congress on Tuesday alleged that the Delhi's ruling Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), led by Arvind Kejriwal and Manish Sisodia, has accepted defeat in the Assembly elections to be held early next year. The Congress also accused the AAP of making baseless statements driven by fear of their party candidates. "In a democratic system, political parties have the right to contest elections independently," Congress Delhi unit President Devender Yadav

said. Criticising Kejriwal and his party, he accused them of losing decorum and making opportunistic remarks about alliances. "I want to ask Arvind Kejriwal who is out on bail, to disclose the amount of foreign funding his party receives annually. He should make it public. By aligning with separatist elements like Khalistan, he has already shown his true face to the public." Yadav further accused Kejriwal of misgovernance during his tenure. "In the last 11 years, corrupt Arvind Kejriwal has destroyed Delhi's education and healthcare



systems, doubled electricity bills, provided dirty water at high prices, and caused record unemployment. He has pushed Delhi back by 50 years in terms of development."



From pandemic setback to success: Archana Kushwaha's factory flourishes with government help

Bettiah (Bihar), Dec 31 (IANS) : Archana Kushwaha is now running her own factory in Bihar's Bettiah with the help of the state government. The factory provides employment to at least 25 people.



Venture Capital investments in India surge to \$16.8 bn in January-November : Report

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Venture capital (VC) activity in India has witnessed significant growth from January to November 2024, with investments reaching \$16.77 billion across 888 deals, according to the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF). Venture capital activity in India from January to November 2024 has surged to US\$ 16.77 billion across 888 deals, reflecting a robust 14.1 per cent increase in value and a 21.8 per cent rise in deal count compared to the same period in 2023, according to figures gathered by the India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF).

The technology sector emerged as the frontrunner, attracting \$6.50 billion, a remarkable 52.5 per cent increase year-over-year. Consumer discretionary investments followed with \$2.30 billion, up 32.2 per cent, while the financial sector saw a slight decline to \$2.20 billion, the IBEF report said.

Noteworthy deals included KiranaKart Technologies (Zepto) at \$1.3 billion and Poolside AI SAS at \$500 million. Industry leaders express optimism about continued momentum into 2025.

Adani Enterprises Ltd's share has potential upside of 57.8 pc in 24 months: Ventura Securities

Mumbai, Dec 31 (IANS) : Leading brokerage Ventura Securities Ltd has set a bullish target of Rs 3,801 for Adani Enterprises Ltd's (AEL) stock, which is a potential upside of 57.8 per cent over the next 24 months. The share of Adani Group's flagship company is currently trading at Rs 2,409 apiece. In a bull case scenario, the target price rises to Rs 5,748, which would mark an upside of 138.6 per cent, the brokerage said in its note. "We have assumed revenue of Rs 1,66,615 crore (FY24-27E CAGR of 20 per cent) and an EBITDA margin of 20 per cent at an EV/EBITDA of 23.4X, which will result in a bull case price target of Rs 5,748," said the brokerage.



Ola Electric's stock down 3 pc after fresh high-level exits

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : The share of Ola Electric fell around 3 per cent on Tuesday after some fresh high-level exits at the company, including its Chief Marketing Officer Anshul Khandelwal and Suvonil Chatterjee, Chief Technology and Product Officer. On Tuesday, the share was trading less than Rs 86 apiece, after falling nearly 3 per cent. Khandelwal and Chatterjee stepped down from their roles at the company, effective December 27, citing personal reasons. Both executives initially joined Ola's ride-hailing business before transitioning to Ola Electric

Mobility. Several top executives of the company have tendered their resignations this year as the company faces mounting pressure. N Balachandar, Group Chief People Officer, left the EV company in November after overseeing HR for Ola Electric, Ola Cabs, and Krutrim AI. In October this year, Ravi Jain, Business Head of Krutrim AI, and Sidharth Shakhder, CBO of Ola Mobility, left the company. After a blockbuster sales figure in October due to the festive season, Ola Electric vehicle registrations dropped by 33 per cent in November. According to Vahan portal data, the number of registra-

tions of Ola Electric vehicles in November fell by 33 per cent on a month-on-month (MoM) basis to 27,746 units. In October last year, this figure was more than 40,000 units. Due to fewer registrations, the company's market share dipped to 24 per cent in November, which was 30 per cent in October. However, the company still maintains the first position in the electric two-wheeler market by sales.

Bhavish Aggarwal-led Ola Electric has seen volatility in sales in recent months. The reasons for this were attributed to increasing competition in the market and poor service and product quality.

Govt's bank guarantee waiver for telcos to boost 4G, 5G networks : Vodafone Idea

Mumbai, Dec 31 (IANS) : The government's decision to waive bank guarantees for the telecom industry has come as a major relief and will help to boost 4G and 5G investments in India, according to telecom major Vodafone Idea. Debt-ridden Vodafone Idea (Vi) stated in a regulatory filing that it has received a letter regarding the waiver of bank guarantee from the Department of Telecommunications (DoT). The move comes as a big relief to the debt-ridden telco.

"The waiver is a clear indi-

cation of the government's continued support to the telecom industry. It will ensure that the exposure of the banking system is utilised by telecom operators towards further proliferation of 4G and 5G networks in India," Vodafone Idea said in a statement. The Department of Telecom (DoT), in a communication dated December 27, 2024, has dispensed with the requirement of submission of Financial Bank Guarantees for the spectrum acquired in auction held in 2012, 2014, 2015, 2016 and 2021, subject to certain terms and conditions. Prior to this reform, bank guaran-

tees aggregating to about Rs 24,800 crore were required to be provided by Vi against each spectrum instalment, 13 months prior to the instalment falling due for the above auctions, the company said in a BSE filing. Other major players such as Bharti Airtel are also expected to gain from the decision. No bank guarantees will be required to be provided by the operator for the 2012, 2014, 2016 and 2021 auctions, Vodafone Idea said in a statement. However, there would be a one-time partial shortfall only for the 2015 auction, where the net present value of all payments



made would be less than the prorated value of the spectrum used, it said. "We are in discussion with the DoT to determine the final amount of this partial shortfall for the 2015 auction," Vodafone Idea said. The moratorium for spectrum auction dues for Vi is ending in October next year and bank guarantees were to be submitted

13 months before the next due payment. Vi was expected to submit bank guarantees in tranches for different spectrum auctions pre-2022. However, the company did not submit any of the tranches scheduled for September and in the ongoing month.



Indian share market opens lower, Nifty below 23,800

Mumbai, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Indian stock market opened lower on Tuesday as selling was seen in the auto, IT, PSU bank, financial service, FMCG, media, energy and metal sectors on Nifty in early trade. At around 9:30 am, Sensex was trading at 78,523.25 after declining 175.82 points or 0.22 per cent, while the Nifty was trading at 23,758.20 after declining 55.20 points or 0.23 per cent.

2024 becomes year of Apple in India amid premiumisation, PLI push, retail expansion

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : 2024 has certainly become the year of Apple in India where the tech giant made new exports as well as domestic sale records, driven by the rising trend of premiumisation, the government's production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme and aggressive retail expansion. According to industry experts, Apple's strategic ap-

proach in India over the past year has resulted in significant achievements and increased market importance. Within the electronics sector, smartphone exports have recorded a 45 per cent increase in exports as leading players such as Apple expand production in the country. Apple's entry into India, supported by its vendors Foxconn, Pegatron, and Tata Electronics, has boosted smartphone exports this

year. Apple's iPhone production reached \$10 billion in the seven months of this fiscal (FY25), with \$7 billion in exports alone which is a record. In the April-October period, the company exported iPhones at almost Rs 8,450 crore (nearly \$1 billion).



iPhone 16



India-Australia merchandise trade reaches \$16.3 billion in April-Nov

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Total merchandise bilateral trade between India and Australia reached \$16.3 billion in the April-November period this fiscal (FY25), the government said on Tuesday. Since the signing of the India-Australia Economic Cooperation and Trade Agreement (Ind-Aus ECTA), bilateral merchandise trade has more than doubled, surging from \$12.2 billion in 2020-21 to \$26 billion in 2022-23. Meanwhile, total bilateral trade between Indian and Australia stood at \$24 billion in FY 2023-24, with India's exports to Australia growing

by 14 per cent. The ECTA has completed two years of remarkable success, driving mutual growth and showcasing the complementarity of both economies.

According to the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the ECTA has significantly advanced trade ties, creating new opportunities for MSMEs, businesses and employment in both nations while reinforcing the foundation of their economic partnership. "Entering its third year, the government of India is dedicated to sustaining this momentum through strengthened collaboration.



CES 2025: AI-powered tech to dominate world's biggest electronics trade show

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : South Korean companies are poised to showcase their advanced artificial intelligence (AI) technologies at CES 2025, the world's largest consumer electronics and IT trade show, scheduled to open in Las Vegas next week. Not only will major home appliance companies like Samsung Electronics Co. and LG Electronics Inc. participate, but other prominent Korean firms, such as SK hynix Inc., SK Telecom

Co. and Hyundai Mobis Co., will also unveil cutting-edge innovations. AI is expected to dominate this year's CES, scheduled for January 7-10, at the Las Vegas Convention Center under the theme "Dive In," reports Yonhap news agency.

'The Satanic Verses' was banned due to appeasement politics : Gourav Vallabh

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : BJP spokesperson Gourav Vallabh, on Tuesday, welcomed the Delhi High Court's decision to lift the 36-year-old ban on the distribution and sale of author Salman Rushdie's controversial book 'The Satanic Verses'.

Vallabh urged people to respect the court's verdict and refrain from commenting on it. He also recalled the original

ban, calling it a result of the Congress government's appeasement politics. Salman Rushdie's 'The Satanic Verses' is now available in Indian bookstores after being banned in 1988 by the Congress government led by Rajiv Gandhi. The Delhi High Court, in November, gave the order on a petition challenging the ban, stating that the officials failed to produce the October 5, 1988 notification sup-

porting the ban, leading to the assumption that such notification did not exist. In recent days, limited copies of the book, which sparked global protests for its allegedly blasphemous content, have been spotted at bookstores such as Bahrison Booksellers in New Delhi. The availability of the book has triggered objections from certain Muslim organisations, which have appealed to the Central govern-

ment to reinstate the ban. Reacting to the development, Vallabh told IANS, "The Delhi High Court has given its decision, which concluded that the notification under which the book was banned 36 years ago did not exist. The High Court has made its ruling, and I would not like to comment on that." He emphasised India's democratic values, stating, "India, being a democratic country, provides space and respect for all



kinds of ideas. If the book is back in circulation today, it is because of the High Court's decision." "The book was banned 36 years ago under an appeasement policy.

I do not know the exact reasoning behind the High Court's decision, but it has ruled on the non-existence of the notification.



VHP to launch campaign from Jan 5 to free temples from govt control

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Tuesday announced a countrywide public awakening campaign from January 5, 2025, to free Hindu temples from government control. Addressing a press conference, VHP Organizing General Secretary Milind Parande said that all the state governments should detach themselves from the control, management and daily works of temples because such activities are discriminatory towards the Hindu society. "When no mosque or church is under government, then why this discrimination against Hindus?" asked Parande. "Under the leadership of the revered Sant Samaj and the leading figures of the Hindu society, we

are going to start a countrywide public awareness campaign on January 5. The call for this all-Bharat campaign will be given at a special gathering of lakhs of people called 'Haindava Shankhaaraavam' to be organised in Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh," he said. The VHP Organising General Secretary said that it is unfortunate that after Independence, many temples that should have been handed over to the Hindu society were kept under state governments. Parande said that the work of management and control of temples should now be handed over to the devoted and capable people of the Hindu society.

After Raghubar Das's resignation as Odisha Guv, voices grow for action against his son

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Days after President Droupadi Murmu accepted the resignation of Odisha Governor Raghubar Das, criticism has been mounting in the state against the Mohan Majhi-led government, alleging inaction in an assault case involving his son. In July, Raghubar Das's son was accused of assaulting a government employee, Baikuntha Pradhan over not sending a luxury car to receive him at the railway station. It was al-

leged that Pradhan was assaulted and mentally tortured by Das's son and four others at the Governor's House in Puri on July 7 when President Murmu visited the town to witness Lord Jagannath Rath Yatra. Pradhan was posted there to supervise the preparation for the President's visit. On July 10, he lodged an FIR, seeking justice. Soon after the incident, the state government transferred him from the Governor's secretariat. The issue was later raised in the Odisha Assembly where the state government said the Puri district

magistrate was investigating the allegations and would submit a report within a month. Former Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik, who raised the issue in the Assembly, alleged that action was not taken against the accused persons because one of them was the son of the Governor. Following Das's resignation, the Biju Janata Dal (BJD) on Wednesday renewed its demand for action against the outgoing Governor's son. The party said an investigation was promised into the allegation after the state's opposition



parties raised the demand in July this year. "The government announced an investigation by the Puri district magistrate with a report to be submitted within days. However, this promise remains unfulfilled, and no action has been taken," BJD spokesperson Lenin Mohanty said.

Rajasthan: SI recruitment exam to be cancelled after scandal, re-exam recommended

Jaipur, Dec 31 (IANS) : The Cabinet committee constituted by the state government to address the Sub-Inspector (SI) recruitment exam controversy has recommended cancelling the exam and conducting a re-examination for the same candidates. This recommendation was submitted recently to Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma but has only now come to public attention. The report has also been forwarded by the Home Department to Agriculture Minister Kirori Lal Meena, who has been actively raising concerns about the recruitment process. A six-member Cabinet committee chaired by Parliamentary Affairs and Law Minister Jogaram Patel was formed to investigate the SI recruitment exam paper leak. The committee explored various options, including conducting the exam for the original candidates again, cancelling the recruitment entirely.



World will be a witness to India's cultural strength at Kumbh : Gajendra Shekhawat

Jodhpur, Dec 31 (IANS) : Union Culture and Tourism Minister Gajendra Singh Shekhawat said on Tuesday that this year's Kumbh will showcase India's strength and cultural power on a global scale. Speaking to the media about the upcoming Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, Union Minister Shekhawat highlighted the event's ancient legacy, mentioning its references in the Vedic civilisation, the Mahabharata, the Gupta period, the Chalukya dynasty, and throughout medieval history. Reflecting on past gatherings, he noted that 20 crore pilgrims attended the Kumbh Mela in 2013 and the 2019 Ardh Kumbh attracted 25 crore. The Union Minister estimated that 45 crore

people will participate in the Mahakumbh this year. Union Minister Shekhawat emphasised that the district administration, the Uttar Pradesh government, and the Indian government are collaborating on an unprecedented scale to make the Kumbh even more divine and grand. He also mentioned that the number of Kalpavasis, who stay for the entire period of Kumbh and practise spiritual penance, will reach 20 lakh this time, which is double the usual number.

Congress accuses BJP of spreading misinformation over 'distorted' Indian map

Jammu, Dec 31 (IANS): The BJP has alleged that the Congress put up a 'distorted' map of India in Belagavi city where the party is holding a CWC meet. The Congress has now accused the BJP of spreading misinformation, rejecting the party's claims as a mere "tactic of distortion and diversion." The banners, part of Congress' ongoing event in Belagavi, have sparked outrage for omitting Pakistan-occupied Kashmir (PoK) and Aksai Chin in the map, leading to fresh political bickering. Speaking to IANS, Ravinder Sharma said,



"Jammu and Kashmir, including PoK, is an integral part of India. The BJP is simply trying to distract attention from its failures. They should first clarify their stance on B.R. Ambedkar's statement." Sharma emphasised that the ongoing controversy was an attempt to deflect from real issues.

Rs 14 lakh robbery in broad daylight stuns Ranchi residents

Ranchi, Dec 31 (IANS) : In a brazen act of daylight robbery, two bike-borne criminals looted Rs 14 lakh from a petrol pump employee in Ranchi's Kathitand under the Ratu police station area. The victim was on the way to deposit the cash at a State Bank of India branch when the incident occurred. The shocking

crime, which unfolded in a busy market area, has left residents alarmed about the deteriorating law and order situation in the state. The employee, working for the Reliance Petrol Pump in Ratu, was carrying the day's cash collections when he was intercepted by two criminals on a motorcycle. They snatched the bag of money and fled.

Despite the area being crowded, the audacious crime went unchallenged, leaving bystanders stunned.



Effective and trustworthy govt can provide 'quality life' to Delhiites: Kiran Bedi

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Kiran Bedi, BJP leader and former Lt Governor of Puducherry, on Tuesday said that the citizens of Delhi are yearning for a better quality of life and improved social amenities, adding this is, however, not possible unless

an 'effective and trustworthy' government works 'holistically and wholeheartedly' to fulfill their needs and dreams. The stark remarks by India's first woman IPS officer assume significance in the backdrop of a bitter and hostile political battle between the ruling AAP and the opposition BJP.





Laos enhances tourism sector to attract visitors, boost local businesses

Vientiane, Dec 31 (IANS) : Laos is working to enhance its tourism sector to attract more visitors and create greater opportunities for local businesses. Soutvimon, a vendor selling handicraft products in Lao capital Vientiane, is optimistic that the booming tourism industry will help create

more job opportunities, promote local businesses, and bring long-term economic benefits to communities. "I believe Laos has great potential to boost its tourism industry, which will provide an opportunity for Lao people to improve their livelihoods. As more visitors come to Laos, local businesses such as restaurants, ho-

tels, and souvenir shops are set to benefit," she told Xinhua news agency on Tuesday. She added that the boost in tourism opens doors for her business to reach a larger audience, as foreign visitors are more likely to purchase local products and services.

Laos' Ministry of Information, Culture and Tourism has convened a meeting to evaluate the implementation of the Visit Laos Year 2024 tourism promotion campaign, laying the groundwork for future tourism initiatives.

Speaking at the meeting on Monday, Lao Minister of Information, Culture and Tourism Suansavanh Viyaket emphasised the government's commitment to tourism as a vital economic sector, highlighting its role in job creation, income generation, and foreign currency inflows, all of which significantly contribute to Laos' economic and social development. Laos is formulating a plan to enhance its tourism sector, focusing on promoting high-quality tourism that meets international standards. Phengchanh, a street food vendor, said, "I believe that as tourism continues to grow, more customers will come, creating higher income and better opportunities for all local vendors like me." "At the same time, we need to focus on the quality of our products and services, because satisfied tourists could return and recommend us to others. The more tourists we attract, the more opportunities there are for businesses like mine to grow and provide employment for local people," he added.

Hospitals in Yemen's capital on heightened alert over potential Israeli strikes : Houthis

Aden, Dec 31 (IANS): Hospitals in Yemen's capital Sanaa have been placed on heightened alert over potential Israeli attacks, Yemen's Houthi group said. The health ministry under the Houthi-controlled government, which is not internationally recognised, issued a circular directing all public hospitals to raise readiness levels across departments and blood banks, and all ambulance services to be ready to respond to any potential emergencies, Xinhua news agency reported. "The exceptional circumstances the country is experiencing as a result of the brutal Israeli aggression require heightened preparedness," it said. Earlier Houthis claimed responsibility for launching a long-range "ballistic missile" toward a military target in Tel Aviv. "Our military operations against Israel will continue until the aggression on Gaza stops and the siege on it is lifted," Houthi mili-

tary spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. On Tuesday morning, Israeli media reported that sirens sounded after a "missile" from Yemen approached Tel Aviv. Yemen's Houthi group later said they launched two drones at the Israeli cities of Tel Aviv and Ashkelon on Wednesday, targeting "vital" and "industrial" areas. "We carried out two military operations, the first of which targeted a vital and sensitive zone in Tel Aviv city.



Syrian refugees find home and hope in Egypt

Cairo, Dec 31 (IANS) : Ahmed Enaba, a master of Middle Eastern dish Shawarma and a Syrian by birth, embarked on a new chapter in Egypt in 2016 when he opened a restaurant in October City, a bustling hub near Cairo. His culinary creations, a fusion of Syrian flavours and Egyptian hospitality, quickly won over the local palate, turning his eatery into a cherished community spot. "I always dream of having my own place," said Enaba, a 32-

year-old with a proud gleam in his eyes. "It's truly a blessing to see it come to life here in Egypt." A militant alliance led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham waged a major military operation from northern Syria on November 27. It swept southwards, captured the capital Damascus, and overthrew former Syrian President Bashar al-Assad's government within 12 days. Following the recent power shift in Syria, Enaba started to feel the pull of his hometown, Aleppo. But the middle-aged man has already

cultivated a deep-rooted life in Egypt, which he holds dear. "This is my home now. I have built a life and a future here," he said. Yet, his heart remains tethered to Syria, and he envisions a day when he can contribute to its revival by opening a branch of his restaurant in Aleppo once the situation becomes more stable. "I want to be part of the solution to bring jobs and hope back to my people," he said, his voice resolute. To make that possible, Enaba plans to split his time between Egypt and Syria, nurturing his



businesses and contributing to both communities at the same time. "Egypt has given me so much, but I also want to give back to Syria," he said. When Enaba first set his foot on Egypt, "the gift of the Nile," he was struck by the generosity of the Egyptian people, who offered him shelter and guidance.



Azerbaijan declares national mourning over air crash

Baku, Dec 31 (IANS) : Azerbaijan has declared Tuesday a national day of mourning for the victims of the tragic crash of an Embraer 190 passenger plane operating a Baku-Grozny flight. Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev signed an official order to observe the day of mourning in response to the tragedy on Tuesday. Aliyev, who was in Russia's airspace en route to St. Petersburg for a summit at the time, ordered his flight to return upon learning of the accident. The aircraft with flight number J2-8243 crashed near Aktau Airport in Kazakhstan. The Kazakhstan's Ministry of Emergency Situations (MES) has reported 28 survivors, while rescue operations are underway. There were 67 people onboard, including 62 passengers and five crew members, Azerbaijan Airlines said on X, Xinhua news agency reported. Kazakh media said the passengers aboard included 37 citizens from Azerbaijan, 16 from Russia, six from Kazakhstan, and three from Kyrgyzstan.



22 Palestinians killed in Israeli airstrikes across Gaza

Gaza, Dec 31 (IANS): At least 22 Palestinians were killed in Israeli airstrikes across the Gaza Strip, Palestinian sources said. Mahmoud Basal, spokesperson for Civil Defence in Gaza, told Xinhua that Israeli aircraft targeted tents housing displaced persons inside the Al-Muhabban school in northern Gaza City.

Heavy rain expected to bring widespread flooding in Fiji

Suva, Dec 31 (IANS) : Fiji has been experiencing relentless rainfall with heavy downpours and flash flooding, with weather systems moving from the Western Division to the Central, Eastern and Northern Divisions in the next few days. People in flood-prone areas are urged to prepare for possible evacuation, keep essential items in elevated locations and secure food, water and gas supplies, reported Fiji Broadcasting Corporation on Tuesday. According to the Fiji Meteorological Service, the West of the country had a brief break from torrential rainfall and Christmas Day floods, but the weather situation remains critical as a new weather system is expected to bring in even more rain and flooding. The me-



teorological service has warned of a second slow-moving trough which is expected to bring heavier rain than Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported. Although the rain is expected to ease by late Friday, the effects of flooding could last for weeks. Weather conditions should improve over the weekend, with clearer skies and a shift in winds. There are currently no signs of tropical cyclone activity but long-range forecasts suggest possible weather developments near northern Vanuatu around New Year's Eve, the Fiji Meteorological Service said.



Tunisia dismantles drug trafficking network, seizes 3.5 kg of cocaine

Tunis, Dec 31 (IANS) : Tunisian security forces have dismantled a drug trafficking network active in the capital Tunis, seizing 3.5 kg of cocaine, the Tunisian National Guard said on its Facebook page. National Guard units targeted the criminal network operating in the neighborhood of Ain Zaghouan, the Tunisian National Guard said on Tuesday, without elaborating on the details of the operation and number of arrests, Xinhua news agency reported. The operation followed investigations that resulted in the seizure of an unregistered car parked outside a residence in Tunis. Inside the vehicle, authorities seized 3.5 kg of cocaine. The Tunisian government has taken a strong stance against drug trafficking, arresting hundreds of individuals suspected of being involved in the crime in recent nationwide operations. Earlier in December 2024 Tunisian security units have dismantled a drug trafficking network active in the Grand Tunis area.



Yemen's Houthis claim another 'hypersonic ballistic missile' attack on Israel

Sanaa, Dec 31 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group claimed responsibility on Tuesday morning for launching a long-range 'ballistic missile' toward Tel Aviv. "Our missile force bombed a military target in Tel Aviv by using a hypersonic ballistic missile," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. "Our military operations against Israel will continue until the aggression on Gaza stops and the siege on it is lifted," he said.

Iran cites Israel's confession to assassination as justification for October 1 attack

Tehran, Dec 31 (IANS) : Iran's envoy to the United Nations (UN) has said that Israel's "clear confession" to assassinating Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh on Iranian soil justifies Tehran's military response against Israel on October 1. Amir Saeid Iravani, Iran's Permanent Representative to the UN, made the remarks in a letter addressed to the UN Security Council while reacting to the confession on Tuesday by Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz, in which he admitted for

the first time that Israel had assassinated Haniyeh in Tehran, Xinhua news agency cited a report from Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency. Haniyeh was killed on July 31 along with his bodyguard when their residence in Tehran was attacked. Both Hamas and Iran accused Israel of carrying out the assassination. On October 1, Iran launched dozens of ballistic missiles at Israel, describing the attack as a retaliation for the assassinations of key resistance figures, including

Haniyeh, Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah, and senior Iranian commander Abbas Nilforoushan. Speaking at a recent Defence Ministry event, Katz had also issued a warning to Houthi forces in Yemen after their drone attacks, which have been intercepted by Israeli air defence systems.





Bengal Police trying to trace direct links between fake passport and human trafficking rackets in state

Kolkata Dec 31 (IANS) : Officials of both the West Bengal Police and Kolkata Police, probing the fake passport rackets in the state, are trying to track the links of these rackets with those involved in cross-border human trafficking, sources said.

The hunch of the investigating official about the possible links between the fake passport and human trafficking rackets was prompted after examining the documents of the fake passports prepared by such rackets, where almost all the beneficiaries were illegal infiltrators. Although the majority of such fake passports were for male illegal infiltrators from neighbouring Bangladesh, there were quite a number of women infiltrators for whom such fake passports were made.

Fuel price hike speculation sparks row in Jharkhand, govt denies proposal

Ranchi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Protests have started against the alleged preparation by the Jharkhand government to impose a cess on petrol and diesel and the opposition Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has warned it that such a move would be both "suicidal" and "anti-people". A recent media report claimed that the state government is drafting a proposal to impose a cess on petroleum products to generate more revenues. If implemented, this could raise petrol and diesel prices by Rs 2-3 per litre in the state. However, state Finance Minister Radha Krishna Kishore has denied the existence of any such proposal.

Addressing media persons here on Tuesday, he said: "There is no such proposal at the moment. If required in the future, the government will make decisions based on the prevailing situation. Also, we oppose the Central government's intent to impose a tax on aviation fuel, as discussed during the GST Council meeting held recently in Jaisalmer."



Specialised training will be given to Manipur Police to deal with present situation: CM Singh

Imphal, Dec 31 (IANS) : Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Tuesday said that given the current situation of law and order in the state, the newly recruited constables would undergo specialised training. After visiting the Manipur Police Training Centre at Pangei, Imphal, the Chief Minister, speaking on the sidelines of the inspection, said that the proposed specialised training is essential to enhance the strength and readiness of the police force to ensure safety and security across Manipur.

"We are committed to equipping our police personnel with the best facilities and training to meet any challenges effectively," Singh said. Earlier this week 1,946 newly recruited Manipur police personnel successfully completed their year-long training at Lachit Borphukan Police Academy at Dergaon in Assam's Golaghat district. The Manipur Chief Minister thanked Assam Chief Minister Hianta Biswa Sarma, his colleagues in the government, as well as Assam's Director General of Police G. P. Singh and other senior officials



of the state for providing training to his state's police personnel. According to officials, out of the 1,946 recruits, caste distribution is diverse with 62 per cent being non-tribal Meiteis, 12 per cent are tribal Kuki-Zo and the remaining 26 per cent belonging to Naga and other tribes. "Among the newly recruited police personnel there are people belonging to the Meitei, Kuki-Zo and Naga communities and the government would try to keep them as a united team without dividing them along ethnic lines," Singh said. The Chief Minister said that 1,946 new recruits for the 10th and 11th Indian

Reserve Battalions of Manipur Armed Police were specially raised for highway protection. Considering the present situation in the state and the spirit of discipline shown by the new recruits, barracks were constructed at Pangei, he said. Around 800 to 1000 of the new recruits would be stationed at the temporary barracks where they would undergo further special commando training, he said, adding that they would form special teams to meet any eventuality concerning law and order situation in the state.



Raj govt to allot land for hostel in Sahibzades' name : CM Sharma

Jaipur, Dec 31 (IANS) : Rajasthan Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma on Tuesday said the BJP government will allocate land to the Sikh community for a hostel in the name of the Sahibzades.

He said this while participating in the 'Shabd Kirtan' programme at the party's state office on the occasion of Veer Bal Diwas.

The CM expressed deep reverence for the Sahibzades, the sons of Guru Gobind Singh Ji, who sacrificed their lives for the nation, culture, and beliefs. "The Sahibzades gave up their lives setting examples of great determination to protect the motherland, religion, and culture. Their sacrifice is a source of inspiration for all of us.



Residents in Kejrival's constituency complain about water woes and poor drainage

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : Amid the raining poll promises of 'free revadis' and financial assistance under the proposed Mahila Samman Yojana and Sanjeevni Yojana, a section of people in New Delhi constituency continue to face problems of water scarcity, accumulating filth and poor drainage facility. A couple of inhabitants from the Princess Park, situated near India Gate spoke to IANS, sharing their woes and also speaking about the city government's 'callous and indifferent' attitude towards their plight. They claimed that political parties and leaders knock on their doors during election time but after they get elected, they leave them to their fate.

New Delhi is the Assembly constituency of former Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, from

where he is seeking re-election. The Assembly turned into a battleground as Congress fielded ex-Delhi CM Sheila Dikshit's son Sandeep Dikshit to challenge him in the ensuing polls. BJP is also contemplating to field a 'big face' from the constituency.

An elderly woman from the constituency, slamming the city government said that the residents are perturbed and peeved over the state of affairs. She also mocked the Mahila Samman Yojana, a poll promise by AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal and termed it nothing more than hollow promises.



BJD foundation day celebrations: Naveen Patnaik urges party workers to counter BJP's false narrative on social media

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31 (IANS) : Naveen Patnaik, former Odisha Chief Minister and Opposition leader, on Tuesday urged the workers of Biju Janata Dal (BJD) to counter the false narratives of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party

(BJP) on social media platforms. During his address to the party workers on the occasion of BJD's 28th Foundation Day celebrations here, the party supremo Patnaik held BJD's failure in successfully countering the false narratives and disinformation spread by the BJP responsible for the party's debacle in the 2024 general elections.



Ayodhya Ram temple to host majestic anniversary celebrations on Jan 11 with devotional, cultural programmes

Ayodhya, Dec 31 (IANS) : Ayodhya is set to witness a grand celebration on January 11, 2025, marking the first anniversary of the "Prana Pratishta of the Ram Lalla" (the first anniversary of the consecration of the Ram Lalla idol) at the Shri Ram

Janmabhoomi Mandir. The occasion, known as Pratishta Dwadashi, will bring together devotees from across the country for a day filled with sacred rituals, music, and cultural programmes. This information was shared by Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra on its

X account. According to the information, the temple complex will host a series of spiritually uplifting events, offering a chance for devotees to connect with Lord Ram through prayer, chanting, and celebration. Here's a look at the key highlights of the day: Sacred rituals at the Yajna Mandap The celebrations will begin early in the morning at the Yajna Mandap within the temple premises.

Delhi: Kejriwal skips NDMC meet; resolution passed against 'Mahila Samman Yojana'

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS): The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) in its meeting on Tuesday unanimously passed a condemnation resolution against former Delhi Chief Minister and NDMC member Arvind Kejriwal regarding the fraudulent "Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana" and "Sanjeevani Yojana" launched by the Delhi government. Kejriwal was absent for the fourth straight meeting of the newly-constituted council, the council members took on record. While addressing the media at the NDMC headquarters, Palika Centre, Vice-Chairman Kuljeet Singh Chahal said the council had on May 25, 2022, given in-principle approval for the implementation of the Central government's flagship "Ayushman Bharat Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojana" (AB-PMJY) for the residents of the New Delhi area. In that meeting, the then Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal himself was present but now he has been blocking the implementation of this scheme for political gains. "Additionally, he is misleading the citizens of Delhi with fraudu-

lent schemes like the "Mukhyamantri Mahila Samman Yojana" and the "Sanjeevani Yojana". These schemes falsely promise Rs 2,100 per month for women and other benefits for citizens aged 60 years and above," said Chahal. While the Delhi government's Women and Child Development Department and the Health and Family Welfare Department clarified through media and social media that no such official schemes exist.



SADC welcomes court ruling on Mozambique's general elections

Harare, Dec 31 (IANS) : Zimbabwean President and Southern African Development Community (SADC) Chairperson Emmerson Mnangagwa welcomed a court ruling that proclaimed Daniel Chapo the winner of the October 9 general elections of Mozambique. "The ruling by that country's top electoral court, which upheld Frelimo party's victory, completes and thus exhausts all lawful processes on determining election results, in line with that country's national laws, and in keeping with SADC's Election Guidelines and expectations," Mnangagwa said in a statement on Tuesday.

He said SADC expects all parties to the electoral process to abide by the decision of the Constitutional Council of Mozambique, noting that the ruling should provide a constitutional way forward for the country and facilitate greater peace, normalcy, and stability in the southern African country, Xinhua news agency reported.

"SADC stands ready to assist the incoming government and the people of Mozambique, in consolidating their electoral democracy on the basis of the aforesaid Court decision which should be held sacrosanct by all," Mnangagwa said.

Mnangagwa also urged the international community to respect the sovereign will of the people and the Republic of Mozambique and encouraged constructive support towards peace, law, and order by all those concerned.

On Monday, Mozambique's Constitutional Council, the body in charge of constitutional and elec-



toral affairs, proclaimed Daniel Chapo the winner of the October 9 general elections. Chapo will take the baton from the incumbent president Filipe Nyusi to become the fifth president of the Republic of Mozambique. As the presidential candidate of the ruling party Frelimo, Chapo has won 65.17 per cent of the votes, less than the 70.67 per cent announced on October 24 by the National Electoral Commission (CNE), according to the data released by President of the CC Lucia Ribeiro in Maputo, the Mozambican capital. Venancio Mondlane, supported by the extra-parliamentary Optimist Party for the Development of Mozambique or Podemos, obtained 24.19 per cent of the votes, higher than the 20.32 per cent announced by the CNE. SADC is a regional economic community comprising 16 member states including Zimbabwe and Mozambique.



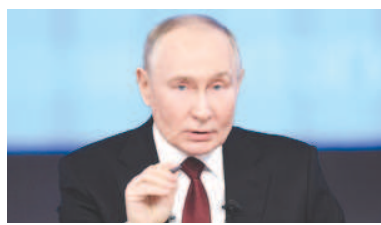
Ambush in Syria kills 14 interim govt officers

Damascus, Dec 31 (IANS) : Fourteen officers from Syria's interim Ministry of Interior were killed and ten others injured in a "treacherous ambush" in the northwestern province of Tartus on Tuesday, the interim government's Interior Minister Mohammed Abdul Rahman announced. The minister described the attackers as "remnants" of the former government, reports Xinhua news agency, citing local Al-Watan newspaper. The ministry said the slain officers were carrying out duties aimed at maintaining security and protecting civilians. No further details were provided. Earlier, it was reported that violent clashes erupted between local armed residents and security personnel from the military coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in Tartus province.



Syrian security forces clash with armed locals in northwestern province

Damascus, Dec 31 (IANS) : Violent clashes erupted between local armed residents and security personnel from the military coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) in northwestern Syria's Tartus province, a Britain-based war monitor reported. The fighting started in the village of Kharbet al-Ma'zza when locals opposed home inspections by the security forces, prompting armed residents to set fire to a vehicle belonging to the HTS, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. There were casualties on both sides, it said, adding that the military coalition dispatched reinforcements, including a specialised division and ambulances, as clashes continued. A large convoy comprising fighters from Unit 82, K9 squads of the military coalition headed to the region near the Latakia province, it said, adding that Syria's new authorities aim to apprehend the armed locals they describe as "remnants of the previous regime" and to prevent any sectarian unrest in the demographically diverse area. The military coalition took control over capital Damascus and most parts of Syria following the fall of Bashar al-Assad's government.



GDP growth of CIS countries to be 4.7 per cent in 2024: Putin

St. Petersburg, Dec 31 (IANS) : The growth of gross domestic product (GDP) of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) members will reach 4.7 per cent this year, Russian President Vladimir Putin said at an informal CIS summit held in Leningrad Oblast. "The macroeconomic indicators of our countries have improved significantly. Thus, by the end of 2024, the growth of total GDP of the Commonwealth countries is projected to reach 4.7 per cent," Putin said Wednesday. He described the figure as "higher than the world average." Russia's trade turnover with other CIS members in January-October increased 10.6 per cent and amounted to more than 93 billion USD, the president noted, adding that in the 10 months, the industrial production of CIS countries rose 4.3 per cent, the volume of cargo transportation went up 7.4 per cent, and retail sales added by 7.7 per cent, Xinhua news agency reported.

Netanyahu warns Houthis as Israel reportedly mulls new airstrike

Jerusalem, Dec 31 (IANS) : Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu warned that Houthi forces in Yemen would face consequences similar to those experienced by other anti-Israel groups. "The Houthis, too, will learn what Hamas, Hezbollah, the Assad regime, and others have learned, and even if it

takes time, this lesson will be understood across the Middle East," Netanyahu said in a video statement. Earlier on Tuesday, Houthi forces launched a ground-to-ground missile toward Israel for the second consecutive day. In the evening, they fired a drone, which crashed into an open field in southern Israel, Xinhua news agency reported.

Israel is reportedly weighing a new large-scale strike against Houthi forces in Yemen, following a series of retaliatory missile and drone launches attributed to the Houthis. On Tuesday, Israel's state-owned Kan TV reported that the military has been preparing for a potential operation. Citing senior security officials, Kan TV said the Israeli Air Force.



Bird flu tightens grip on California as human cases rise



Sacramento, Dec 31 (IANS) : California's battle against avian influenza A (H5N1) intensified amid spreading infections across dairy farms and a growing number of human infection, including two newly confirmed cases in Stanislaus and Los Angeles counties. The virus, commonly known as bird flu, has infected 659 of California's 984 dairy operations since August, with one-quarter of these cases emerging in the past month alone, according to California authorities. The rapid spread through the state's dairy industry prompted

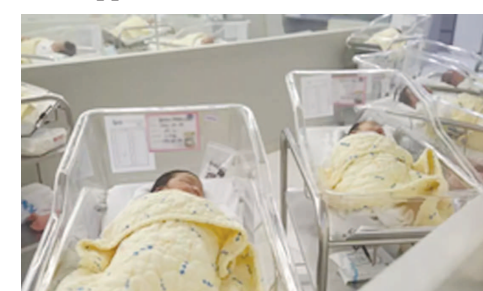
Governor Gavin Newsom to declare a state of emergency last week to protect agricultural workers and public health, Xinhua news agency reported. "This proclamation is a targeted action to ensure government agencies have the resources and flexibility they need to respond quickly to this outbreak," Newsom said in a statement. The outbreak's human impact has grown increasingly severe, with California reporting at least 36 confirmed cases -- more than half of the nation's total of 65, according to the latest report by the US Centers for Disease Control (CDC) on Tuesday, though the actual count is likely higher as recent local confirmations may not yet be reflected in federal data. Two new cases were confirmed Monday in California's Los Angeles County and Stanislaus County.

S. Korea's childbirths rise by highest rate in 14 years in October

Seoul, Dec 31 (IANS) : The number of babies born in South Korea increased by the fastest rate in 14 years in October, data showed on Tuesday, as the country is struggling to address the grim demographic changes posed by its ultra-low birth rate and rapid ageing. According to the data compiled by Statistics Korea, a total of 21,398 babies were born in October, up 13.4 per cent from the 18,878 newborns a year earlier, Yonhap news agency reported.

It marked the largest on-year increase since November 2010, when the number of childbirths grew by 17.5 per cent. "More couples held weddings from the second half of 2022 through the first half of 2023 after delaying their marriages during the earlier stages of the Covid-19 pandemic," said Im Young-il, an agency official. He also noted an increase in the number of second children.

South Korea has been grappling with a persistent decline in its birth rate, as an increasing number of young people are choosing to delay or avoid marriage and parenthood. To encourage marriage and improve the fertility rate, the government has rolled out various marriage benefits and support for child care.



UAE President, Turkish FM discuss ties, regional stability

Abu Dhabi, Dec 31 (IANS) : President of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan met with visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on strengthening bilateral ties and addressing pressing regional issues. During the meeting on Tuesday, Fidan conveyed Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan's wishes for the UAE's continued prosperity, while the

UAE president expressed his hope for Turkey's sustained growth and development, Xinhua news agency reported quoting Emirates News Agency (WAM). They highlighted the expanding cooperation between the two countries in areas such as trade, investment, and energy, it reported. They emphasised the importance of collaboration to address regional challenges and safeguard regional stability, and reiterated



their commitment to preventing the escalation of conflicts that threaten regional security, it reported. The two sides reviewed developments in the Middle East, stressing the need to intensify efforts to

prevent the expansion of regional conflict, which threatens security and stability, and pursue a clear path to peace that ensures stability and security for all. They both stressed unwavering support for Syria's sovereignty, territorial integrity, and the aspirations of the Syrian people for peace, stability, and progress, it said.



Hayley Matthews back in top 10 of women's ODI batting rankings

Dubai, Dec 31 (IANS) : West Indies opener Hayley Matthews capped off 2024 in style, smashing her seventh ODI century to re-enter the top 10 of the ICC women's batting rankings. Matthews' brilliant 106 off 109 balls in the second ODI against India not only guided her team to a competitive total but also elevated her to a joint-seventh position in the rankings with a rating of 652. She now shares the spot with

Australia's star left-hander Beth Mooney. While Matthews excelled, Australia's Alyssa Healy, who scored a half-century earlier in the series, slipped one spot to third in the rankings (720 points), overtaken by Sri Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu (733 points), who moved into second place. India's Jemimah Rodrigues and Richa Ghosh also saw upward movement in the rankings.



Djokovic beats Hijikata to storm into second round in Brisbane

Brisbane, Dec 31 (IANS) : Novak Djokovic marked his return to singles action with a dominant win at the Brisbane International, dispatching Australian wildcard Rinky Hijikata 6-3, 6-3 at Pat Rafter Arena. Playing his first ATP singles match since October, the Serbian showcased his trademark precision and resilience kicking off his 2025 singles season in impressive fashion. A day after partnering with Nick Kyrgios for a doubles win, Djokovic delivered a clinical performance in his singles opener. Over the course of 75

minutes, he overwhelmed Hijikata with his impeccable baseline play and unerring serve, winning 81% of points behind his first serve. The 37-year-old did not face a single break point, underscoring his dominance. "I always expect myself to do well on the court. Obviously, a win is a win," Djokovic said during his on-court interview. "To start off the new season with a win is very important."

Bumrah captain, Jaiswal other Indian in Cricket Australia's Test Team of 2024

Melbourne, Dec 31 (IANS) : Cricket Australia has named India's premier pacer Jasprit Bumrah as captain of the Men's Test Team of the Year 2024. Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal is the other Indian named in the di-

verse playing XI featuring players from six countries. Wicketkeeper-batter Alex Carey and pacer Josh Hazlewood are the two players from the Australian team to feature in the multinational 11.



Fritz, Gauff seal United Cup QF berth for USA

Perth, Dec 31 (IANS) : Taylor Fritz and Coco Gauff guided USA to the United Cup quarterfinals with a 3-0 win against Croatia on Tuesday. Fritz eased to a 6-3, 6-2 win

over Borna Coric, ensuring USA top Group A and qualify for the quarterfinals, where they will face China on New Year day. Gauff then notched a dominant win over Donna Vekic to wrap up the tie before teaming up with Fritz to secure their second mixed doubles triumph of the week.

Rooney sacked by Plymouth Argyle as club sits at bottom of Championship table

Plymouth, Dec 31 (IANS) : England and Manchester United legend Wayne Rooney has been sacked by Championship club Plymouth Argyle after the side sits at 24th place in the league table. Alongside Rooney, Assistant Head Coach Mike Phelan and first team coach Simon Ireland will also be departing the club. Rooney will be replaced by first team coach Kevin Nancekivell and club captain Joe Edwards will be in charge of the team for the game against Bristol City on Wednesday.



Alexandersson keen on handing more debuts after 14-0 routing in first Maldives friendly

Bengaluru, Dec 31 (IANS) : Joakim Alexandersson made a thumping start to his coaching career as head coach of the women's national team as India dominated Maldives 14-0 in the first of two FIFA women's friendlies in Bengaluru. What made it special was that as many as eight players made their senior India debut, and the Swede has assured that there will be more in the second game on January 2. The chasm in quality was obvious from the first whistle. While Alexandersson was happy that most of the things worked according to plan, he is now keen to see what his

bench has to offer on Thursday. "I think we used the game well. We were too big for them. We used the advantage we had and made improvements with regards to moving the ball, using the space in behind, going wide, and using the central line. So yeah, I think overall it was a good performance from us," he said. "We're gonna use the opportunity to have more inexperienced girls in the next game from the start. We're going to make some rotations. Let's see what they can offer in the next game." Among the debutants, Lynda Kom Serto proved to be the most impactful, scoring four goals. Those who have followed the striker from her younger years would label it as a routine performance despite it being her senior debut.

Attacking flair, defensive shifts and clutch moments define ISL 2024-25 first half

Mumbai, Dec 31 (IANS) : As the Indian Super League (ISL) 2024-25 season capped off its 14th match week, notable changes in attacking, defensive and overall tactical trends have emerged as compared to the previous season. The numbers not only paint a vivid picture of an action-packed campaign but also lay the foundation for storylines that deserve further exploration.



Cobolli, Paolini guide Italy to United Cup quarterfinals

Sydney, Dec 31 (IANS) : Flavio Cobolli bounced back from the verge of defeat on saving a match point and produced a memorable comeback as Italy sweeps France to book a place in the quarterfinals of the United Cup. The Italian defeated Frenchman Ugo Humbert 3-6, 7-6(8), 6-2. Ugo Humbert, won his first 17 service points in the second set and served for the match at 6-3, 5-4 15/0.



LeBron reflects on turning 40, says he could play at high level for '5-7 years'

New Delhi, Dec 31 (IANS) : LeBron James, a player who has dominated the National Basketball Association (NBA) for two decades, turned 40 years old on Monday. While still being a top-ten player in the league, he reflected on his unprecedented career and claimed he could still play at a high level for

another five to seven years. "To just wake up and just be like, 'Oh shoot, oh damn, you're 40? It's kind of laughable, really, to know where I am, to see where I am still playing the game at a high level."