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Know all about 2 new SBI deposit schemes that offer financial flexibility

The State Bank of India (SBI) has announced two new deposit schemes, 'Har Ghar Lakhpati' and 'SBI Patrons', to provide greater financial flexibility and better value to its customers.

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Model SV temple at Mahakumbha Mela : TTD Board Chief

TTD chairman B.R. Naidu has said that all arrangements are being made for setting up of a model temple of Sri Venkateswara Swamy...

02



Anti-polio vaccination drive kicks off in Pakistan's Balochistan

A seven-day anti-polio vaccination drive began in Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province, the worst-hit province...

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Telangana is at forefront in oil palm cultivation : Tummala

Hyderabad, Jan 5 : Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao stated that Telangana is at the forefront of oil palm cultivation in India, with one lakh hectares already utilised for this purpose. The State government has ambitious plans to expand oil palm cultivation.



Prepare a report on impact of Polavaram project : CM Revanth directs officials

Hyderabad, Jan 5 : Chief Minister Revanth Reddy has instructed the irrigation officials to collaborate with IIT Hyderabad in order to generate a report on the effects of the Polavaram project construction within Telangana State. The Chief Minister held a meeting with top officials of Irrigation department here on Saturday. Minister for Irrigation N Uttam Kumar Reddy and Government Advisor (Irrigation). Continued on pg 02

Special focus on Hyderabad development : Mayor Vijayalaxmi

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (NSS) : Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) Mayor Gadwal Vijayalaxmi said that various development works are being undertaken with special focus on the development of Hyderabad city with the aim of providing better services with all facilities to the people. On Saturday, Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi, along with local MLA Danam Nagender, laid the foundation stone and inaugurated various works un-

dertaken at an estimated cost of Rs. 3.54 crores. Speaking on the occasion, she said the Municipal administration is constantly working to provide better facilities to the people and as part of its endeavour, funds have been allocated for various projects, and development works are being completed at a fast pace.



Govt files case against KTR to evade Rythu Bharosa scheme : MLA Jagadish Reddy

Suryapet, Jan 5 (NSS): Suryapet MLA Jagadish Reddy has lashed out at the Congress government for registering an ACB case against BRS party working president KT Rama Rao and alleged that the case was filed to evade Rythu Bharosa scheme. He said there was no other case in the country except the one registered against former minister K T Rama Rao. Jagadish Reddy spoke to the media at the MLA camp office in Suryapet district centre. Continued on pg 02



Kharge sends ceremonial 'chadar' to Ajmer dargah

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (NSS): AICC president Mallikarjun Kharge today sent a ceremonial chadar to mark the 813th Urs of Sufi saint Hazrat Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti at the Ajmer Sharif Dargah on Saturday, reflecting his party's commitment to secular traditions and communal

harmony. The chadar was handed over to AICC Minority Department chairman & Rajya Sabha MP Imran Pratapgarhi for presentation at the dargah. Prominent leaders, including Advisor to the Telangana Government Moham med Ali Shabbir, former MP Mohammed Azharuddin, and Congress MP Syed Naser Hussain, were present

during the occasion. Expressing his sentiments, Kharge said, "With immense reverence, I feel fortunate to send this chadar on behalf of myself and the Congress Party. This tradition embodies the spirit of India's composite culture, communal harmony, and mutual brotherhood."

We have to protect Telugu language : Kishan Reddy

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (NSS): Union Minister for Coal and Mines G Kishan Reddy today said it was the responsibility of all to protect the Telugu language and added that the movement to protect it should start from people's homes. He was the chief guest at the 12th biennial conference of the World Telugu Federation held at HICC on Saturday. Speaking on the occasion, he said he was very happy to participate in the 12th Biennial Conference of the World Telugu Federation. "Special thanks to the elders of the World Telugu Federation.



Govt to recruit vacant posts on regular basis : Sridhar Babu

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (NSS): Minister for IT and Industries Duddilla Sridhar Babu has reiterated that the State government is committed to recruit all vacant positions on a regular basis. He was addressing the Passing Out Parade of 196 Fire Driver Operators at the Telangana State Fire Services and Civil Defense Training Institute in Vattinagula Pally of Rangareddy district on Saturday, where he attended as the chief guest. "The recruitment process, which was stalled for the past decade, has been revived under the leadership of Chief Minister Revanth Reddy," the Minister stated.



Congress Govt's job calendar doesn't have jobs : Rakesh Reddy

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (NSS): BRS party leader Enugula Rakesh Reddy today alleged that the Congress government had given a jobless calendar by believing it was a job calendar. "In the last jobless calendar, except for festivals and panchangams, there was no job recruitment."



KTR slams govt over poll promises

Sircilla, Jan 5 : Former minister KTR has once again come down heavily on the ruling Congress party's promises.



World's oldest person dies in Japan at 116

Tokyo, Jan 5 (IANS) : Japanese media on Saturday reported that 116-year-old Tomiko Itooka, recognised as the world's oldest person, has died of old age. Itooka died earlier this week at a nursing home in the city of Ashiya in western Japan where she resided, the city government in Hyogo Prefecture said, reported Kyodo News. The Japanese woman was born on May 23, 1908, in Osaka as the eldest of three siblings. "At the special nursing home in the city where she resided, she enjoyed drinking her favourite lactic acid beverages and often said Thank you to the staff.

Prepare a report on impact of Polavaram project : CM Revanth directs officials

Continued From pg 01 Adityanath Das were also present in the meeting. During the meeting, Revanth Reddy asked the officials to

prepare a comprehensive report within a month and directed that a special officer should be appointed to coordinate with the IIT Hyderabad team. He also ordered

for a comprehensive report on the threat of construction of the Polavaram project on the famous Bhadrachalam temple. The officials briefed the Chief Minister that

the temple project of Bhadrachalam was submerged due to flood of 27 lakh cusecs of water in 2022. Irrigation officials brought to the attention of Revanth Reddy about the

construction of Godavari Banakacharla project by Andhra Pradesh government. The officials further informed that the AP government gave a PowerPoint presentation on this project recently and the project is

being taken up by using flood waters without any permission. Revanth Reddy instructed the officials to lodge the Telangana government's objections with AP government Chief Secretary against the project.

Govt files case against KTR to evade Rythu Bharosa scheme : MLA Jagadish Reddy

Continued From pg 01 He said they were not scared of PM Narendra Modi and CM Revanth Reddy. He said CM Revanth Reddy should be

the first accused in the formula car race case. Reddy demanded that farm loan waiver list has to be released with the signature of the finance secretary by the

State government. "The farmers are eagerly waiting for the loan waiver. But the Chief Minister says he has waived off the farm loans for all. There are no pro-

visions for the farm loan waiver in the Warangal Declaration. The rules are now being laid down. In the case of loan waiver of Rs 46,000 crore, Rs 36,000 crore has been allocated.

Bank of Baroda POSSESSION NOTICE (for Immovable property) NIZAMPET BRANCH Plot No.C&D, Jai Bharat Nagar, Nizampet Road, Kukatapally, Hyderabad - 500085

Explosion in factory claims one life, leave seven injured

Hyderabad, Jan 4 (NSS): An explosion occurred at an industry in Yadagirigutta mandal of Peddakandukuru. The blast occurred at the Premier Exclusive Factory. Kanakayya, a labourer from

Bachannapeta in Jangaon district, was killed in the incident. Seven other workers were seriously injured. Among them, Mogilipaka Prakash of Ramajipeta village of

Yadagirigutta mandal is said to be in a critical condition. He was rushed to Bhuvanagiri area hospital and given basic treatment. He was shifted to a private hospital later. The workers of the factory rushed out as the explosion occurred with a loud noise.

Govt ready to increase 42 percent reservation for BCs: VH

Hyderabad, Jan.4 (NSS): Senior Congress leader and former MP V. Hanumantha Rao has emphasised that the Congress government is genuinely dedicated to the welfare and development of marginalised communities, firmly committed to executing the Kamareddy Declaration made by the Congress party during the Telangana Assembly elections. Addressing the media at Gandhi Bhavan on Saturday, Hanumantha Rao stated that the state government is prepared to increase the reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) in local bodies to 42 percent, asserting that BRS leaders do not have the authority to criticise Congress. He noted that Congress has pro-



vided numerous opportunities for BCs, highlighting that it was the Congress party that appointed BCs as PCC presidents. He added that former Chief Minister K. Chandrashekar Rao attempted to proceed without the dharna chowk, whereas the Congress government restored it at Indira Park in Hyderabad.

Honourable Member, National Commission for ST, Shri J Hussain Nayak visit to Hyderabad

Hyderabad, Jan 5 (TIM Bureau) : The Honourable Member, National Commission for ST, Shri J Hussain Nayak, visited SBI Bibi Nagar Branch today. Shri Ravi Kumar Verma, General Manager NW-1 and other senior officials of the Bank, were present on this occasion. Shri Nayak interacted with staff members of the branch. Shri Ravi Kumar Verma, General Manager NW-1, assured bank's commitment towards customer service and outlined various initiatives undertaken by the bank in this regard like Contact centre, Whatsapp Banking, Cyber fraud



awareness programme etc. Shri Verma also apprised the Hon'ble member about the way SBI employees have saved the innocent customers from digital arrest attempted by fraudsters in the recent past. Thereafter, Shri Nayak and Shri Verma attended an SHG customer outreach program where a loan disbursement of 10 Crore was done to the various members from 69 Self Help Groups. Shri Ravi Kumar Verma, in his welcome address outlined the various initiatives for improving Rural Livelihood like PMSVANIDHI, PM VISWAKARMA, PMEGP, PMMY, STAND UP INDIA and Financing to Members of Self Help Group.



Model SV temple at Mahakumbha Mela : TTD Board Chief

Tirupati, Jan.4 (NSS): TTD chairman B.R. Naidu has said that all arrangements are being made for setting up of a model temple of Sri Venkateswara Swamy next to the Vasuki Temple in Sector 6 during the upcoming mega religious event of Maha Kumbhmela at Prayagraj (Allahabad) in Uttar Pradesh from January 13 to February 26. Speaking to media persons at Ramachandra Pushkarini in Tirupati on Saturday after inspecting the SSD token issuing counters.

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

SOUTH CENTRAL RAILWAY Tender Notice No.01/2025. Dated: 03.01.2025 Supply Of Stores Items. E-Procurement Tender Notice

Tender Notice No:CRS-E-26-24-25 Dy.CME/CRS/TPTY acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites E-Tenders against Tender No: mentioned here under closing date as mentioned below up to 11:00 Hrs.

TENDER NOTICE No. CEE-P-SC-2X25-PSS-12 Date: 03.01.2025 For and on behalf of the President of the Union of India, Chief Electrical Engineer (Projects), Secunderabad invites (online) e-tender for the following works:

SI.No.: 01 Tender No.: CEE-P-SC-2X25-PSS-12 Date: 03.01.2025 For and on behalf of the President of the Union of India, Chief Electrical Engineer (Projects), Secunderabad invites (online) e-tender for the following works:

SI.No.: 02 Tender No.: N-SG-36-2024-25-EI-37 Dt. 02.01.2025 Name of the work: Annual Maintenance Contract of Electronic Interlocking (E.I.) System of Medha Make at Nagarsol (NSL) station for a period of two years in Nanded division. Approx. value: ₹15,31,640/- Bid Security deposit: ₹30,600/- Period of completion: 24 Months Cost of Tender form: ₹ NIL

SI.No.: 03 Tender No.: N-SG-36-2024-25-EOLB-38 Dt.02.01.2025 Name of the work: Replacement of Mechanically Operated Lifting Barrier (MOLB) with Electrically Operated Lifting Barrier (EOLB) at 12 no. of Level crossing Gates.7.53.39.83.99.77.125, 129.121, 163.29 & 171(with Goomty) in Nanded Division. Approx. value: ₹2,15,58,628/- Bid Security deposit: ₹2,57,800/- Period of completion: 12 Months Cost of Tender form: ₹ NIL

SI.No.: 01 Tender No.: N-SG-36-2024-25-AMC-DG-36 Dt. 02.01.2025 Name of the work: Annual Maintenance contract of Diesel Generator sets under SSE/Sig/Nanded & SSE/Sig/Akola section for a period of two years in Nanded Division. Approx. value: ₹8,96,320/- Bid Security deposit: ₹17,900/- Period of completion: 24 Months Cost of Tender form: ₹ NIL

SI.No.: 02 Tender No.: N-SG-36-2024-25-EI-37 Dt. 02.01.2025 Name of the work: Annual Maintenance Contract of Electronic Interlocking (E.I.) System of Medha Make at Nagarsol (NSL) station for a period of two years in Nanded division. Approx. value: ₹15,31,640/- Bid Security deposit: ₹30,600/- Period of completion: 24 Months Cost of Tender form: ₹ NIL

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Diesel buses to be phased out from Guwahati in next one year : Assam CM

Guwahati, Jan 5 (IANS) : Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Saturday said that the state administration has decided to phase out diesel buses completely from Guwahati in the next one year making the city a green corridor zone. The CM said, "The government has added 56 electric buses to Assam State Transport Corporation (ASTC) taking the total number of electric buses to 356. Moreover, under PM e-Bus Sewa, 100 more electric buses will be rolled out on the streets of Guwahati." Sarma further stated that the diesel buses will be completely phased out of Guwahati by 2026 making the city a green corridor zone. The diesel buses will run in other profitable routes like

Guwahati-Nagaon and Guwahati-Nalbari routes etc. CM Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday laid the foundation of a project to give a modern outlook of Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden involving a financial outlay of Rs 362.04 crore. The project will include adding various facilities for animals and visitors to make Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden a modern and state-of-the-art centre. Speaking on the occasion, CM Sarma said that established in 1957, Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden is the only zoological and botanical centre in the entire North East which is a leading conservation centre for the region's rich biodiversity. Set up at a sprawling area, Assam

State Zoo is a centre where flora and fauna of several unique species exist together. Reminiscing his childhood memories with the Assam State Zoo cum Botanical Garden, he said that once he became the Chief Minister, he took the decision to make the zoo a modern one. Therefore, it was decided to infuse Rs 362.04 crore for its modernisation purpose. The Chief Minister said that the State government has already planned to set up two more zoos at Dibrugarh and Silchar respectively. Both the zoos will be built in an open zoo model, as Rs 259 crore and Rs 214 crore have been earmarked for Dibrugarh and Silchar zoos respectively.

Gurugram: Three criminals held after gunfight

Gurugram, Jan 5 (IANS) : A crime branch team of the Gurugram Police arrested a notorious criminal and his two companions after a gunfight on the intervening night of Saturday and Sunday, police said. The suspects have been identified as Arif (28), Arif alias Mandal (27), a resident of Palwal and Rashid alias Yusuf alias Kake (33), a resident of Nuh. According to the police, Rashid was involved in 49 cases, including gang-related activities, murder, attempt to murder, robbery, attack on police team and ATM thefts. Meanwhile, two cases of attempt to murder and cow smuggling have been registered against Arif alias Mandal and one case of cow

smuggling has been registered against accused Arif, the police said. Police said on the intervening night of Tuesday and Wednesday, crime branch teams of Farrukhnagar and Sohna received information regarding cow theft in a canter vehicle from village Ullawas in the Sector-65 area of Gurugram. During the search, the police teams saw the canter near the Medwas village in which two cows were loaded. When the police team signalled the canter driver to stop the vehicle, the canter driver increased the speed of the vehicle and tried to escape. "The police teams chased the canter and surrounded it near village Medwas, after which the accused got down from the canter.



Odisha govt approves 25 industrial projects worth Rs 4,222.24 crore



Bhubaneswar, Jan 5 (IANS) : The Odisha government on Saturday approved 25 major projects worth to the tune of Rs 4,222.24 crore. The approvals were granted during the 133rd State Level Single Window Clearance Authority (SLSWCA) meeting, chaired by Chief Secretary of Odisha, Manoj Khajuria. "These projects, which span a variety of high-impact sectors, are expected to generate more than 14,497 job opportunities, contributing to the socio-economic development of Odisha," said the state industry department in a press statement issued on Wednesday. The Department asserted that Odisha is the premier investment destination in Eastern India.



2024: Bhubaneswar saw significant rise in cybercrime cases

Bhubaneswar, Jan 5 (IANS): The Commissionerate Police witnessed a significant rise in the reporting of cybercrime-related incidents in 2024. The information was revealed by the Commissionerate police in the annual crime statistics-2024 shared with media persons here on Saturday. As per the statistics shared by the Commissionerate police, 7263 cases related to cybercrime were reported in Bhubaneswar last year, as compared to 4832 cases in 2023. The capital city Bhubaneswar recorded a rise of more than 50 per cent in cybercrime-related incidents in 2024. It is pertinent here to mention that as many as 3614 cases regarding various cyber frauds were reported in Bhubaneswar in 2022.

Loaded comment by senior leader on Trinamool foundation day sparks speculation about infighting

Kolkata, Jan 5 (IANS) : A loaded statement by a senior Trinamool Congress leader, West Bengal municipal affairs & urban development minister, Firhad Hakim, on the occasion of the party's 28th foundation day programme, on Saturday, sparked fresh speculation in the state's political corridors about the internal row in the party over the "fresh blood" ver-

sus "old guards" issue. Speaking at the main function on the occasion of the special day, Hakim, who is also the Kolkata Mayor, said that being a part of the Trinamool Congress should not carry the feeling of being in power. "There is a his-

tory of sacrifices by thousands of people behind it. Real Trinamool Congress is not just leaders and ministers moving around in cars, receiving salutes of people and 1,900 followers accompanying them," said Hakim on Saturday.

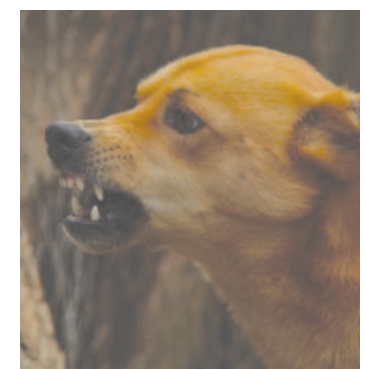


However, he did not specify whom he actually meant by "leaders moving around in cars."

As rabies deaths rise, TN health dept directs vaccine availability in all districts

Chennai, Jan 5 (IANS) : With a rise in dog bite cases across Tamil Nadu, the state health department has directed district and city health officers to ensure round-the-clock availability of Anti-Rabies Vaccine (ARV). In a statement, the Tamil Nadu Director of Public Health (DPH) instructed health officers to maintain a stock of at least 20 vials of ARV at all times. Officials have been directed to administer the vaccine in all dog bite cases without hesitation, re-

gardless of concerns about wastage. Additionally, no denial or refusal to administer ARV, even during night hours, will be tolerated. The state has witnessed an alarming surge in rabies-related deaths and dog bites in 2024, with 34 human fatalities and 6.42 lakh dog bite cases reported up to October



— the highest in five years. In comparison, 2023 recorded 18 rabies deaths and 4.41 lakh dog bite cases.

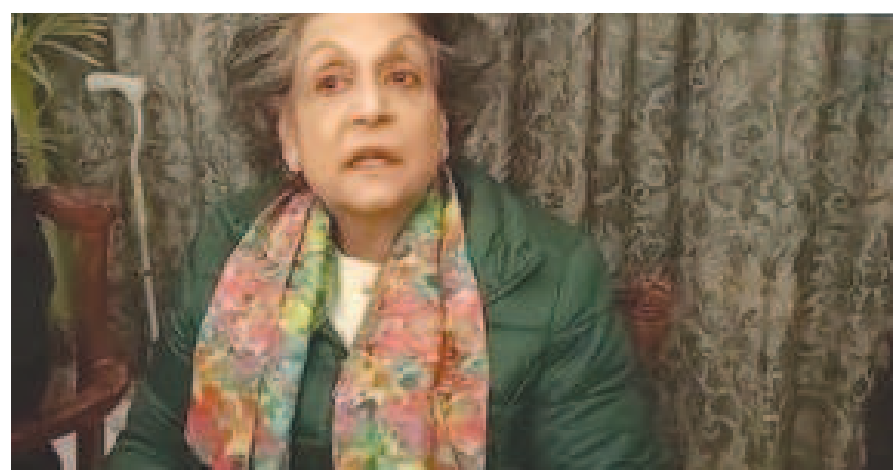
40 years after Bhopal gas tragedy, toxic waste shifted through green corridor

Bhopal, Jan 5 (IANS) : Toxic waste lying at Bhopal's Union Carbide India Limited (UCIL) premises for the last 40 years was finally shifted on Saturday to Pathampur dumping site in Dhar district, around 30 km, from Indore.

Royal rift in Bikaner: Setback for MLA Siddhi Kumari, aunt Rajyashree regains power as trustee

Jaipur, Jan 5 (IANS) : Bikaner East MLA Siddhi Kumari has faced a major setback in the property dispute case which was sub-judice and involved the former royal family of Bikaner who is Siddhi Kumari's aunt. Previously, the Devasthan Department ruled in favour of the BJP MLA. However, the same department has now reversed its decision, strengthening the position of Rajyashree Kumari, Siddhi Kumari's aunt. Under the new order from the Devasthan Department, Rajyashree Kumari, Madhulika Kumari, and Hanuwant Singh have been recognised as trustees. The decision was based on

a ruling by the Mumbai High Court. With this development, Rajyashree Kumari can now access Junagarh, Lalgarh, and other properties managed by the trust. Rajyashree expressed her desire to avoid controversy, emphasising her commitment to preserving the dignity of the royal family. Following the favourable decision, Rajyashree made serious allegations against her niece Siddhi Kumari during a media interaction. She claimed that Siddhi Kumari had been harassing her since the passing of her mother, Sushila Devi. She alleged that false police cases were filed against her and other family members, including junior staff. Rajyashree also accused Siddhi Kumari of deploying bouncers at Junagarh and Lalgarh



to prevent their entry. Previously, MLA Siddhi Kumari had removed Rajyashree Kumari, Madhulika Kumari, Hanuwant Singh, and Reema Huja as trustees of the royal family's trusts. In their place, Siddhi Kumari appointed Sanjay Sharma, Dheeraj Bhojak, Manish Sharma, and Madan Singh as trustees. This decision was approved by the Assistant Commissioner of the Devasthan Depart-

ment on May 27, 2024. The earlier ruling recognised Siddhi Kumari as the senior family member and deemed the signature of working trustee Hanuwant Singh as forged. The removal of the old trustees was reportedly based on the will of Rajmata Sushila Kumari, Siddhi Kumari's grandmother. However, Hanuwant Singh appealed against this order to the Commissioner of the Devasthan Department in Udaipur, leading to the current reversal.

Will win more seats in next election, claims Rajasthan BJP in-charge

Jaipur, Jan 5 : Rajasthan BJP in-charge Radha Mohan Das Agarwal on Saturday criticised former CM Ashok Gehlot and said.



POSSESSION NOTICE - (for immovable property) Rule 8(1)

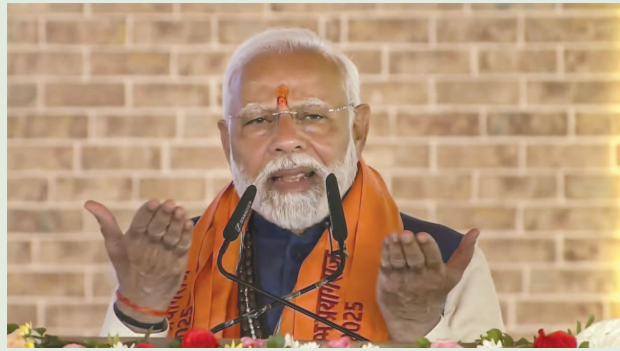
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of IFL Home Finance Limited (Formerly known as India Infoline Housing Finance Ltd.) (IFL HFL) under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules 2002, a Demand Notice was issued by the Authorized Officer of the company to the borrowers / co-borrowers mentioned herein below to repay the amount mentioned in the notice within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice. The borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower and the public in general that the undersigned has taken possession of the property described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him under Section 13(4) of the said Act read with Rule 8 of the said rules. The borrower in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property and any dealings with the property will be subject to the charge of IFL HFL for an amount as mentioned herein under with interest thereon. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, if the borrower clears the dues of the "IFL HFL" together with all costs, charges and expenses incurred, at any time before the date fixed for sale or transfer, the secured assets shall not be sold or transferred by "IFL HFL" and no further step shall be taken by "IFL HFL" for transfer or sale of the secured assets.

| Name of the Borrower(s)/ Co-Borrower(s) | Description of secured asset (immovable property) | Total Outstanding Dues (Rs.) | Date of Demand Notice | Date of Possession |
|---|---|--|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Mr. Sivaratri Suryanarayana Mrs. Sarada Sivaratri (Prospect No. 934419, 934411) | All That Piece And Parcel Of Flat No. F1 2, Fourth Floor, In Om Sai Residency, Plot No. 20 A, Near Door No. 4-25, In Survey No. 561, Goliapudi Village, Vijayawada Rural, Krishna District, Andhra Pradesh, India, 521225 Area Admeasuring (In Sq. Ft.) Thousand Five Hundred and Forty Five (Only) Prospect No. 934411 Rs. 431272.00 (Rupees Four Lakh Thirty One Thousand Two Hundred and Seventy Two Only) | Rs. 1618545.00 (Rupees Sixteen Lakh Eight Hundred and Fifty Four Thousand Five Hundred and Seventy Two Only) | 19-Sep-2024 | 02-Jan-2025 |

For Further Details Please Contact To Authorised Officer At Branch Office: 40-5-5-1/A, 1/B, Chandramouli Puram, Tikkle Road, Near Sweet Magic Hotel, MG Road, Vijayawada - 520010/Or Corporate Office: Plot No.98, Phase-IV, Uday Nagar, Gungana, Hyderabad.
Place: Guntur Date: 06/01/2025

Sd/- Authorised Officer, For IFL Home Finance Limited

OPINIONmail



MODI CALLS FOR 'MAHAKUMBH OF UNITY' IN MUSLIM-LESS MAHA KUMBH

Where is the Modi government's sworn affidavit to the Supreme Court on its stand on the Places of Worship Act, 1991? The government is mute and Prime Minister Narendra Modi is calling for unity in a country that is riddled with disaffection and disunity. How can there be unity after months of 'Batenge tohkatenge', when 'Ekhaitoh safe hain' didn't work and RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat has added his two pence to the acrimonious debate by advising the BJP's Hindu vote-bank not to look for temples under mosques? Bhagwat says for "Bharat to become 'Vishwaguru' social harmony is a prerequisite and social harmony cannot be there if Hindus keep looking for a "Shivling under every mosque" Bhagwat conveniently forgot that the Sangh Parivar was the one which fanned the 'Mandir-Masjid' fire for decades. Also, didn't Prime Minister Modi go all out fueling 'Hindu-Muslim' acrimony during the run-up to the 2024 general election? Modi is okay with dividing the electorate. Now, he is a master of social and religious bonhomie. What to make of Modi-ji, what does he want? On Sunday, Modi delivered yet another 'Mann Ki Baat' and it was another sermon. This one about the Prayagraj 'Maha Kumbh', which he renamed the 'Maha Kumbh of Unity'. BJP spokespersons kept parroting 'Maha Kumbh of Unity this ad infinitum all of Sunday. The Prime Minister is known for rhyming slogans and he coins them while on the move from an endless queue of them. When does PM Modi get the time to coin slogans is an enduring mystery, but the one about 'Maha Kumbh' has the unending message of ridding the country of hate and division, a recurring theme in Modi-speak. How many people remember Modi's slogans the morning after is hard to guess, the moot point is Modi believes in them. Those habituated to Modi's 'Bunch of Thoughts' are diehard 'Modi-bhacts'. On December 29, Modi called the upcoming Prayagraj 'Maha Kumbh' as the "Mahakumbh of Unity" and urged listeners to be at the 'Mahakumbh' and leave the world's largest religious gathering with the slogan "Mahakumbhkasandeshek ho puradesh."

This, even as hoardings all over Maha Kumbh were saying 'Darengetohmareng', a play on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's 'Batengetohkatenge' which made Prime Minister Modi coin 'Ekhaitoh Safe hain,' with which Modi attempted to assure Muslims they were part of his unity call. Is Prime Minister Modi a sucker for corny slogans? He does swear by 'Unity in Diversity.' "Such a scene of unity in diversity cannot be seen anywhere else in the world," Modi said. "Mahakumbh's speciality lies not just in its vastness but also in its diversity... This time's Maha Kumbh will also bolster the mantra of Maha Kumbh of unity... when we participate in the Kumbh, let us bring along this resolve of unity with us - MahakumbhKaSandesh, Ek Ho PooraDesh."

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be helped in his quest for unity in diversity by AI technology, which will help Kumbh participants find their bearings in the 'Maha Kumbh' mish-mash. What Modi did not say in his monthly 'Mann kiBaat' was that Modi's quest for unity can't go anywhere if he doesn't make clear what sort of unity does Modi want - Hindu-Muslim unity or a consolidation of Hindu votes by uniting Hindus alone?

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath is by far more straightforward, Prime Minister Narendra Modi makes promises but mostly ends up unfulfilling them as he balances false equivalences. Now, there is also RSS Chief Mohan Bhagwat adding his voice to the confusion by asking Hindus to stop looking for Shivlings under every mosque, which is his idea of "unity in diversity" and "social harmony".

The problem is, there is a churning in the Hindu community and things have gotten out of Modi's and Bhagwat's hands. Bhagwat is more or less isolated, if Prime Minister Modi wants to survive isolation, there are promises to keep. The Supreme Court wants the Modi Government to make its stand on the Places of Worship Act, 1991 clear in four weeks' time.

(By Sushil Kutty)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

LISTLESS WINTER SESSION COST TAXPAYERS Rs. 97,87,50,000 IN HARD-EARNED MONEY

Parliament's productivity in the just-concluded Winter Session was a record low - only 52 percent of scheduled work completed. Various factors, including disruptions and lack of quorum, contributed to the reduced output. The confrontation between the treasury benches and a belligerent Opposition continued throughout. The current

performance highlights the challenges in maintaining productivity. The Opposition wanted to discuss the Adani issue and Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi has been raising the issue in public. It is a matter of significant public interest due to its implications. Also, the Opposition asked Union Home Minister Amit Shah to apologize for his comments about Dr B.R. Ambedkar, a highly respected figure in Indian history.

The government was not willing to be flexible. With a productivity of merely 40.03 percent in the Winter Session, the Lok Sabha passed four of the five bills it received. Rajya Sabha approved three bills. The Lok Sabha lost 65 hours and 15 minutes, the highest in 2024. Many requests for adjournment motions made in Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were not accepted. The 18th Lok Sabha is different

in many respects. For the first time in a decade, there's a strong opposition with an official leader of Opposition (LOP) but the bitterness between parties within and outside Parliament is increasing. Neither side is willing to accommodate. Discipline, decorum and dignity of Parliament are of paramount importance.

(IPA Service)

INDIA TO WITNESS BITTER POLITICAL FIGHTS FOR THE CONSTITUTION IN 2025

Save the Constitution of India protests launched by the opposition parties cost PM Narendra Modi and his BJP majority in the 2024 Lok Sabha Elections. The protests turned ugly by the close of the year with physical confrontation in the Parliament - which caused injuries to several BJP MPs. Now, at the fag-end of the year, both the Congress and the BJP NDA have announced a series of events in 2025 to take the battle to the other. In 2024, the opposition INDIA bloc kept attacking the Modi-led government for undermining the integrity of the Constitution of India and violating its key provisions, while the ruling establishment kept defending the government.

REMEMBERING JIMMY CARTER WHO HELD THE DOOR OPEN FOR NEOLIBERALISM

Whatever one might say about Jimmy Carter's presidency, it was clear that the man himself meant for it to be transformational. From a subdued 1977 inauguration - Carter skipped the motorcade and black-tie balls in favor of business attire and an open-air stroll down Pennsylvania Avenue - to subsequent promises to restore American energy independence, reform welfare, and even transcend the "inordinate fear of communism" that had dominated US foreign policy since the 1940s, the thirty-ninth president put a lot on his plate. Elected president in the wake of the catastrophic US intervention in Vietnam and amid divisive racial tensions and widespread economic distress, Carter hoped

to, as he put it in his inaugural address, "bring a resurgent commitment to... basic [moral] principles" and establish a government "both competent and compassionate". Though Carter achieved more than he is generally given credit for - and remains among the more decent men to have held the office - his presidency failed to bring about the fundamental transformation he sought. Instead, his term helped establish a far more dubious pattern: Democratic presidents with admirably ambitious policy agendas stymied by an inability to form a durable coalition or stem the erosion of their party's support among the working and middle classes. Born in Plains, Georgia in October of 1924, Carter at first seemed destined for a life in the navy,



graduating from the Naval Academy in 1946 and serving aboard submarines until 1953. He was called home to Plains that year by family crisis - his father had died leaving the family farm in desperate straits - forcing a reluctant Jimmy (and his even more reluctant wife, Rosalynn) to return to manage it. The lure of public service never was far away, however, and, with prosperity restored by the late 1950s, Carter turned to politics, serving in the Georgia State Senate before a failed run for governor in 1966 (he was ultimately defeated by the arch-segregationist Lester Maddox).

POLITICAL ROW OVER SUICIDE OF DCC TREASURER AND HIS SON IN KERALA

There seems to be no end to the problems plaguing the Congress in Kerala. The latest jolt to the party, already rocked by internecine factionalism, has come in the form of a flaming row over the suspected suicide of Wayanad District Congress Committee treasurer, N M Vijayan, and his son, Jijesh. The unfortunate deaths have put the Congress on the defensive. Vijayan and Jijesh are said to be the victims of the Congress-controlled Cooperative Bank job scam involving party MLA I C Balakrishnan. Vijayan, who was also the former SulthanBathery panchayat president, and son Jijesh, a former SulthanBathery Co-operative Bank employee.



INFILTRATION ATTEMPTS FROM BANGLADESH RISING IN EAST, NORTHEAST STATES

Attempts made by groups of people to sneak into India illegally from Bangladesh into Tripura and West Bengal have increased in recent weeks. The Border Security Force (BSF) and various state

police have stepped up vigil to prevent the infiltration to the extent possible, more so in view of the continuing violence in Bangladesh.

BONHOMIE ENDS: TALIBANI FRANKENSTEIN PAKISTAN CREATED IS AT ITS THROAT

"You reap what you sow" has been proven right in the context of recent escalation of violence between Afghanistan and Pakistan. For decades, Pakistan nurtured the Taliban for strategic reasons. So, what are the reasons behind this increased tension between two neighbours, threatening tenuous peace in the region? The once hunky-dory relationship between Pakistani military and its protégé, the Taliban in Afghanistan, has gone sour. After Taliban's return to power in 2021 for the second time, Pakistan has recognised it as a legitimate government and provided military assistance to it. But it would be naïve to describe relations between Pakistan and Taliban 2.0 as cool. Within months after coming back to power, Taliban raised the issue



of an ongoing Pakistani project to erect fencing along the shared border between Afghanistan and Pakistan (Durand Line) - the demarcation of which prior Afghan governments have never accepted. In fact, the skirmishes between the two sides started in early 2022. Also, contrary to expectations, the Taliban 2.0 refused to bow to different Pakistani demands and pursued the path of governance all alone. But in this process their efforts to establish peace and an effective government in Afghanistan, were hampered by the in-

fighting amongst their internal factions, viz, the Haqqani network; the political wing led by Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar; and the military wing represented by Mullah Muhammad Yaqoob and Mullah Abdul QayamZakir. In addition, crucially the Taliban 2.0 also failed to rein in the remaining terrorist elements after the withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan. These splinter terrorist groups include elements of Islamic State Khorasan (IS-K), a jihadist group which seeks to create a caliphate across South and Central Asia. During the last three years, the outfit has carried out several terror attacks in Afghanistan and continues to mock Taliban 2.0's desire for international legitimacy, a message that has resonated with many disaffected Afghans.

USA REDEFINING CAPITALISM BY BLOCKING NIPPON STEEL TAKEOVER OF US STEEL

Unbelievable but true. The government of the United States of America, supposedly the vanguard of modern capitalism, is fighting with its back to the wall to prevent a private corporate takeover of a publicly-listed US firm by a widely-held Japanese company. Both the outgoing US President Joe Biden of the Democratic Party and his soon-to-be Republican successor, Donald Trump, have vowed to stall the Nippon Steel takeover of the US Steel Corporation on the grounds.

Israel warns of escalation in Gaza if hostage deal not reached

Jerusalem, Jan 5 (IANS): Israeli Defence Minister Israel Katz issued a stern warning stating that Israel would intensify its military operations in Gaza if Hamas does not agree to a deal for the release of hostages "soon." In a public statement, Gallant said that should Hamas fail to permit the release of Israeli hostages, the group would face "blows of an intensity not seen in Gaza for a long time." He emphasised that Israel's military would "escalate and intensify" its efforts against militant strongholds in Gaza until the hostages are freed and Hamas is "eliminated."

Negotiations mediated by Qatar, Egypt, and the US are stalled over

key issues, including the continuation of the ceasefire, Xinhua news agency reported. Hamas seeks to prolong the truce, while Israel insists on the right to resume military action if it perceives a security threat. Another point of contention is Hamas's demand for the withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza, which Israel opposes, asserting the need for a continued military presence to maintain security control. The Hamas-led assault on southern Israel on October 7, 2023, resulted in the kidnapping of approximately 250 civilians and soldiers, of whom around 100 are still believed to be held in Gaza. The subsequent Israeli offensive



has had a devastating impact on the Gaza Strip, causing mass destruction, widespread hunger and diseases, and resulting in at least 45,540 deaths, according to Gazan health officials. Earlier on December 29, fighters in the Gaza Strip

fired about five rockets at southern Israel, the Israeli military said. The rockets on Sunday afternoon triggered air raid warning sirens in the city of Sderot and other communities near the Palestinian enclave. No injuries were reported. In a statement, the military said that two of the rockets were intercepted by the Iron Dome anti-rocket system, while the rest "likely fell in open areas." This marked the second consecutive day of projectile fire from the besieged enclave as the Israeli onslaught continues. The two long-range rockets fired on Saturday from Gaza toward the Jerusalem area were also intercepted.



Norway tightens eco-protection in Svalbard to safeguard Arctic ecosystem

Oslo, Jan 5 (IANS) : Norway has introduced new environmental regulations for Svalbard to protect the archipelago's fragile ecosystem, cultural heritage, and wildlife as climate change accelerates and tourism expands. Svalbard, a remote Arctic archipelago situated between mainland Norway and the North Pole, is known for its dramatic glaciers, polar bears, and seabird colonies. Its pristine wilderness attracts adventurers and researchers alike, but the region's delicate environment faces mounting pressures from rising temperatures and increased human activity, Xinhua news agency reported.

"We have seen growing pressure from tourism that impacts nature, cultural heritage, and wildlife. At the same time, climate change is unfolding here and now," said acting Minister of Climate and Environment Tore Sandvik in a press release. "To preserve

Svalbard's wilderness, we are updating the regulatory framework to address these challenges," he added.

Among the key measures is a mandate to maintain stricter distances from polar bears, ensuring minimal disturbance to the vulnerable species.

Visitors must now stay 300 metres away from polar bears year-round, with the distance increasing to 500 metres from March to June during the animals' most sensitive period.

Drones use near bird cliffs is banned during breeding seasons from April to August to reduce noise and disturbance. Additionally, landing in protected areas will now be tightly regulated, with exceptions for only 43 mapped areas or snow-covered grounds in specific zones.

Passenger ships will face new restrictions, allowing no more than 200 passengers in protected areas at a time.

Reforms to spur stronger economic performance in 2025: Kenyan President Ruto

Nairobi, Jan 5 (IANS) : Kenyan President William Ruto has said that reforms initiated by his government are expected to result in stronger economic performance, increased job opportunities for the youth and higher incomes for farmers and entrepreneurs. Ruto, who delivered his end-of-year address in Kisii, western Kenya, on New Year's Eve, said the government has successfully laid a solid foundation to hasten the country's socioeconomic progress in 2025, urging Kenyans to embrace the New Year with faith, hope and determination to achieve greatness for Kenya.

"The progress we have made has set us firmly on a path of rapid and sustainable growth. As a result, we can anticipate stronger economic performance, more jobs for our youth, and higher incomes for farmers and entrepreneurs," Ruto said.



French President Macron admits dissolution of parliament brings more divisions than solutions

Paris, Jan 5 (IANS) : French President Emmanuel Macron acknowledged that dissolving the French National Assembly in June created more division than resolution. The dissolution aimed to give the voice back to the French and regain clarity, "but lucidity and humility require us to recognise that, at this time, this decision has produced more instability than serenity and I take full responsibility for that," Macron said on Saturday night in his annual New Year's Eve address. Macron dissolved parliament in June after the far right trounced his alliance in European elections. He called snap parliamentary polls, which resulted in a hung parliament and the resignation of Prime Minister Gabriel Attal, Xinhua news agency reported. Michel Barnier succeeded Attal, but he was

ousted in a no-confidence vote on December 4.

Macron extended his gratitude to the three prime ministers who served in 2024 -- Elisabeth Borne, Gabriel Attal and Michel Barnier -- and extended best wishes to Francois Bayrou, the fourth Prime Minister in 2024 appointed following Barnier's ouster.

On Europe's security, Macron stressed the importance of self-reliance, noting that the continent can no longer delegate its security to other powers.

California enacts new law to reduce homework burden

Sacramento, Jan 5 (IANS): The US state of California enacted a new law on Saturday, aimed at reducing students' homework burden statewide.

The Healthy Homework Act, signed into law by Governor Gavin Newsom in September 2024, took effect on the first day of 2025. Its primary goal is to promote evidence-based homework practices to sup-

port student learning and well-being, as well as consistency and clarity in assignments. The bill was initially introduced by California State.



New round of Iran-E3 talks scheduled for mid-Jan

Tehran, Jan 5 (IANS) : A new round of talks between Tehran and the E3 group of France, Britain and Germany will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, on January 13, Iran's semi-official Tasnim news agency reported on Saturday, citing a senior Iranian diplomat.

Iran's Deputy Foreign Minister for Legal and International Affairs Kazem Gharibabadi made the remarks in an address to reporters in Tehran on the sidelines of a ceremony to mark the anniversary of the assassination of top Iranian commander General Qassem Soleimani by the United States in

January 2020, the report said. The talks, "which are not considered negotiations," would focus on clarifying different issues of common concern and holding further consultations, so as to decide on the method and framework for any possible negotiations in the future, said Gharibabadi.



Yemen's Houthis claim they have downed another US-made MQ-9 drone

Sanaa, Jan 5 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group said it shot down a US-made MQ-9 drone over central Yemen on Saturday, making it the second MQ-9 drone the group downed within 72 hours. "We shot down an American MQ-9 aircraft while it was carrying out hostile missions over Marib province," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. "The plane was shot down with a locally-made surface-to-air missile," he said. "This is ... the 14th one of the same type we have shot down since November 2023."

Al-Masirah TV said footage of the downed plane would be broadcast in the next hours. The US army has not commented on the Houthi claim, Xinhua news agency reported. The Houthi group, which controls much of northern Yemen, has been launching regular rocket and drone attacks against Israel.



Tax evasion among self-employed foreigners on rise in Lithuania: Authorities

Vilnius, Jan 5 (IANS) : The number of self-employed foreigners avoiding taxes has been on the rise in Lithuania in recent years, according to the State Tax Inspectorate (VMI). The majority of those failing to meet their tax obligations are taxi drivers and couriers, Xinhua news agency reported.

New Orleans attacker has ISIS influence, links under probe to Las Vegas explosion

Washington, Jan 5 (IANS) : The New Orleans attacker had posted videos indicating he was inspired by ISIS before he ploughed New Year's eve revellers in a popular area. Investigations are on into possible links between this attack and the explosion of a Tesla cyber-truck



outside a Trump organisation property in Las Vegas, which left several people injured.

"Mere hours before the attack, he posted videos on social media indicating that inspired by ISIS, expressing a desire to kill," Biden said in an address to the nation from the presidential retreat of Camp David in the state of Maryland where he is spending the rest of the week. "The situation is very fluid, and the investigation has a preliminary stage."

"Additionally, we're tracking the explosion of a cyber truck outside the Trump Hotel in Las Vegas," the president added. "Law enforcement and the intelligence community are investigating this as well, including whether there's any possible connection with the attack in New Orleans."

Former Punjab BSP chief Jasvir Singh Garhi joins AAP

Chandigarh, Jan 5 (IANS) : Former Punjab Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) President Jasvir Singh Garhi, along with his supporters, on Saturday joined the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann welcomed him into the party and assured him of

AAP's dedication to social justice and inclusive governance. Along with Garhi, former general secretaries of BSP Jaspreet Singh and Gurlal Saira also joined the AAP. On this occasion, MLAs Kulwant Singh Pandori and Sukhwinder Sukhi were also present. Welcoming Garhi, CM

Bhagwant Mann said, "The Aam Aadmi Party is dedicated to carrying forward the ideals of Baba Saheb Ambedkar and Kanshi Ram-ji. Together, we will ensure justice, equality, and opportunities for every section of society." "For the past two months, I remained silent about the decision

taken by my previous party. I hoped they would introspect and correct their mistakes. Instead, I felt betrayed, as though my political assassination was carried out, similar to the sidelining of many leaders who stood with Kanshi Ram-ji," Garhi told the media here.



Chadar offering on PM's behalf: Ajmer Sharif Dargah official says tradition continues since 1947

Jaipur, Jan 5 (IANS) : Union Minister for Minority and Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju will present the Chadar sent by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at the Dargah Sharif of Khwaja Moinuddin Chishti in Ajmer on January 4 (Saturday).

Speaking in the context, Haji Syed Salman Chishty, Chairman Sufi Foundation and Gaddi Nashin of Ajmer Dargah said that PM Narendra Modi has been sending chadar to Ajmer Dargah for the last 10 years. "The 813th Urs of Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chishti commenced in Ajmer, Rajasthan,

on Saturday, marking the occasion with the sighting of the moon. On January 4, a ceremonial chadar (sacred offering) will be presented by Prime Minister Narendra Modi as part of the annual Urs of Gareeb Nawaz.

African swine fever: Mizoram suffered Rs 336.49 cr loss in 2024; over 39,200 pigs died or culled

Aizawl, Jan 5 (IANS) : Mizoram suffered a loss of Rs 336.49 crore due to the outbreak of African Swine Fever (ASF), which left 15,000 pigs dead while around 24,200 pigs culled to prevent the spread of the disease in 2024, officials said on Saturday.

An official from Mizoram's Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Department said that over 15,000 pigs died while over 24,200 pigs were culled till December 31 after the outbreak of the ASF on February 9 last year. The officials said that the outbreak of the contagious disease started

in mid-March 2021 and since then the ASF caused huge losses to the farmers and government farms. In 2021, 33,417 pigs and piglets died and 12,568 were culled due to infectious disease while 12,795 pigs and piglets died.



Yet another suicide: K'taka techie jumps into river over alleged harassment by wife

Hassan (Karnataka), Jan 5 (IANS) : Close on the heels of the sensational Atul Subhash suicide case in Bengaluru on December 9 over alleged harassment by his wife, followed by the suicide of a policeman on December 13 and that of a cafe owner in New Delhi on December 31, an incident of a software professional committing suicide over alleged torture by his wife was reported from Hassan district of Karnataka on

Wednesday. Police sources stated on Wednesday that the victim has been identified as 35-year-old Pramod, a staffer attached to the Benz company in Bengaluru.



Northeast witnessing unprecedented development under PM Modi: Sonowal

Guwahati, Jan 5 (IANS) : Sarbananda Sonowal, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, on Saturday said that the northeast is undergoing an era of unprecedented growth and transformation under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Sonowal in a video posted on X said, "The mighty Brahmaputra flows not only as a lifeline but as a symbol of the boundless energy

of the people, embodying the newfound confidence of a rising New India. Under Modiji's inspiring leadership, we continue to work towards harnessing the immense potential for the cause of nation-building towards a 'Viksit Bharat' that has been made available due to efficient and effective good governance since 2014."

No booksellers or publishers from Bangladesh to participate in Agartala Book Fair

Agartala, Jan 5 (IANS) : Amidst the unrest followed by the political changes in Bangladesh, no booksellers or publishers from the neighbouring country will participate in the Agartala Book Fair, beginning from Saturday, officials said. The 13-day-long 43rd Agartala Book Fair will be inaugurated by Chief Minister Manik Saha on January 2 and will continue till January 14.



Kannada star Shivarajkumar shares emotional journey of overcoming cancer, declares comeback

Bengaluru, Jan 5 (IANS) : Kannada star Dr Shivarajkumar, son of Kannada film legend Dr Rajkumar, shared a video from the US on the first day of 2025, detailing his journey of overcoming cancer and assuring fans of his return.

In the video, Shivarajkumar conveyed his New Year wishes to everyone and said, "I am hesitant to speak as I might get emotional at this moment. Leaving Karnataka was a very emotional experience for me. Under these circumstances, fear is inevitable, but the support of my fans has significantly reduced it." He continued, "The way the doctors took care of me gave me immense courage. While shooting for the movie '45', I underwent chemotherapy and even filmed the climax fight scene. As the date to leave for the US for treatment approached, I became anxious. However, my wife Geetha and daughter Nivedita stood by me throughout." "Dr Manohar, who treated me, cared for me like a child. My urinary bladder has been re-



placed, but there is no need for anyone to panic. I am doing well and will be back with double the energy. I thank all my fans for their unwavering support," Shivarajkumar assured. Geetha Shivarajkumar, his wife, who appeared in the video alongside him, stated that all the medical reports had come back negative, and it was officially declared that Shivarajkumar is cancer-free. "He recovered because of the blessings of his fans, and I will never forget this," she emphasised. The actor underwent surgery at a

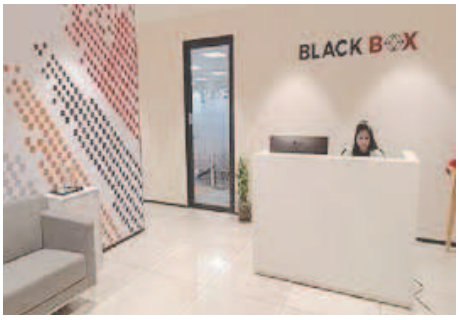
hospital in Miami, US, where his cancerous bladder was removed. According to the surgeon, Dr Muruges Manoharan, an artificial bladder was created using Shivarajkumar's intestine. In November, Shivarajkumar had spoken publicly about his illness, acknowledging that he was human like everyone else. While he didn't disclose it was cancer at the time, he said, "At the end of the day, I am a human being. I have a health issue and am currently undergoing treatment for it. I have completed a couple of treatment sessions.

Haryana CM hails farmer-friendly decisions by first Union Cabinet of 2025

Chandigarh, Jan 5 (IANS) : Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Saturday welcomed the farmer-friendly decisions made in the first Union Cabinet meeting of 2025, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Expressing his gratitude to the Prime Minister, he said that the thoughtful manner in which these decisions have been made for the welfare of farmers will directly benefit lakhs of farmers in Haryana. Referring to the Union Cabinet's decisions as a New

Year gift to the farmers from Prime Minister Modi, the Chief Minister said that these decisions will ensure the availability of DAP to farmers at affordable and subsidised rates. In addition, a budget allocation has been made to promote the Pradhan Mantri Fasal Bima Yojana and enhance technology, which will have a direct positive impact on farmers. It may be mentioned here that during the Union Cabinet meeting chaired by the Prime Minister on Saturday.





Ventura gives buy rating to Black Box Ltd, projects upside potential of 27.3 pc

Mumbai, Jan 5 (IANS) : Digital infrastructure company Black Box stock has an upside potential of 27.3 per cent from the current price of Rs 649 to Rs 826 in the next 24 to 30 months, according to a report by brokerage house Ventura on Saturday.

Job creation gathers further momentum in 2024-25

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : While a massive 4.67 crore additional jobs were created in the Indian economy in the financial year ended March 2024, the fast pace of employment generation has continued into 2024-25 in both the formal and informal sectors, official data shows.

The total estimated employment in India's Unincorporated Sector recorded a double-digit growth of 10.01 per cent during October 2023-September 2024, compared to the same period of the previous year, according to the annual survey of the Ministry of Statistics released on Saturday.

The Annual Survey of Unincorporated Sector Enterprises (ASUSE (ASUSE) shows that among the broad sectors covered, the number of establishments in the "Other Services" employed more than 12 crore additional workers between October 2023 and September

2024, marking an increase of more than one crore workers from 2022-23 and reflecting robust labour market growth. Among the broad activities, the "Other Services" sector showed the highest annual growth of 17.86 per cent, followed by 10.03 per cent in the manufacturing sector.



India's textile & apparel exports clock 7 pc growth at \$21.36 bn in April-October

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : India's overall export of textiles & apparel (including handicrafts) recorded a 7 per cent growth to \$21.36 billion during April-October of FY 2024-25, compared to the corresponding figure of \$20.01 billion for the same period of FY 2023-24, according to a statement issued by the Ministry of Textiles on Saturday.

Ready-made garments (RMG) exports to the tune of \$8.73 billion, constituted the largest share of 41 per cent in India's total textile exports during April-October of FY 2024-25. Cotton textiles rank second in the export list with a 33 per cent share valued at \$7.08 billion followed by man-made textiles (15 per cent, \$ 3.105 billion) during the 7-month period of the current financial year.



Indian housing sector to contribute 13 pc to national GDP by 2025

New Delhi, Jan 5 : The housing sector in the country is expected to contribute 13 per cent to the national GDP by 2025, reflecting its resilience and potential, according to a report on Saturday. Projected to grow into a \$1-trillion market by

2030, the sector is evolving in response to demographic shifts, policy reforms, and global trends, according to the report by JLL, a leading global commercial real estate and investment management company. Tier 2 and 3 cities are emerging as pivotal growth hubs, with smaller urban centres like Jaipur, Indore and Kochi driving more than 40 per cent of new housing developments by 2025.

realme partners with KRAFTON India to revolutionise Indian e-sports landscape

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : India's gaming industry is experiencing remarkable growth, transforming the country into a major force in the global gaming landscape. By 2028, the APAC region is projected to generate \$181.8 billion in gaming revenue, representing 54.4 per cent of the global market. Within this region, India's online gaming market is expected to reach Rs 66,000 crore by 2028, expanding at a compound annual growth rate of 14.5 per cent.

Several factors contribute to this growth, including India's young demographics, with nearly 600 million people under 35 years of age. Coupled with some of the world's most affordable mobile data prices and over 650 million smartphone users, India has cultivated a strong culture of digital entertainment consumption, particularly in gaming. The industry's growth is particularly evident in two key segments. The real-money gaming (RMG) market has gained significant momen-

tum through skill-based games, while the social and casual gaming sector continues to expand its reach among young adults and working professionals.

This surge in app-based gaming reflects broader changes in entertainment preferences, driven by increasing smartphone adoption and improved internet connectivity.



Indian economy in robust spot globally in 2025 with high frequency indicators picking up growth

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : As 2025 begins on a note of heightened global uncertainties ahead of the US President-elect Donald Trump's inauguration, India continues to be in a much stronger position with high frequency indicators showing a pick up in the pace of growth in the third quarter of current fiscal (Q3 FY25), according to a report on Saturday.

GST collections, services purchasing managers' index (PMI), air passenger growth, and vehicle registrations saw a notable improvement in Q3 versus Q2, according to a Bank of Baroda (BoB) report.

On the other hand, in China, while the manufacturing sector is expanding slowly, lifting domestic consumption and reviving the real estate sector is proving to be a task for the administration. The US economy is giving mixed signals regarding growth. While the labour market appears to be softening and manufacturing activity is weak, retail sales, pending home sales, and the service



sector seem to be doing well. In Europe, manufacturing activity is unable to pick up pace so far, while the service sector is regaining ground. In India, the current account deficit (CAD) narrowed to 1.2 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY25 from 1.3 per cent of GDP in Q2 FY24.

"While the trade deficit was higher, buoyant services exports as well as continued strength in remittances underscored the lower CAD. Our year-end market analysis shows that both Sensex and Nifty 50 surged by 8.7 per cent and 9 per cent in CY24.

Know all about 2 new SBI deposit schemes that offer financial flexibility

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : The State Bank of India (SBI) has announced two new deposit schemes, 'Har Ghar Lakhpati' and 'SBI Patrons', to provide greater financial flexibility and better value to its customers. SBI has a market share of

about 23 per cent in deposits. With these offerings, the bank said it is committed to prioritise innovation and further empower people. 'Har Ghar Lakhpati' is a pre-calculated recurring deposit scheme designed for customers to deposit Rs 1,00,000 and its multiples.

With this product, customers can focus on planning and saving to achieve their financial goals. This scheme has also been introduced for the age group below 18 years, so that this class can also work on their financial planning and savings plans from an early age.

The bank has also launched a special term deposit scheme 'SBI Patrons' for senior citizens aged 80 years and above. With this product, the bank is offering enhanced interest rates. This scheme of the bank is available to both existing and new term deposit customers.



India's coal production posts 5.3 per cent growth to 97.94 million tonnes in Dec 2024

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : India's total coal production recorded a growth rate of 5.33 per cent during December 2024 to touch 97.94 million tonnes (MT) compared to the corresponding figure of 92.98 MT for the same month in the previous year, the Coal Ministry said on Saturday. Captive and other mines produced 18.95 MT, reflecting a



significant growth of 29.61 per cent compared to 14.62 MT in the corresponding period of the last year.

The cumulative coal production up to December 24 also witnessed substantial growth, reaching 726.29 MT in FY 2024-25, compared to 684.45 MT during the corresponding period of FY 2023-24.

16.15 lakh EVs incentivised under FAME-II scheme

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : A total of 16.15 lakh electric vehicles (EVs) have been incentivised under the Faster Adoption and Manufacturing of Hybrid and Electric Vehicles in India (FAME India)-II scheme, the government said on Saturday. It includes 14.27 lakh electric two-wheelers (e-2Ws), 1.59 lakh e-3Ws, 22,548 e-4Ws and 5,131 e-buses. Additionally, 10,985 EV public charging stations (PCS) have been sanctioned, with 8,812 allocated for installation. As of October 31, 2024, a total of Rs 8,844 crore has been spent, including Rs 6,577 crore for subsidies, Rs 2,244 crore for capital assets, and Rs 23 crore for other expenses, according to Ministry of Heavy Industries. The scheme includes a phased manufacturing program and has supported significant policy initiatives, such as reducing GST on EVs and enabling state EV policies, contributing to India's transition to sustainable mobility. The first phase

of the scheme was initially approved for a period of two years, commencing from April 1, 2015. After successful implementation of the scheme, the second phase -- FAME-II -- was launched in 2019 with an outlay of Rs 11,500 crore to provide incentives for electric vehicles, including two, three, four wheelers, electric buses and EV public charging stations.





H-1B visas vital for US

California's tech titans : Report

California, Jan 5 (IANS) : Of all the rich and powerful people cosyng up to US President-elect Donald Trump, few have rushed to Mar-a-Lago faster than the crowned heads of big tech, including California's own chiefs of Google and Meta, local media reported. "And few have a stronger motive to curry Trump's favour than Silicon Valley: the fate of the H-1B visa program that permits foreign-born computer scientists, engineers and other highly skilled workers to migrate to the United

States hangs in the balance," noted the report on Saturday. Support for retaining H-1B from Elon Musk, the incoming president's new closest associate, has stirred rage through much of Trump's MAGA base, which is against immigration in almost any form. But keeping the pipeline open for tech and other skilled workers is seen by many business leaders as critical for the American economy, especially in California, reports Xinhua news agency, quoting the Los Angeles Times.

South Korean Prez Yoon's senior aides offer to resign after acting president appoints key justices

Seoul, Jan 5 (IANS) : Senior aides of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, including his chief of staff, offered to resign Saturday, a day after acting President Choi Sang-mok appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court. Those who expressed their intents to resign include

Chung Jin-suk, the presidential chief of staff; National Security Adviser Shin Won-sik; Sung Tae-yoon, chief of staff for policy; and Chang Ho-jin, foreign policy adviser to Yoon, according to the presidential office. Choi on Tuesday appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court.



Gazprom stops gas transit through Ukraine as agreements expire

Moscow, Jan 5 (IANS) : Russian energy giant Gazprom said Saturday that it has stopped gas supply for transit through Ukraine due to expiration of key agreements and the lack of renewal by the Ukrainian side.

The agreements, signed on December 30, 2019, included a contract between Gazprom and Ukraine's national oil and gas company Naftogaz on the transportation of Russian gas through the Ukrainian territory, and a cooperation agree-

ment between the operators of the two countries' gas transmission systems. These agreements officially expired at 8 am Moscow time (0500 GMT) Wednesday, Gazprom said on Telegram. Gazprom said Ukraine had repeatedly and unequivocally refused to extend these agreements, leaving the Russian company without the technical and legal means to continue gas transit through Ukraine. Consequently, the supply of Russian gas through Ukrainian territory stopped at 8 am Moscow time Wednesday, it added, Xinhua

news agency reported. Last month, the Russian government had warned that the transit of Russian gas to European countries is currently "very difficult" and requires attention. "You have heard the statement from the Ukrainian side, and you know about the position of those European countries that continue to buy Russian gas and that consider it necessary for the normal operation of their economies,"

China extends visa fee reduction till Dec 31, 2025

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : In a significant move to facilitate foreigners travelling to China, the Chinese Embassy in India announced the extension of reduced visa fees until December 31, 2025, the Embassy said in a statement on Saturday.

The single entry visa fee for visitors is Rs 2,900, and Rs 4,400 for double entry, continuing previous cost-cutting measures put in place last year. For six months of multiple entries, the fee is 5,900 and for 12 months or above multiple entries, the fee is Rs 8,800. For group visas and official group visas, each applicant has to pay Rs 1,800.

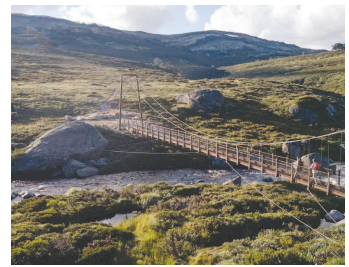
The notification came as India and China developed a broad consensus on the Line of Actual Control. The statement by MoD, as part of its year-end review, said that India and China are on the road to restoring the ground situation in some areas along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).



Australia confirms death of 3rd hiker in one week

Sydney Jan 5 (IANS) : A man has died while hiking in the southeast Australian island state of Tasmania, marking the third death of a hiker in the state in one week. Tasmania Police said in a statement on Tuesday that a man, aged in his 30s, from the mainland state of Victoria, died after falling from a height while hiking in the Southwest National Park on Saturday. The man fell while attempting to summit the 1,225 metre-high Federation Peak at about 11 a.m. local time on Monday,

Tasmania Police Inspector Colin Riley told reporters on Tuesday. His two female companions raised the alarm, and a search and rescue operation was launched on Monday afternoon before being suspended overnight.



Autopsy reveals struggle not suicide, but murder, say parents of OpenAI whistleblower

San Francisco, Jan 5 (IANS) : The parents of Indian-American techie Suchir Balaji, who was found dead in his San Francisco apartment on December 14, 2024, have rejected the official suicide ruling, alleging that their son was mur-

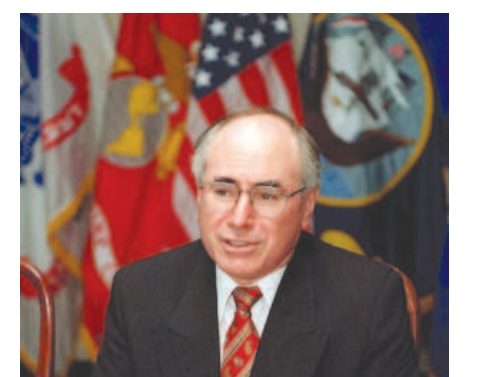
dered. Suchir, a former OpenAI employee, had made headlines for his whistleblowing revelations about the ethical concerns surrounding generative AI. In an interview with NDTV, his parents claim that the second autopsy report indicates "signs of

struggle," including a head injury and trauma, which contradict the suicide verdict by the medical examiner's office. Suchir's mother, Poornima Ramarao, expressed disbelief at the suicide ruling, citing the absence of a suicide note and the findings of the second autopsy. "We have facts with the second autopsy -- head trauma and signs of struggle. This is not a suicide; it's a murder," she stated.



Iraq War WMD intelligence wrong : Former Australian PM

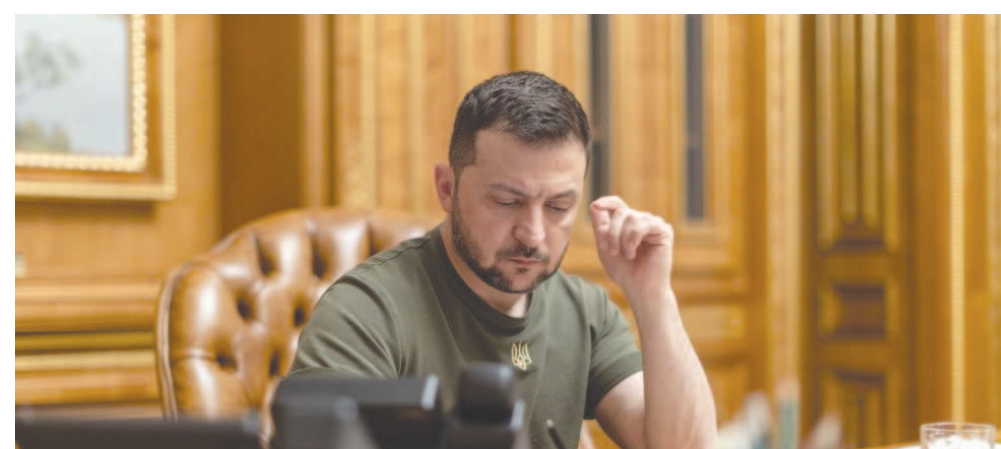
Canberra, Jan 5 (IANS) : Former Australian Prime Minister John Howard has admitted that intelligence about weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that led to the Iraq War was wrong. Howard on Saturday said it was disappointing that searches failed to detect weapons of mass destruction in Iraq but that he still believes the decision to commit Australia to the war was in the national interest, reports Xinhua news agency. His comments coincided with the release of previously sealed cabinet documents from 2004 by the National Archive of Australia (NAA). Each year, on January 1, the NAA publicly releases cabinet documents from 20 years prior. The 2003 documents, which were released belatedly in March 2024 after some went missing, revealed that Howard's government authorised the deployment of troops to Iraq in January 2003.



Cambodia seized 14.7 tonnes of narcotics in 2024

Phnom Penh, Jan 5 (IANS) : Cambodia has recorded a sharp increase in both the number of drug-related suspects arrested and the amount of narcotics seized last year, according to an Anti-Drug Department's report released on Saturday. The authorities had detained 26,033 drug-related suspects in 2024, up 30.5 per cent from 19,940 in the year before, the

report said, adding that 954 suspects were foreigners of 20 nationalities. "A total of 14.7 tonnes of illicit drugs had been confiscated from those suspects' possession from January 1 to December 31, 2024," the report said. According to the report, only 2.97 tonnes of narcotics had been seized in the entirety of 2023.



Ukraine halts Russian gas transit to Europe

Kyiv, Jan 5 (IANS) : Ukraine on Saturday stopped the transit of Russian natural gas to Europe following the expiration of a five-year transportation agreement, the Ukrainian Energy Ministry

said. "At 07:00 am (0500 GMT), in the interests of national security, the transportation of Russian natural gas through the territory of Ukraine was stopped," the ministry said in a statement. Ukraine has notified its interna-

tional partners of the termination of the gas transit in line with the established procedures, the statement said.



Panama celebrates 25th anniversary of Canal's handover

Panama City, Jan 5 (IANS) : Panama celebrated the 25th anniversary of the handover of the Panama Canal, which had been under the control of the United States for nearly a century. The United States inaugurated the canal in 1914 and operated the waterway until December 31, 1999. The Torrijos-Carter Treaties, signed on September 7, 1977, in Washington by Panama's General Omar Torrijos and then US President Jimmy Carter, ended 85 years of the colonial enclave known as the Panama Canal Zone. "These 25 years of Panamanian administration ... have worked on a common goal: to fulfill the national commitment to a safe and continuous operation for the world," said Panamanian President Jose Raul Mulino at the ceremony held on Saturday, early Wednesday, India time. "This canal has to be and has to continue to be the canal of our Panamanians, for Panamanians, at the world's service but above all for Panamanians mainly," Mulino said from the steps of the Panama Canal Administration Building, Xinhua news agency reported.

Kerala govt greenlights work on building two new townships at landslide-hit Wayanad

Thiruvananthapuram, Jan 5 (IANS) : The Kerala government on Saturday cleared the rehabilitation programme that involves building two new townships for those who lost their homes and livelihood on account of the Wayanad landslide disaster that hit four villages in July last year. Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan said following the High Court also clearing the taking over of two estates -- Harrison

Malayalam Estate of 65.41 acres in Nedumbala, Meppadi grama panchayat and Elston Estate of 78.73 acres in Kalpetta -- the state government will go forward with the township projects. The July landslide that hit the state was the worst-ever witnessed by Kerala as four villages were washed away leaving 231 dead, while 47 people continue to be missing. A whopping 145 homes were fully destroyed and 170 homes was par-

tially destroyed, while 240 homes have been declared uninhabitable and 183 homes were washed away. Chief Secretary Sarada Muraleedharan made a presentation of the two proposed townships. "At the Kalpetta township every family accommodated will get 5 cents and a 1000 sq feet home, besides there will be public amenities also. Construction will be under sustainable practices and since this area is in Seismic Zone 3 all constructions will be



in RCC model. There will be commercial spaces also here. While at the other township in Meppadi panchayat, every family will get 10 cents and a 1000 sq feet house," said Muraleedharan.

CM Vijayan made it clear that work would commence at the earliest. "What we envisage is not just a house but a total package. The final list of beneficiaries will be out latest by January 25.



Intentional wage theft facing up to 10-year imprisonment in Australia

Canberra, Jan 5 (IANS) : Australia's new laws that took effect on Saturday made intentional wage theft a criminal offence that would see dishonest heads of businesses being imprisoned for up to 10 years and facing hefty fines. Some large companies in Australia have been involved in cases of underpayment scandals, such as Woolworths, Qantas, and 7-Eleven. However, the company directors currently can only be investigated according to civil laws, without the threat of imprisonment, according to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). Under the Fair Work Legislation Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Act 2023.

Malaysia grants social media, messaging app providers licenses as new regulation takes effect

Kuala Lumpur, Jan 5 (IANS) : Social media platform and messaging app providers operating in Malaysia have begun receiving licenses after a new law mandating regulation of such services has taken effect, Malaysia's multimedia regulator said on Saturday. Chinese internet giant Tencent which operates the popular messaging app WeChat and Chinese tech firm ByteDance which operates TikTok have successfully obtained licenses, the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission said in a statement. It added that Telegram was in the final stage of the licensing process while Meta, which owns Facebook, WhatsApp and Instagram, has initiated the process of obtaining its licenses to operate these platforms in the country. However, both X, formerly Twitter, and Google, which operates YouTube, were yet to submit their applications, it said, Xinhua news agency reported. Malaysia's lower house of parliament passed amendments to its communication and multimedia laws on December 9, 2024, mandating the providers of such services operating in



Malaysia to obtain licenses citing the need to strengthen online safety, enhance user protection, particularly for children and vulnerable groups, and improve regulatory oversight. The unveiled guidelines on information and network security for the Communications and Multimedia Industry (INSG) aimed at enhancing the information and network security and resiliency of the communications and multimedia industry in the country. The Malaysian Communications and

Multimedia Commission (MCMC) advised the industry to operationalize best practices as part of their proactive measures to strengthen cybersecurity across the communications and multimedia industry. "It aims to enhance the capability and readiness of service providers to manage cyber risks, mitigate data breaches, minimize disruptions through strengthened network infrastructure, and protect consumers from online harms," it said. It added that the guidelines serve as a pivotal step in safeguarding Malaysia's digital systems, ensuring secure and resilient network infrastructures and highlighting the commission's ongoing efforts to address the challenges of an increasingly complex cyber landscape while fostering trust and safety in the nation's digital environment.

Iron Brother no more: Pakistan-China relations in crisis

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : In 2015, preceding Chinese President Xi Jinping's maiden visit to Pakistan, the two nations indulged in grandiose rhetoric to celebrate their friendship. The relationship was described as being "higher than the Himalayas, deeper than the ocean, sweeter than honey, and stronger than steel". This flowery depiction underscored the strategic significance of their bilateral engagement as part of President Xi's ambitious Belt and Road Initiative (BRI). The partnership was hailed as transformative for regional geopolitics,

with the potential to reshape South Asia's strategic dynamics. However, by 2024, nearly a decade later, this partnership has encountered serious challenges, overshadowed by Islamabad's inability to provide security for Chinese investments and nationals. As tensions mount and Beijing appears to recalibrate its approach towards Pakistan, this decline reflects the systemic failures of Pakistan's military-dominated establishment to ensure internal stability and meet its strategic commitments. Often referred to as "all-weather friends" and "iron brothers", Pakistan and China have historically

enjoyed close relations. Despite Pakistan's alignment with the US-led Western bloc during much of the Cold War, Islamabad and Beijing managed to cultivate a robust partnership. Over the years, economic cooperation emerged as a cornerstone of their relationship, witnessing a qualitative leap following Xi Jinping's ascension to the Chinese presidency in 2012. Under President Xi's leadership, Pakistan became a key node in China's Asian policy framework, with the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) emerging as the flagship project of the Belt and Road Initiative. By 2024,

CPEC investments were estimated to exceed \$62 billion, underscoring their critical importance in the economic and geopolitical calculations of both nations. Despite this promising start, the bilateral relationship has experienced significant turbulence in recent years. Pakistan's chronic economic mismanagement, coupled with a spate of insurgent attacks targeting Chinese interests and nationals, has strained ties between the two countries. A particularly notable incident occurred on October 6, 2024, when operatives from the Balochistan Liberation Army (BLA) attacked a convoy of Chi-



nese workers near Karachi's Jinnah International Airport. The assault, which resulted in the deaths of two Chinese engineers, highlighted glaring security lapses. Beijing's frustration with Islamabad's inability to protect its citizens and projects was evident,

with the Chinese Ambassador to Pakistan, Jiang Zaidong, issuing a rare public rebuke. Ambassador Jiang demanded immediate action to "hunt down" the perpetrators and implement measures to safeguard CPEC projects.



20 Indian fishermen released by Sri Lanka return home

Chennai, Jan 5 (IANS) : The 20 Indian fishermen, who were released from jails in Sri Lanka, reached Chennai by flight, said officials here on Saturday. The fishermen were arrested by the Sri Lankan Navy a year ago. They are residents of the Tamil Nadu districts of Pudukkottai, Ramanathapuram, and Tuticorin, and were in Sri Lankan judicial custody. After negotiations between the Indian and Sri Lankan governments, the latter released the 20 fishermen.

Two women drown in separate incidents in northeast Australia

Sydney, Jan 5 (IANS) : Two women have drowned in separate accidents in the northeastern Australian state of Queensland. Queensland Police said on Saturday that a woman who went missing while floating down a river northwest of Brisbane on Friday has been found dead. The 53-year-old woman fell into fast-moving water at about 2:30 pm local time and did not resurface, triggering a search operation involving a helicopter, drone and water rescue crews. She was found dead on Wednesday afternoon. Queensland Police said the death is being treated as non-suspicious. Earlier on Wednesday, a woman died in a scuba diving incident, Xinhua news agency reported. A spokesperson for the Queensland Ambulance Service said that five crews were sent to Wave Break Island, a popular swimming, snorkeling

and diving spot 60 km southeast of Brisbane, after the woman was pulled unresponsive from the ocean at about 10:10 am. Ambulance crews treated the woman but she was declared dead at the scene. More than 30 people have drowned across Australia since the start of summer on December 1, according to data from Royal Life Saving Australia.



In relief to DMK, alliance partner MDMK not for sharing power in TN govt

Chennai, Jan 5 (IANS) : In a move that brought relief to the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister and his party the DMK, its alliance partner, the MDMK, announced that it is not in favour of sharing power and pledged unstinting support to the M.K. Stalin government. It is worth noting that since the Dravidian parties came to power in Tamil Nadu, there has never been a tradition of sharing power within the state.

Poland assumes EU Council presidency with focus on security

Warsaw, Jan 5 (IANS) : Poland took over the six-month rotating presidency of the Council of the European Union on Saturday, marking the start of 2025. This is the second time Poland has held the presidency since 2011. Under the motto "Security, Europe," Poland will focus on seven dimensions of security during its tenure: external, internal, informational, economic, energy, food, and health. Poland's presidency coincides with the beginning of a new five-year institutional cycle, providing an opportunity to set strategic goals, propose solutions and start processes for the next five years. "Our presidency will therefore be an opening presidency. We won't focus on how many matters we can finalize, but on how many we can set a new tone for," said Magdalena Sobkowiak-Czarnecka, deputy minister for EU affairs. Over the next six months, Poland will host more than 300 administrative and ministerial meetings, including 22 informal councils involving EU ministers, Xinhua news agency reported. However, an informal summit of EU leaders is scheduled for February 3 in Brussels, rather than Poland.



Health alert issued over deadly mosquito-borne virus in southeast Australia

Sydney, Jan 5 (IANS) : Health authorities in Victoria, Australia's second-most populous state, on Saturday issued a high-risk warning after identifying a human case of a deadly mosquito-borne virus. The Department of Health in Victoria announced that a probable human case of Japanese encephalitis (JE) virus has been identified in a resident of the state's north. It is the first human case of JE virus -- a potentially deadly flavivirus related to dengue and yellow fever -- in Victoria during the current summer and has prompted a warning for people to take extra precautions to avoid mosquito bites. "The risk of mosquito-borne diseases remains high in the coming weeks. Taking measures to avoid mosquito bites is critical to protect against infections," the alert issued by Victoria's Acting Chief Health Officer Christian McGrath said.

Myanmar announces provisional population figures for 2024 census

Yangon, Jan 5 (IANS) : The provisional results of Myanmar's 2024 population and housing census show a total population of 51,316,756 on census night, September 30, 2024, according to a recent statement released by the Department of Population under the Ministry of Immigration and Population.

The figure includes 32,191,407 individuals directly enumerated and an additional 19,125,349 estimated using remote sensing technology for areas where enumeration was not possible, the statement said. These figures will serve as a reference until the final census report is published, it added.

The provisional results indicate that, including the estimated population of unenumerated areas, 31 per cent of Myanmar's population resides in urban areas, while 69 per cent lives in rural areas, it said.

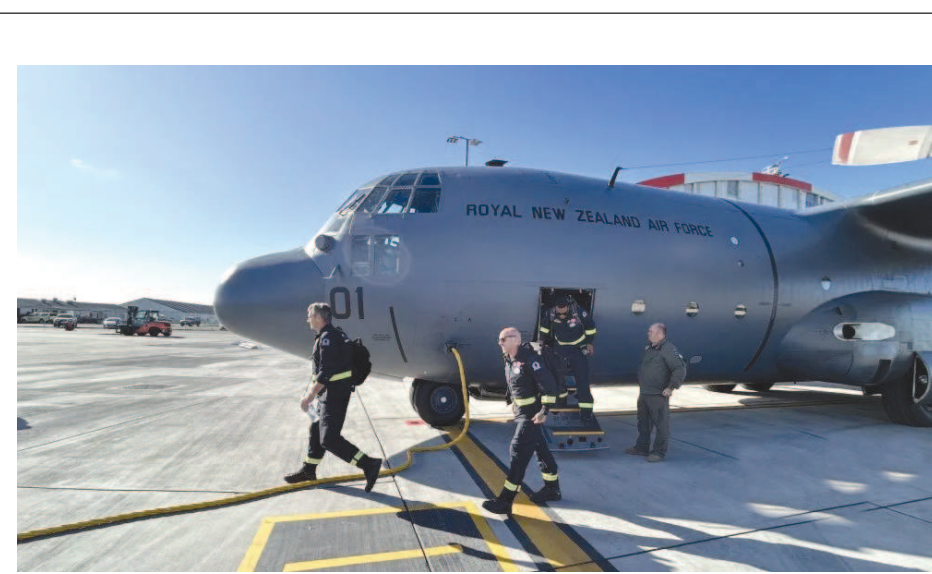
Yangon region has the highest proportion of urban residents at 68 percent, followed by Kachin



State, Mon State, and Nay Pyi Taw, each with 35 per cent of their population living in urban areas, it added, Xinhua news agency reported.

The census night was set for September 30, 2024, with the enumeration process conducted from October 1 to 15, it said. However, due to transportation challenges and security concerns, the enumeration period was extended in

certain areas until the second week of December, it added. The 2024 population and housing census was conducted using mobile tablets equipped with the computer-assisted personal interviewing system, eliminating the need for paper questionnaires, it said. This digital approach enabled real-time data transmission to a central server, it added.



New Zealand dispatches more air force flights to support Vanuatu quake response

Wellington, Jan 5 (IANS) : The New Zealand government has dispatched more air force flights to support the disaster response in Vanuatu following a 7.3-magnitude earthquake which struck the Pacific nation two weeks ago.

Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) C-130H Hercules aircraft carried out further flights after the massive quake that left at least 14 people dead and hundreds more injured so far, according to the New Zealand Defense Force on Saturday. Two round-trip flights took place last week between New Zealand and Vanuatu for the change of shift of disaster relief staff and equipment from various agencies, most from Fire and Emergency New Zealand, and bring home Kiwis being evacuated from Vanuatu.

After last weekend's flights, most of the people initially deployed by agencies to Vanuatu are now home, said RNZAF Air Component Commander, Air Commodore Andy Scott, Xinhua news agency reported.

On December 28, the Indonesian government

also provided emergency assistance to quake-stricken Vanuatu to support the nation's relief efforts following the 7.3-magnitude earthquake on December 17, which killed a dozen people and injured hundreds.

A plane carrying a medical team and 50.5 tonnes of logistics and food departed from Halim Perdanakusuma Air Force base in East Jakarta.

Health Minister Budi Sadikin expressed his hope that the medical team would begin aiding the victims upon their arrival in Vanuatu. According to him, the team was scheduled to conduct the humanitarian mission for 14 days.

Pakistan told to expedite release and repatriation of Indian prisoners, including fishermen

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : India on Saturday called for an early release and repatriation of civilian prisoners, including fishermen along with their boats, and missing Indian defence personnel from Pakistan's custody.

As both countries exchanged - through diplomatic channels simultaneously at New Delhi and Islamabad - the lists of civilian prisoners and fishermen in each other's custody, the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) stated that Pakistan has been asked to expedite the release and repatriation of 183 Indian fishermen and civilian prisoners who have completed their sentence,

"In addition, Pakistan has been asked to provide immediate consular access to the 18 civilian prisoners and fishermen in Pakistan's custody, who are believed-to-be-Indian and have not been provided consular access so far. Pakistan has been requested to ensure the safety, security and welfare of all Indian.



Focus on approving 10 lakh pending houses in January: Union Minister

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : The government this month will focus on approving 10 lakh pending houses against the target allocated earlier in the financial year 2024-25 and the first installment will also be released to the beneficiaries, Union Agriculture and Rural Development Minister, Shivraj Singh Chouhan, said on Saturday.

By properly implementing all the schemes being run under the Rural Development Ministry on time, poverty-free villages will be created in the

country, said the Union Minister. "In future, targets will be set on a monthly basis for the work of the ministry and efforts will continue to achieve those targets," he said while reviewing various works of his ministry on the occasion of New Year in the national capital.



India to play key role in global biotechnology revolution in 2025: Minister

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : The year 2025 will witness India assuming critical role in the global biotechnology revolution, and the first Bio-E3 policy has already paved the way for it, Minister of State for Science and Technology, Dr Jitendra Singh, said on Saturday.

The Bio-E3 policy marks a significant milestone for India's biotechnology sector, reinforcing its potential to shape the country's economy, employment landscape, and environmental sustainability in the years to come.

Maternal deaths: K'taka BJP to stage protests for resignation of Ministers Rao, Hebbalkar

Bengaluru, Jan 5 (IANS) : Karnataka BJP Women's Wing President C Manjula has demanded the resignation of Health Minister Dinesh Gundu Rao and Minister for Women and Child Welfare Laxmi Hebbalkar, alleging their failure to prevent maternal deaths in the state.



Act against night shelters turning into 'permanent homes' at Urdu Park, NHRC tells DUSIB CEO

New Delhi, Jan 5 (IANS) : The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on Saturday wrote to the Delhi Urban Shelter Improvement Board (DUSIB) CEO, raising alarm bells over alleged encroachment in the Urdu Park near Jama Masjid area and demanded that the body cracks the whip against the defaulters and violators.

The human rights body, in the letter, cited recent visits by its officials to the area and inspection of night shelters (Rain Baseras), which it found were turned into 'permanent residences' of a few who have illegally occupied the government-run facilities.

Manipur violence: Much effort made, lot remains to be done, says CM Biren Singh

Imphal, Jan 5 (IANS) : Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Saturday while referring to the 20-month-long ethnic violence in the state said much effort has been made in this direction and yet much remains to be done.

In his New Year message, the Chief Minister said that the start of a new one is always a time for reflection and contemplation and it is so for the government machinery as well.





Romania, Bulgaria fully join Schengen border-free zone

Bucharest, Jan 5 (IANS) : Romania and Bulgaria officially joined the Schengen Area on Saturday, eliminating border checks with neighbouring Hungary and between the two countries. This marks their full integration into Europe's passport-free travel zone, and ceremonies were held at key border crossings, attended by senior officials from both nations. The Romanian Border Police confirmed that 40 border crossing points are now fully operational without checks, streamlining travel and trade across the region. Travellers moving to or from other Schengen states, excluding

Cyprus and Ireland, no longer need to stop for document verification. However, authorities will conduct random checks within a 30-km border zone using mobile devices and risk-based assessments, Xinhua news agency reported. In October, Hungary had formally requested an exemption from the European Union (EU)'s asylum and migration regulations. The request was made through a letter written by the country's Minister for European Union Affairs Janos Boka and addressed to European Commissioner for Home Affairs Ylva Johansson. In the letter, Boka stated that Hungary seeks to restore stronger national control over its migration policy, citing national security concerns and the need to curb illegal migration as primary reasons for the exemption. The request comes in the context of a potential future amendment to EU treaties.

Yemen's Houthis claim downing US drone

Sanaa, Jan 5 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group said on Saturday that it has shot down a US-made MQ-9 drone over the central Yemeni province of Marib. The drone was shot down by a "locally-made surface-to-air missile" while "carrying out hostile activities," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by the Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. It is the second MQ-9 drone shot down by the group within 72 hours, also the 14th of its type downed since November 2023, according to Sarea. The Houthi television said footage of the downed drone would be broadcast in the next hours, Xinhua news agency reported. The US army has not yet commented on the Houthi claim. The drone downing came one day after the US Central Command claimed multiple precision strikes since Monday against Houthi targets in Yemen's capital Sanaa and coastal regions.



AU commits to stabilization efforts in Somalia in 2025 as new mission begins work

Mogadishu, Jan 5 (IANS) : The new African Union peacekeeping mission in Somalia on Saturday announced its commitment to the country's stabilization efforts in 2025 and post-conflict recovery as it began operations the same day. The African Union Support and Stabilization Mission in Somalia (AUSSOM) officially replaced the African Union Transition Mission in Somalia (ATMIS), marking a further step in transitioning national security responsibilities to that country's own forces. In his New Year message, Special Representative of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission for Somalia Mohamed El-Amine Souef said 2024 marked a pivotal year for Somalia, characterized by sig-

nificant strides in peace and security thanks to the concerted efforts of the Somali government in collaboration with the pan-African body's peace mission. "AUSSOM has finally become operational, beginning January 1, 2025, as per UN Security Council Resolution 2767 (2024). It will build on the achievements made under ATMIS to ensure Somalia realizes long-term peace and security," Souef said. On December 27, 2024, the UN Security Council (UNSC) endorsed the African Union Peace and Security Council's decision to replace ATMIS with AUSSOM. He said ATMIS made significant strides by transferring military bases to the Somali Security Forces in 2024, in line with the Somalia Transition Plan.



Yoon's senior aides offer to resign after acting president appoints key justices

Seoul, Jan 5 (IANS) : Senior aides of impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol, including his chief of staff, offered to resign Saturday, a day after acting President Choi Sang-mok appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court. Those who expressed their intents to resign include Chung Jin-suk, the presidential chief of staff; National Security Adviser Shin Won-sik; Sung Taeyoon, chief of staff for policy; and Chang Ho-jin, foreign policy adviser to Yoon, according to the presidential office. Choi on Tuesday appointed two justices to the Constitutional Court, partially meeting the opposition's demand to fill three vacancies on the nine-member bench before a ruling on President Yoon's impeachment. The presidential office voiced regret over Choi's appointments.

Lankan President launches 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative to heal environment and society

Colombo, Jan 5 (IANS) : Fresh off his last month's India visit, Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake on Saturday launched the 'Clean Sri Lanka' national programme, which aims to create a morally and environmentally sustainable nation. As he inaugurated the 'Clean Sri Lanka' programme at the Presidential Secretariat in Colombo, Dissanayake stated that 2025 marks the start of a new "political culture" in the island nation. "Our primary developmental goals include eradicating rural poverty, implementing the 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative, and building a digital economy. The 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative, launched alongside the New Year, aims to uplift society to greater heights through social, environmental, and ethical revival," he said. Dissanayake stated at the event - attended by members of the Maha Sangha, religious leaders, ministers, ambassadors, athletes, representatives from various sectors, and government officials - that the success of the 'Clean Sri Lanka' initiative depends solely on the active participation of the public. Sri Lanka, he highlighted, faces "grave challenges" in spite of having been endowed with an exceptionally beautiful and vital environment.



Anti-polio vaccination drive kicks off in Pakistan's Balochistan

Islamabad, Jan 5 (IANS) : A seven-day anti-polio vaccination drive began in Pakistan's southwest Balochistan province, the worst-hit province by the crippling disease with 27 reported cases in 2024. According to the provincial Emergency Operation Centre (EOC), more than 11,600 teams will participate in the campaign to

administer anti-polio drops to over 2.6 million children under five. EOC officials noted that security arrangements have been made to protect the polio teams during the campaign. Balochistan EOC Coordinator Inamul Haq has urged parents, media, and citizens to play their role in ensuring the success of the anti-polio drive. The drive includes door-to-door vaccinations and establishing fixed

centers at public locations, aiming to ensure no child is left unvaccinated, Xinhua news agency reported. Pakistan, along with Afghanistan, remains one of the last two polio-endemic countries in the world. The country has experienced a concerning surge in poliovirus cases, with 68 instances of the crippling disease reported in 2024.



Several injured in knife attack in Berlin, suspect in custody

Berlin, Jan 5 (IANS) : Several people were injured, including two hospitalised, in a random knife attack in western Berlin on New Year's Eve, German police reported.

Iran rejects involvement in escalating Red Sea tension

Tehran, Jan 5 (IANS) : Iran's envoy to the United Nations (UN) has rejected the accusations by the United States and Britain about Tehran's role in escalating tensions in the Red Sea, Iran's official news agency IRNA reported Saturday.



Peace agreement signed between Shia-Sunni tribes in Pakistan's Kurram

Islamabad, Jan 5 (IANS) : After weeks of intense negotiations, a 14-point peace agreement was signed between the rival tribal groups from different sects in Kohat city of Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province on Saturday, paving way for a ceasefire and the reopening of blocked routes and supplies to the district which has been devastated by violence and remained completely cut off from the rest of the country for over 80 days. As per details, the agreement was signed by at least 45 members of each tribe following the Kurram Grand Jirga, or tribal court, with an agenda of establishing a long-lasting and sustainable

peace in the district. "The two warring tribes in Kurram have signed a peace agreement containing 14 points aimed at establishing peace in the area as violence has plagued the restive territory for several weeks now," said Malik Sawad Khan, member of the Grand Jirga, who was involved in negotiating the peace agreement. "Both sides have agreed to hand over their weapons to the government. All bunkers will be dismantled and if anyone refuses to hand over their illegal arms and



weapons, the government will take action against them," he added. It has also been agreed between the two tribes that passenger convoys in each other's territories will not be attacked. The maintenance of law and order in the district will be done jointly by the Frontier Corps and the local tribes who will also be responsible.



Indian Railways Fostering New Regional Growth Hubs

for

Viksit Bharat



Inauguration of New Jammu Railway Division of Northern Railway

&

Charlapalli New Terminal Station in the twin cities of Secunderabad and Hyderabad

and

Foundation stone laying for

Rayagada Rail Division Building in Odisha

By

Narendra Modi

Prime Minister

(Through Video Conferencing)

On January 6, 2025 | Time 11:00 AM

HIGHLIGHTS

Jammu Railway Division

- Links major cities and towns across India to the Jammu & Kashmir region, fulfilling the long-pending demand of its people.
- Acts as a game-changer by promoting trade, tourism and economic opportunities in the region.
- Seamlessly connects regions of Jammu & Kashmir viz. Udhampur-Srinagar-Baramulla and Leh & Ladakh to major destinations across India strengthening unity and development.

Rayagada Divisional Office Building

- Features a Divisional Control Office, eco-friendly staff residences and modern amenities, enhancing railway operations in Koraput, Rayagada and Kalahandi.
- Streamlines railway management and boosts operational efficiency across Odisha.
- Strengthens connectivity, accelerates development and fosters economic progress in tribal belt of South Odisha for Viksit Bharat.

Charlapalli New Railway Terminal in Telangana

- A world-class, eco-friendly terminal that offers top-tier facilities at Charlapalli in the Twin Cities.
- Relieves pressure on existing terminals in Secunderabad, Hyderabad and Kacheguda.
- Facilitates the operation of new trains and enhances connectivity for the people of Telangana and nearby regions.

In the august presence of

Jishnu Dev Varma
Governor, Telangana

A. Revanth Reddy
Chief Minister, Telangana

Ashwini Vaishnav
Union Minister of Railways,
Information & Broadcasting and
Electronics & Information Technology

G. Kishan Reddy
Union Minister of
Coal and Mines

V. Somanna
Union Minister of State for
Railways and Jal Shakti

Bandi Sanjay Kumar
Union Minister of
State for Home Affairs

Ravneet Singh
Union Minister of State
for Railways and Food
Processing Industries

Duddilla Sridhar Babu
Minister of Information Technology,
Electronics & Communications,
Industries & Commerce and
Legislative Affairs and Medchal-
Malkajgiri District In-charge Minister,
Govt. of Telangana

Vijaya Lakshmi R. Gadwal
Mayor, Greater Hyderabad Municipal
Corporation

Eatala Rajender
Member of
Parliament

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