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## Govt committed to make Andhra Pradesh prosperous, modern : PM Modi

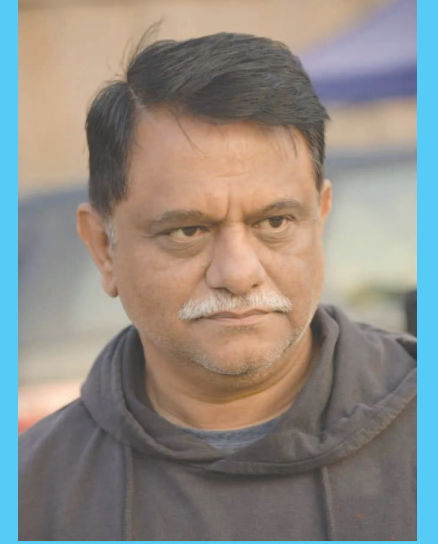
Visakhapatnam, Jan 8 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday that the NDA government is committed to developing Andhra Pradesh into a prosperous and modern state. Assuring all help to Andhra Pradesh in achieving its goal of becoming about \$2.5 trillion economy by 2047, he said the Centre was giving top priority to the state in schemes of lakhs of crores. He was addressing a public meeting in this port city after launching projects worth over Rs 2 lakh crore in Andhra Pradesh. The public meeting was also ad-

ressed by Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, Deputy Chief Minister Pawan Kalyan and State IT Minister Nara Lokesh. Describing Andhra Pradesh as a state of opportunities and possibilities, the Prime Minister said that "Andhra Pradesh's development is their vision and serving the people of Andhra is their commitment". "The Centre is walking side by side with Andhra Pradesh to achieve the goal of 2.5 trillion dollar economy set under Swarnandhra@2047 vision," he said. He hoped that the projects launched today would take devel-

opment of Andhra Pradesh to greater heights and lay the foundation for making the state \$2.5 trillion economy. "Because of its innovative nature, Andhra Pradesh is a major hub of IT and technology. It's now time Andhra become centre of new futuristic technologies. We should take lead in technologies which are under development. One such emerging field is green hydrogen," said the Prime Minister who laid the foundation for green hydrogen hub which involves an investment of Rs 1.85 lakh crore. **Continued on pg 02**

## Govt's goal is women empowerment: Bhatti

Hyderabad, Jan.8 (NSS): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka said the State government is working towards the goal of women empowerment and accordingly has taken a policy decision. In the wake of agreement between Energy department and Rural Development department for setting up solar power plants through the involvement of Self Help Groups of women for generation of 1,000 MW of power, Bhatti Vikramarka held a video conference at Praja Bhavan here on Wednesday. Reviewing the district-wise progress along with Ministers Seethakka and Konda Surekha, the Deputy Chief Minister said that only when women attain financial empowerment, they would develop further. **Continued on pg 02**



## Formula-E case: Senior IAS officer appears before ACB

Hyderabad, Jan 8 (IANS) : Special Chief Secretary, Telangana government, Arvind Kumar appeared before the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) in a Formula-E race case on Wednesday. The senior Indian Administrative Officer (IAS) reached the ACB headquarters in Banjara Hills around 10 a.m. The ACB, which is probing the alleged financial irregularities in conducting the Formula-E race in Hyderabad in 2023.



## No more Kingfisher beers in Telangana

Hyderabad, Jan.8 (NSS): United Breweries Telangana Beverages Corporation Limited (TGBCL), the makers of Kingfisher brand beer, has decided to stop the supply of all brands of Kingfisher beer with immediate effect due to 'significant, ongoing operating losses'. In compliance with Regulation 30 of the SEBI Listing Regulations,

it has informed that the Company has decided to suspend the supply of its beer to Telangana Beverages Corporation Limited (TGBCL) with immediate effect. The decision of the Company has arisen because the TGBCL has not revised the basic price of the Company's beer since 2019-20, resulting in huge losses in the State and significant overdues remaining unpaid by TGBCL for the past supply of beer by the Company. As a result, the continued supply of our beer to TGBCL has been rendered unviable.

## HC allows advocate to accompany KTR for ACB inquiry

Hyderabad, Jan.8 (NSS): The Telangana High Court has allowed one advocate to accompany BRS working president KT Rama Rao to the ACB office during the questioning session scheduled for Thursday. The court, hearing a lunch motion moved by Rama Rao earlier in the day, said the BRS leader's senior counsel should be seated in

the library of the ACB from where Rama Rao and the advocate could see each other. The Court also said that if there was any procedural irregularity on part of the ACB, KT Rama Rao was free to approach the court anytime.



## Bandi Sanjay visits injured activist

Hyderabad, Jan 8 (NSS): Union Minister of State for Home Affairs, Bandi Sanjay Kumar, visited the family of Nanduraj, a Dalit activist injured in the recent attack on the BJP state office.

Bandi Sanjay met Nanduraj at his residence in Bahadurpura, located in the Old City, to inquire about his health condition. Nanduraj explained that he had sustained a head injury and received medical treatment. The Minister also sought details about the attack incident and wished Nanduraj a speedy recovery. Later, speaking to



the media, Bandi Sanjay strongly condemned the attack on BJP office by the Congress activists.



## Konda Surekha condemns Ramesh Bidhuri's remarks against Priyanka

Hyderabad, Jan 8 (NSS): Minister for Forests, Environment and Endowments, Konda Surekha has strongly condemned the derogatory comments made by BJP leader Ramesh Bidhuri towards Congress MP Priyanka Gandhi Vadra. In a press release issued on Wednesday, the Minister highlighted the necessity of upholding respect and dignity for women within the political arena. She urged the BJP leadership to take appropriate action against Bidhuri.



## Young engineers must uphold Telangana's rich legacy in engineering: Uttam

Hyderabad, Jan.8 (NSS): Irrigation and Civil Supplies Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy called upon young engineers to uphold Telangana's rich legacy in irrigation engineering. Speaking after launching the 2025 diary of the Telangana AE Association at Jalasoudha, Erramanzil Colony,

on Wednesday, Minister Uttam emphasised the importance of dedication, transparency, and commitment in maintaining the department's reputation as one of the most prestigious in India. The Minister highlighted iconic projects such as Nagarjuna Sagar, Sriram Sagar, and Srisailem, describing them as "modern temples" built by previous generations of engineers. **Continued on pg 02**

## Priority for infrastructure development in the city: GHMC Mayor

Hyderabad, Jan.8 (NSS): GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi today said that they were working to address the problems of the people at the ground level and provide an immediate solution to them. She visited several areas in Balanagar and Allapur divisions of Kukatpally zone on Wednesday as part of a field visit and took stock of the situation in those areas and enquired about the problems faced by the local people.

Young engineers must uphold Telangana's rich legacy in engineering : Uttam

Continued From pg 01 "Young engineers must rise as inheritors of this legacy," he said, adding that sincerity and integrity in their work would lead to professional excellence. Senior officials, including Engineer-in-Chief Anil Kumar, Deputy ENC K. Srinivas.

Govt committed to make Andhra Pradesh prosperous, modern : PM Modi

Continued From pg 01 He mentioned that National Green Hydrogen Mission launched in 2023 has the target 5 million tonne green hydrogen production by 2030. Initially, two green hydrogen hubs will be developed and one of them is coming up in Visakhapatnam. "In future, Visakhapatnam will be one of the few cities in the world to have green hydrogen facility on such a large scale. This hub will create job opportunities and develop manufacturing eco-system." PM Modi,

who also laid foundation for bulk drug park, said that Andhra Pradesh is among three states where such parks are being established. He hoped that this would provide best infrastructure to boost manufacturing and research to attract investments and benefit pharma companies. Stating that the government sees urbanisation as an opportunity, he said they want to make Andhra Pradesh an example of new-age urbanisation. As part of this foundation has been laid for Krishnapatnam Industrial Area (KRIS City) in Tirupati district under the Chennai-Bengaluru Industrial Corridor. This smart city, he said, would attract investment of thousands of crores and create lakhs of industrial jobs. He noted that Andhra Pradesh is already known for Sri City. He exuded confidence that Andhra Pradesh would become one of the top states in manufacturing and industrial production. The Prime Minister said the government launched PLI scheme to promote manufacturing and noted that India has already joined the list of top countries in mobile manufacturing. PM Modi, who laid foundation stone for South Coast Railway zone headquarters, said this would be key for the state's development. He hoped that this would help expand agriculture and trade-related activities in the region and boost tourism and the local economy with new opportunities. Referring to the launch of railway connectivity projects worth thousands of crores, he mentioned that Andhra Pradesh is among the states with 100 per cent electrification.

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED (Formerly Known as Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited) REGISTERED OFFICE: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032, BRANCH OFFICE: Near Rammandhir, Opp. Boddala Madhusudhan hospital, Mahabubabad (D)-506101 (RULE-8(3) POSSESSION NOTICE Note: It is informed that "SHRIRAM CITY UNION FINANCE LIMITED" has been amalgamated with "SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" as per order of NCLT, Chennai. Subsequently the name of "SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED" was changed as "SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED" with effect from 30.11.2022 vide Certificate of Incorporation pursuant to change of name dated 30-11-2022. Whereas, the undersigned being the authorised officer of Shiram Finance Limited (SFL) under the provisions of the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 (said Act) and in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(12) of the said Act read with Rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 (said Rules) issued demand notices to the Borrowers details of which are mentioned in the table below to repay the amount mentioned in the said demand notices. The Borrower having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the Borrower and the public in general that the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of SFL has been handed over the physical possession of the mortgaged Properties described herein below in pursuance of the order passed by the Hon'ble Chief Judicial Magistrate, at Khammam under Section 14 of the said Act and Rules, on this 08th Day of January 2025.

Govt's goal is women empowerment : Bhatti

Continued From pg 01 He advised the District Collectors to make use of the agreement entered between the Energy and Rural Development departments on new energy policy on November 19, 2024 and go forward. The Indiramma government has decided to make one crore women as crorepaths in a span of five years. As part of this, the

government has been extending interest free loans to women on a large scale. The officers should draw plans and provide facilities to enable women groups who were getting good amounts invest in various businesses, Bhatti said. He instructed the District Collectors to identify land within the reach of SHGs and also available government land to set up solar power plants. The Collectors should also coordinate with bank officials regarding financial assistance for SHGs' solar power plants.

Canara Bank DEMAND NOTICE Notice issued under Section 13(2) of the Securitisation & Reconstruction of Financial Assets & Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. The below mentioned person(s) has been granted various credit facilities from time to time by way of financial assistance against various assets creating security interest in favour of the Bank. The particulars of property mortgaged by borrower/guarantor by way of deposit of title deeds creating security interest in favour of the Bank are mentioned hereunder. As borrowers/guarantors have failed to discharge the debt due to the Bank, the account has been classified as Non Performing Assets as per the guidelines issued by the Reserve Bank of India. As the Demand Notice that were sent to borrower/guarantor by Regd. Post calling upon them to discharge the debt due to the Bank were returned by the Postal Department, this notice is issued.

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, Ghanoli, Navi Mumbai-400710. DEMAND NOTICE Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/ mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.



Maha Shivaratri Jatarata should be organized with spiritual splendor : Government Whip Adi Srinivas

Rajanna Siricilla, Vemulawada, Jan 8 (TIM Bureau) : Government Whip Adi Srinivas has instructed the concerned officials to take strict steps to organize the Maha Shivaratri Jatarata with spiritual splendor. On Wednesday, Government Whip Adi Srinivas participated in the Maha Shivaratri Jatarata coordination meeting organized under the auspices of District Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha at the open slab of the Vemulawada Rajarajeshwara Swamy Temple. "He conducted a department-wise review of the arrangements being made to organize the Maha Shivaratri Jatarata celebrations in Vemulawada for 3 days from February 25 to February 27 in a grand manner. He advised the government whip officials to complete the prescribed work expeditiously to prepare for the Jatarata. Speaking on the occasion, Government Whip Adi Srinivas said that the Jatarata organized in Vemulawada, known as Dakshina Kashi, should be organized in a spiritual and divine manner, without any mistakes. He said that cultural programs should be organized on the occasion of Maha Shivaratri Jagaram and necessary arrangements should be made for it. Collector Sandeep Kumar Jha suggested that devotional programs such as Maha Bharatam, Shiva Puranam etc. should be organized and a control room should be set up in coordination with the nodal officers of all departments to monitor the Jatarata. SP Akhil Mahajan said that prasadam counters should be set up in more places.

RECOVERY DEPARTMENT, 10-1-1199/2, PTI Building, 2nd Floor, A.C. Guards, Hyderabad-500004. Ph: 8004265659 E-mail: assetrecovery.telangana@bankofindia.co.in Preponment of e-auction under SARFAESI Act, 2002 & Rules farmed there under The undersigned being Authorized Officer of Bank of India is having full powers to issue this notice of Sale and exercise all the powers of sale under the SARFAESI Act, 2002 and the Rules framed there under. Notice is hereby given to you/borrowers/guarantors/mortgagors that the below described immovable properties mortgaged/charged to the secured creditor Bank of India, the constructive/physical possession of which has been taken by the Authorized Officer of Bank of India, will be sold on "As is, where is", "As is, what is" and "Whatever there is" basis through e-auction on 27-01-2025, for Recovery of dues as detailed below to the secured creditor Bank of India from Borrowers and Guarantors detailed below

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, Ghanoli, Navi Mumbai-400710. DEMAND NOTICE Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors/ mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHRIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers/guarantors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Priority to common devotees-TTD Chairman

Tirumala, Jan.8 (NSS): Under the instructions of CM of Andhra Pradesh N Chandrababu Naidu, priority is given to common devotees in providing Vaikuntha Darshan at Tirumala. Addressing media persons at

Annamaiah Bhavan in Tirumala on Wednesday, the TTD Board Chief said elaborate arrangements for the ten days of Vaikuntha Dwara Darshan to be held from January 10 has been made, keeping in view of huge turn out of devotees. He said the VIP darshan commences on January 10 at 4.30 am while the Sarva Darshan begins at 8 am. Keeping in view the larger interests of the pilgrims, SSD tokens will be issued at 90 counters set up at 8 centers in Tirupati for devotees and 4 counters at one center in Tirumala for the Tirumala locals alone. All the privilege darshans including senior citizens, disabled, parents with infants, NRI, others remains canceled during these ten days.

Date and Time of Sale: 27-01-2025 at Time 11:00 AM to 5.00 PM. (With multiple extensions till sale is concluded) With reference to the e-auction sale notice published on 09-10-2024 pertaining to 1. Mr. Mutamsetty Krishna Rao (Borrower), 2. Mrs. Mutamsetty Vijaya Nirmala (Co-Borrower), 3. Mr. Mutamsetty Sumedh Yagni (Co-Borrower), 4. Ms. Mutamsetty Akhila (Co-Borrower) Address: H.No.1-9-375/GWW/7 (PTIN No.1060103435), Green Walk Ways, Budvel Village, Rajendranagar Mandal and Municipality, Ranga Reddy Dist., Telangana-500030. Below mentioned scheduled property was put for the a-auction on 11-11-2024 inviting the bids vide publication of sale notice published on 09-10-2024 in National Daily The South India Times and in vernacular language Ninadaram for the sale of scheduled property pertains to 1. Mr. Mutamsetty Krishna Rao (Borrower), 2. Mrs. Mutamsetty Vijaya Nirmala (Co-Borrower), 3. Mr. Mutamsetty Sumedh Yagni (Co-Borrower), 4. Ms. Mutamsetty Akhila (Co-Borrower) Due to the certain reasons, property's e-auction was postponed to 25-03-2025. And now, the same e-auction is preponed to 27-01-2025 inviting the bids with following Terms & Conditions. The interested persons may participate in the bidding by submitting bids on or before 27-01-2025. Schedule of the immovable property: All that the part and parcel of immovable property comprising Residential Building comprising Ground + Three Upper Floors bearing Municipal No.1-9-375/GWW/7 (PTIN No.1060103435) with plinth area 30470 Square feet located on Plot No. 6 & 7, total admeasuring 3000 Square yards forming part of layout known as "Green Walk Ways" covered by Permit No.45943/HO/SZ/CI/6/2015 in File No.9883/02/03/2015/HO dated 27.10.2015 in Survey Nos.268, 277(Part), 278(Part) & 279(Part) situated at Budvel Village, Rajendra Nagar Mandal, Ranga Reddy District, Telangana State, within the municipal limits of Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation and bounded: North: Open Area, South: Plot No.8, East: Open Area and Plot No.15, West: 40' Wide Road. Possession Type: Symbolic, Reserve Price: 2661.60 lakhs EMD: 266.16 Lakhs Bid Increase Amount: 5.00 Lakhs TERMS AND CONDITIONS: 1) To view the details of the property, click on https://banknet.com. 2) The auction sale will be e-auction online/bidding through website https://banknet.com/eauction/psb/login on 27.01.2025 at 11.00 AM to 05.00 PM (With multiple extensions of 10 minutes till the sale is concluded). 3) The intending bidders should one time register their names at portal https://banknet.com/eauction/psb/bidder-registration and get their User ID and Password, where upon they would be allowed to participate in online e-auction on the said portal. EMD has to be deposited to their banknet eWallet. 4) Bids shall be submitted through online procedure through above portal and bidder should have sufficient balance in their wallet for EMD to participate in E-Auction. 5) Intending bidders shall have a valid Email address & Mobile No for registering and participating in E-auction. 6) Bidders are advised to go through our website https://www.bankofindia.co.in for detailed terms and conditions of E-auction sale before submitting their bids and taking part in the E-auction sale. 7) The sale is subject to detailed terms and conditions provided in Secured Creditor Bank of India website https://www.bankofindia.co.in/ 8) Inspection of the property with prior appointment of the Branch concerned, Details of contacts are also furnished above. 9) Bank is not liable to demarcate or hand over physical possession of any lands under sale of purchasers. 10) The auction purchaser shall bear the TDS wherever applicable including other statutory dues, registration charges & stamp duty etc wherever applicable. Note: The Successful bidders shall have to pay 25% of the sale price including EMD on the same day of the sale or not later than next working day, as the case may be and the balance amount of sale price within 15 days of acceptance/confirmation of sale communicated to them. Place: Hyderabad, Date: 08-01-2025 Sd/- Branch Manager



OPINIONmail



Big milestone : Indian metro network now third-largest in the world

India has achieved a remarkable milestone by reaching 1,000 kilometres in its metro network, solidifying its position as the world's third-largest metro system. This remarkable achievement follows the announcement of new metro projects and the Namu Bharat initiative for Delhi under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The journey of India's metro network, which began in 2002 with the launch of the modern metro by former Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee in Delhi, has now reached this nationwide milestone. The transformation and expansion have been unprecedented under PM Modi's leadership, particularly since 2014. In the past decade, the metro network has seen a three-fold increase, with an additional 1,000 kilometres added to its length. The number of states with metro services has grown from five to eleven, while the number of cities benefiting from metro connectivity has surged from five to 23. Daily passenger ridership has also witnessed exponential growth, rising from 28 lakh in 2014 to over one crore, reflecting a 2.5 times increase. Furthermore, the total distance travelled by metro trains has tripled, climbing from 86,000 kilometres to an impressive 2.75 lakh kilometres. Under PM Modi's vision, the Centre remains committed to providing seamless, affordable, and modern urban transport to enhance the ease of travel and the quality of life for millions of citizens. As part of these transformative efforts, PM Modi is set to undertake a ride on the Namu Bharat Train from Sahibabad RRTS Station to New Ashok Nagar RRTS Station on Sunday morning. This ride will mark the inauguration of the 13-kilometer stretch of the Delhi-Ghaziabad-Meerut Namu Bharat Corridor. Built at an estimated cost of Rs 4,600 crore, this corridor will significantly enhance regional connectivity between Delhi and Meerut, providing millions with high-speed and comfortable travel options. In addition to the Namu Bharat corridor, PM Modi will inaugurate a 2.8-kilometer stretch of Delhi Metro Phase-IV between Janakpuri and Krishna Park. With an investment of Rs 1,200 crore, this marks the first operational segment of Delhi Metro Phase-IV. Residents of West Delhi, including areas such as Krishna Park, parts of VIKASPURI, and Janakpuri, are set to benefit greatly from this development. PM Modi will also lay the foundation stone for the 26.5-kilometer Rithala-Kundli section of Delhi Metro Phase-IV. With an estimated cost of ₹6,230 crore, this new corridor will connect Rithala in Delhi to Nathupur (Kundli) in Haryana. It aims to boost connectivity across North-West Delhi and Haryana, positively impacting key areas such as Rohini, Bawana, Narela, and Kundli. These initiatives mark another leap forward in India's urban infrastructure development, showcasing the government's resolve to create world-class transport systems that cater to the needs of a rapidly growing urban population.

EDITORIAL  
the indian mail

FairPoint: PM Modi's 'AAPda' jibe shakes Delhi politics, more for Kejriwal's AAP

No one could have believed that the word 'AAPda (disaster)' could create ripples in political circles. The word is only about destruction and sadness and has nothing to do with politics. But, suddenly in the election campaign for the Delhi Assembly polls, the word has assumed significance. AAPda may as well turn the tables in favour of one political entity and destroy others. When Prime Minister Narendra Modi, without directly naming the Aam Aadmi Party, criticised the AAP government in Delhi, vowing to remove AAPda, he set the stage and the tone for the BJP's election fight against Arvind Kejriwal's party. On January 3, during an event in the national capital, he said that over the last 10 years, an AAPda had befallen Delhi and the people have made up their minds to vote for the BJP in the Assembly polls so that this AAPda could be removed. Politicians often use catchphrases or buzzwords, especially during election time to run down the opponent. And, in the

Delhi Assembly election, which has to be conducted before February 15 when the current Assembly tenure ends, the AAPda seems to have created the right buzz for the BJP and taken a lead over others' ideas. The word has everything the BJP needs to sharply attack AAP and its national convenor, former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal. As per the BJP, the word rightly describes the situation that has been created by Kejriwal's politics in the national capital – that of AAPda for the people of Delhi. PM Modi also offered justifications for using the AAPda jibe, listing the AAP's "failed" promises and the ongoing corruption cases. Taking a dig at the Delhi CM, PM Modi said, "I, too, could have built a 'sheesh Mahal' (glass palace) for myself, but my dream was to provide 'pucca' (concrete) houses to my fellow countrymen." Kejriwal has been criticised for spending lavishly on refurbishing his official residence when he was the CM. The Prime Minister first used the

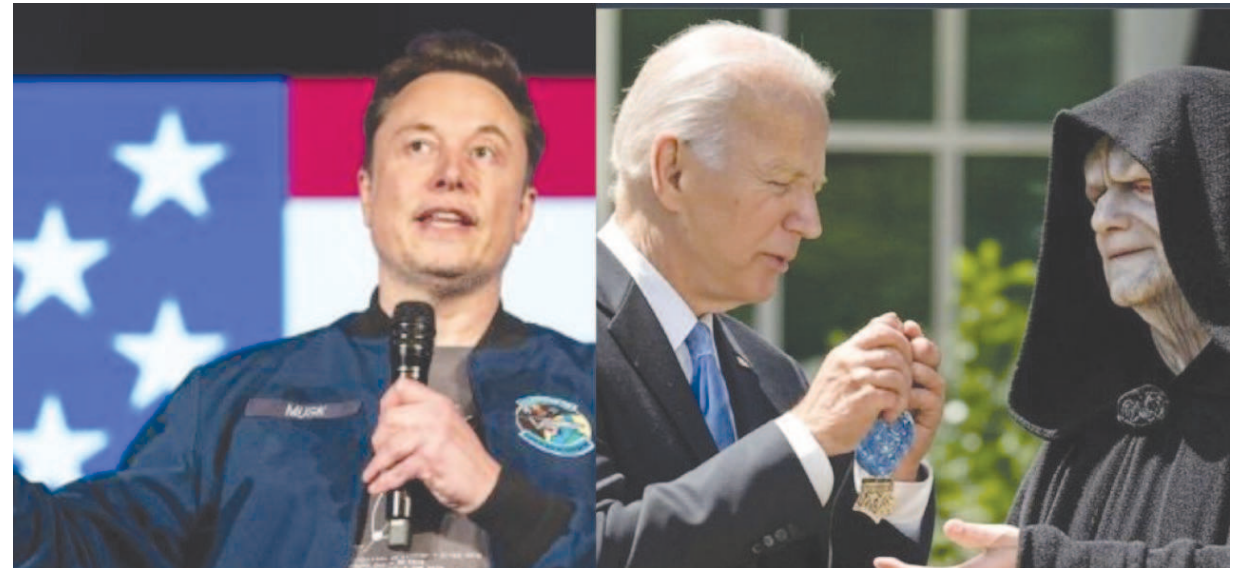


word, AAPda, while speaking at an event where he handed over the keys of newly constructed flats to the dwellers of clusters under the in-situ slum rehabilitation project at Swabhiman Apartments in Delhi's Ashok Vihar. Without taking Kejriwal's name, PM Modi said that by keeping Anna Hazare on the front, some allegedly "kattar beimaan (staunchly dishonest)" people have pushed the national capital towards the AAPda. The AAP leaders, including Kejriwal, quickly responded to PM Modi as soon as he ended his speech. Kejriwal said that for 39 minutes in his 43-minute speech, the PM "abused Delhi people and the government elected by them with a massive mandate". On the AAPda remark, Kejriwal said, "BJP is faced with 'aapda' as it has no CM face, narrative, is-

sue for Delhi polls". Though Kejriwal did react quickly, somehow it seemed less in intensity against the BJP's newest attack strategy. The fact is that Kejriwal, who started his political career riding the wave created by Anna Hazare's anti-corruption movement, is an accused in graft cases. He was arrested by the Enforcement Directorate and the CBI and has been on bail. The cases are going on in the courts currently. Several of his cabinet colleagues, AAP MLAs and leaders have also landed in jail on various charges. Apart from the corruption and crime cases, the Delhi AAP government has also been accused of not doing enough developmental work in the capital city and only indulging in fights and bickering with the Centre.

Home-cooked veg thali's cost declines 3 pc in Dec, non-veg thali gets costlier

The cost of preparing a vegetarian thali at home declined 3 per cent (month-on-month) in December, while the cost of a non-vegetarian thali is estimated to have increased at a similar pace, according to a report on Monday. While tomato prices fell 12 per cent on-month, helped by fresh supplies from Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat, the cost of non-vegetarian thali grew at a faster pace due to an estimated 11 per cent on-month increase in broiler prices on a dip in production triggered by a cold wave in the north, said the CRISIL Market Intelligence and Analytics report. "This, coupled with a rise in festive- and wedding-season demand, along with an elevated feed cost, exacerbated the woes," the report mentioned.



'A travesty': Musk slams Biden for awarding Soros Presidential Medal of Freedom

Tesla CEO and close aide to President-elect Donald Trump, Elon Musk, joined the wave of online trolling directed at billionaire George Soros, following US President Joe Biden's decision to award him the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour in the US. Musk's meme post comparing Soros to a Star Wars villain has quickly gained traction across social media. The meme depicts Soros as Sheev Palpatine, also known as Darth Sidious, from the Star Wars saga. In the film series, Palpatine ap-

pears as a kind, democratic ruler while secretly plotting to take control of the galaxy as the Sith Lord Darth Sidious. Musk's meme suggested that Soros might similarly be hiding his true motives while presenting himself as a philanthropist, with the caption, "George Soros looking quite good here. Must be the lighting". The post added a layer of humour, which sparked widespread attention. The trolling came after President Biden named Soros as one of the 19 recipients of the Presidential Medal of Freedom on Saturday. The White House lauded Soros for his contributions

to global democracy, human rights, education, and social justice through his Open Society Foundations. Other recipients included former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, football legend Lionel Messi, and actors Michael J. Fox and Denzel Washington. Musk's comments are just the latest in a series of controversies surrounding Soros. The billionaire investor and philanthropist has long been a target of criticism, particularly from conservative figures. In addition to the online uproar in the US, Soros has been at the centre of a political storm in India.

Ethiopia earns over \$216 million from horticulture exports

Ethiopia has earned more than \$216 million from exports of horticultural commodities during the first five months of the current fiscal year, the country's Ministry of Trade and Regional Integration has disclosed. The East African country exported 39,225 tonnes of flowers to the international market, earning over \$186 million during the first five months of the current Ethiopian 2024/2025 fiscal year, which started on July 8. Flower exports secured the largest share of the total revenue generated from the export of horticultural commodi-

ties during the reported period, the ministry disclosed in a statement issued on Friday. The country also exported 71,305 tonnes of fruits and vegetables to the international market, generating more than \$30 million. The ministry said the Netherlands, Saudi Arabia, and the United Kingdom are the top three destinations for Ethiopia's flower exports, while Somalia, Djibouti, and the Netherlands are the top three destinations for vegetable exports. According to recent data from the ministry, Ethiopia has generated some \$2.63 billion in export revenue during the first five months of the current fiscal year amid strong performance in major agricultural export com-



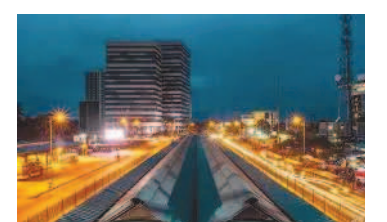
modities, Xinhua news agency reported. Horticulture is a field of agriculture that encompasses the science and technology of production, improvement and consumption of crops, which includes vegetables, fruits, spices,

condiments, herbs, aromatic and ornamental plants. To obtain desirable agricultural outputs, these crops require immense care.

Tanzania gears up for energy summit to expand power access

Tanzanian authorities announced that preparations for the African Heads of State Energy Summit, scheduled for January 27-28, are well underway. The summit, also known as the Mission 300 Africa Energy Summit, is a landmark event aimed at accelerating energy access across the continent, Xinhua news agency reported. Noel Kaganda, director of the Department of Multilateral Cooperation in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and East African Cooperation, told editors and journalists in Dar es Salaam that Tanzania has co-organised the summit, which will bring together over 1,500 delegates, including representatives from the African Union, the African Development Bank Group, and the World Bank Group. Kaganda high-

lighted the summit as a platform for governments, private sector leaders, development partners, and civil society to advance the goal of providing electricity access to 300 million Africans by 2030. Innocent Luoga, commissioner for electricity and renewable energy in the Ministry of Energy, said 14 pilot African countries are expected to endorse the Africa Energy Compact.





### Iran, Saudi Arabia vow to boost bilateral ties

**Tehran, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Iranian Justice Minister Amin-Hossein Rahimi held a meeting with Saudi Ambassador to Iran Abdullah bin Saud al-Anzi, during which both sides vowed to expand bilateral ties in various areas, especially in judicial and legal fields. Rahimi on Wednesday expressed satisfaction with the resumption of friendly relations between the two countries since 2023, describing "effective, strong and strategic ties between Tehran and Riyadh as very important and influential," Xinhua news agency reported quoting Iran's official news agency IRNA. He noted the Iranian government's principled policy of developing friendly ties with all countries, especially neighbouring ones, and called for maintaining and boosting ties between Iran and Saudi Arabia in cultural,

### Austrian President to meet Freedom Party leader over govt formation

**Vienna, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen said that he would meet the Freedom Party leader Herbert Kickl on Wednesday to discuss the formation of a new government while the conservative People's Party softened its stance, saying it is now open to talks with the far-right party. The move came after the collapse of three-party coalition talks among the People's Party, the Social Democratic Party and the NEOS party.



### Canadian PM Trudeau likely to resign this week as Liberal Party leader: Reports

**Toronto, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is reportedly preparing to step down as leader of the Liberal Party, according to a media report citing three anonymous sources. The Liberal caucus is set to meet on Wednesday, with growing demands from party lawmakers for Trudeau to resign as party leader. The sources, speaking on the condition of anonymity, revealed to the Globe and Mail that while the exact timing of Trudeau's announcement remains uncertain, they anticipate it will occur before the pivotal caucus meeting. It is also unclear if Trudeau will simultaneously vacate his position as Prime Minister

or continue until a new party leader is chosen. His resignation as party leader would spark a leadership contest, with the winner expected to assume the role of Prime Minister. Trudeau has faced mounting challenges, particularly after Chrystia Freeland's abrupt resignation as Finance Minister on December

16. Freeland publicly slammed Trudeau in her resignation letter, intensifying pressure on his leadership. Adding to his troubles, Trudeau's minority Liberal government lost a critical ally in September 2024 when Jagmeet Singh's New Democratic Party (NDP) withdrew its support.



### Syria committed to forging positive relations across region: Interim FM

**Damascus, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Syria's interim Foreign Minister Asaad Hassan al-Shibani underscored his country's commitment to forging positive foreign relations across the region. In a series of posts on social

media platform X, al-Shibani emphasised that Syria's new administration will adopt foreign policies that differ markedly from those implemented by the previous government. He made the remarks after talks

with Qatari Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani and Qatari Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry Mohammed bin Abdulaziz bin Saleh Al Khulaifi in Doha.



### South Korean industry minister to visit US for broader bilateral economic ties

**Seoul, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun plans to visit the United States this week to discuss bilateral economic exchanges with business and government officials ahead of the launch of the second Donald Trump administration, his office said on Wednesday.

Ahn plans to leave for the US state of Georgia on Wednesday to meet with Gov. Brian Kemp and seek the state's support for South Korean businesses operating in the region, according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, reports Yonhap news agency.

The minister will also visit the production line of SK On Co., the battery unit of SK Group, and hold a conference with South Korean businesses operating in Georgia to discuss ways to address business challenges and bolster bilateral cooperation in cutting-edge industries. Ahn's planned trip to the U.S. comes amid growing uncertainties in global trade ahead of the upcoming launch of the second Donald Trump administration, which has signalled protectionist trade policies, including the imposition of sweeping tariffs of at least 10 percent on all goods.



### Ethiopian govt launches evacuation as recurring earthquakes strikes eastern parts of country



**Addis Ababa, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The Ethiopian government said that it is coordinating evacuations in response to successive and recurring earthquakes wreaking havoc around eastern parts of the country. Recent tremors have shaken areas around Awash Fentale, Metahara, and Abomsa towns, with magnitudes frequently exceeding five, according to data

from the US Geological Survey (USGS). According to the USGS the strongest quake, a magnitude 5.8, occurred early Wednesday, striking 56 km south-southeast of Abomsa. Its epicenter was at a depth of 10 km, at 9.505 degrees north latitude and 40.169 degrees east longitude, Xinhua news agency reported. USGS data indicate that at least

seven earthquakes have hit eastern Ethiopia in the past two days, marking a significant increase in intensity compared to previous weeks' moderate tremors. In a Saturday evening statement, the Ethiopian National Disaster Risk Management Commission highlighted the urgent need for action in affected areas. About 15,000 people across six localities in the Awash Fentale district, Afar region, are at risk, with 7,000 already relocated. In the Dulecha district, around 20,000 individuals have been impacted, and 6,223 have been moved to safer zones. Tremors from the earthquakes were felt as far as Addis Ababa, the Ethiopian capital, about 190 km west of Abomsa. The government has deployed emergency teams, including experts from various sectors, to assess damages across 12 localities in the Afar, Oromia, and Amhara regions. The Ethiopian Government Communication Service noted a rise in both the intensity and frequency of recent earthquakes, stating that the government



### 'Detain President Yoon', South Korea anti-graft agency asks police to execute warrant

**Seoul, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The South Korean anti-corruption agency has asked the police to take over the execution of a warrant to detain impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol over his failed martial law bid, both sides said Wednesday. The Corruption Investigation Office for High-ranking Officials (CIO) made the request in an official letter late Sunday with one day left until the warrant's expiry, Yonhap news agency reported.

### Qatari PM meets Syrian delegation on ties, latest developments

**Doha, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Qatari Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, met with a high-level Syrian delegation led by interim Foreign Minister, Asaad Al-Shaibani, to discuss bilateral ties and the latest developments in Syria. The delegation included Syria's Minister of Defence, Marhaf Abu Qasra, and the Head of the Intelligence Service, Anas Khattab, according to a statement from the Qatari Foreign Ministry. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral cooperation and ways to strengthen it, the latest developments in Syria, Qatar's humanitarian assistance, among other issues concerning mutual interests, Xinhua news agency reported. The Qatari Prime Minister reaffirmed his country's unwavering stance in supporting Syria's unity, sovereignty, and independence, highlight-

ing the importance of fulfilling the aspirations of the Syrian people. For his part, Al-Shaibani praised Qatar's prominent role in supporting the Syrian people, noting that Qatar would be a key partner in the peace phase.

On December 21, 2024, Qatar reopened its embassy in Damascus, Syria, becoming the second country to do so after the collapse of Bashar al-Assad's government. This marked the first time in 13 years that Qatar's national flag was

raised over the embassy building. A military coalition led by Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) launched a major offensive from northern Syria on November 27, 2024.



### Israeli researchers discover virus defence system in marine bacteria

**Jerusalem, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Israeli researchers have discovered a unique mechanism in marine bacteria that protects them from virus attacks, the Israel Institute of Technology (Technion) said in a statement. A new study published in Nature Microbiology focused on the battle between bacteria and phages, viruses that infect bacteria.

## Heavy snowfall in J&K higher reaches, moderate snow, rain in plains

**Srinagar, Jan 8 (IANS):** Heavy snowfall occurred in the higher reaches while moderate snow and rain lashed the plains of Jammu and Kashmir on Wednesday. The Meteorological (MeT) department officials said heavy snowfall occurred in Gulmarg,

Pahalgam, Sonamarg and other higher reaches of J&K during the last 24 hours.

A MeT office statement said, "On January 6, generally cloudy weather with light to moderate rain (Plains of Jammu)/snow at most places of J&K. Im-

provement from January 6 afternoon. On January 7 and 10, generally cloudy weather with dry weather. On January 11 and 12, generally cloudy weather with light snow at isolated to scattered places. On January 13 and 15, generally dry weather."

The weather department also issued an advisory, saying that in view of fresh snowfall, sub-freezing temperatures and icy conditions over roads (plains/higher reaches), tourists, travellers and transporters are advised to plan accordingly.



## Wanted Maoists likely to lay down arms, join mainstream after K'taka govt's appeal

**Bengaluru, Jan 8 (IANS):** Most wanted Maoists operating in deep jungles of Western Ghats, hilly and coastal region of Karnataka have decided to lay down their arms and join the mainstream following the appeal by Chief Minister Siddaramaiah-led Karnataka Congress government.

According to sources, the Maoists have taken the deci-

sion following the encounter of Vikram Gowda and the continuous combing operations in the Western Ghat region by the Anti-Naxal Force (ANF) and the Karnataka Police.

Sources said that top leaders Mundagaru Latha who leads the Tunga Naxal Wing in the state; Sundari, Vanajakshi, Jeessa, the most wanted Maoists of south India; K. Vasantha from Andhra Pradesh and Mareppa Aroli have decided to surrender and lay down their arms. Maoist leader Sundari's brother Anand, who was also a Naxal and returned to the mainstream, stated, "They will welcome her home if she decides to lay down arms."

## Ruckus in TN Assembly over Anna University sexual assault case, AIADMK members evicted

**Chennai, Jan 8:** The first day of the Tamil Nadu Assembly session witnessed uproarious scenes as opposition AIADMK members were evicted from the House after raising the issue.



## CAG presents detailed report on Sheesh Mahal, Kejriwal's black deeds: Delhi BJP chief

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS):** Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva on Wednesday accused Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national convener and former Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal of extravagant spending on the renovation of his official residence.

## Cybercrime caller tune 'butchering' Assamese pronunciation, alleges AASU leader

**Guwahati, Jan 8 (IANS):** All Assam Students Union (AASU) advisor Samujjal Bhattacharya has alleged that the cybercrime awareness caller tune has been "butchering" Assamese pronunciation. Taking to X handle, Bhattacharya wrote on Wednesday,

"The cybercrime awareness caller tune in Assam is insulting our Classical Language by severely butchering Assamese pronunciation. This is unacceptable for a language with such rich heritage and cultural significance."



## TN Guv walks out of Assembly, says CM Stalin, Speaker stubbornly refused appeal on National Anthem

**Chennai, Jan 8 (IANS):** Tamil Nadu Governor R.N. Ravi walked out of the state Legislative Assembly immediately after the session commenced in protest against the National Anthem not being played in the House.

He reminded the Assembly of its constitutional responsibility to sing the National Anthem and even urged the Chief Minister to ensure this protocol. However, only the Thamizh Thai Vazhthu (the state song) was sung. In a statement, Tamil Nadu Raj Bhavan said that the Constitution of India and the National Anthem were once again insulted in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. "Respecting the National Anthem is among the first fundamental duties enshrined in our Constitution."

## Four-day school evaluation exercise 'Gunotsav' begins in Assam

**Guwahati, Jan 8 (IANS):** The four-day-long 'Gunotsav' to evaluate school education in Assam commenced on Wednesday across 11 districts in the state. The Gunotsav is being held in various phases in Assam where the quality of education in schools is evaluated and, accordingly, the education department takes steps to bring betterment to the system. Education Minister Ranaj Pegu said, "Gunotsav 2025, themed 'Ensuring Quality Education', will take place from January 6-9 in 11 districts, covering 16,056 schools and 14,11,874 students with the support of 6,365 external evaluators. Everyone's cooperation and active participation are earnestly requested to ensure its successful completion, fostering a higher standard of education for the future of Assam."



## Bihar govt unnerved with Kishor's growing popularity: Jan Suraaj leader slams police action

**Patna, Jan 8 (IANS):** Jan Suraaj Party founder Prashant Kishor, who was sitting on an indefinite hunger strike for past four days at the Gandhi Maidan, was forcefully arrested in wee hours of Wednesday. Reacting to Bihar police's brazen action on Prashant Kishor, the Jan Suraaj Party Vice-President VY Giri slammed the state government stating that it was frightened of his growing popularity. VY Giri said that the police and administration violated all protocols and forcefully evacuated Prashant Kishor from the dharna site.



## Delhi polls: Congress pledges Rs 2,500 a month for women

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS):** The Delhi Congress on Wednesday announced the 'Pyari Didi Yojana' to give monthly financial assistance of Rs 2,500 to all eligible women in the city if it comes to power in the upcoming Assembly elections.

To impress Delhi voters, the party also invited Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister D.K. Shivakumar to the media briefing where he highlighted the success of a similar scheme in his state and called it a role model even for the BJP-ruled states.

"The 'Pyari Didi Yojana' will be approved in the very first Cabinet meeting of the Congress after it wins in Delhi," said Shivakumar, seeking votes for the Congress based on the Karnataka model.

## South Central Railway to operate 52 Sankranti special trains

**Hyderabad, Jan 8 (IANS):** The South Central Railway will operate 52 additional special trains between various destinations to clear extra rush during Sankranti festival season. These special trains will be operated from January 6 to January 19, connecting Hyderabad and other places in Telangana to various destinations in neighbouring Andhra Pradesh.

Train number 07077 Charlapalli - Tirupati will depart from Charlapalli at 15.00 hrs on January 6 and reach Tirupati at 04.00 hours the next day.

07078 Tirupati - Charlapalli will depart Tirupati at 20.00 hrs on January 7 and reach Charlapalli at 08.00 the next day.

02764 Charlapalli - Tirupati will be operated on January 8, 11 and 15. On these days, the train will leave at 18.55 hrs and reach Tirupati at 07.15 hrs the next day.



## GRP arrested 35 human traffickers in Tripura in 5 months

**Agartala, Jan 8 (IANS):** The Government Railway Police (GRP) arrested 35 human traffickers in the last five months in Tripura for facilitating illegal entry of Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingyas into India, officials said on Wednesday. An official said that the 35 human traffickers, all Indians, were arrested by the GRP from

different places in Tripura in the past five months. On Sunday night, the GRP personnel with the help of the Border Security Force (BSF) jawans arrested five more human traffickers from Konaban in Sepahijala district. The GRP also arrested over 115 Bangladeshi nationals and Rohingyas at the Agartala railway station.

## Indian stock market ends in green as HMPV fear begins to subside

**Mumbai, Jan 8 (IANS) :** As more clarity emerged around HMPV amid increased surveillance across the country, India's domestic benchmark indices closed higher on Wednesday amid positive global cues while buying was seen in metal, media, energy, commodities, PSU bank, financial service, pharma and FMCG sectors. Sensex ended at 78,199.11, up by 234.12 points, or 0.30 per cent, and Nifty settled at 23,707.90, up by 91.85 points or 0.39 per cent. Nifty Bank ended at 50,202.15, up



by 280.15 points, or 0.56 per cent. The Nifty Midcap 100 index closed at 56,869.3 after rising 502.35 points, or 0.89 per cent, while the Nifty Smallcap 100 index closed at 18,673.45 after rising 248.20 points, or 1.35 per cent.



## LPG connections to households jump over 2-fold to 32.83 crore in last 10 years

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The number of LPG connections for household kitchens in the country has more than doubled to 32.83 crore, as of November 1, 2024, from 14.52 crore in 2014, according to the year-end review of the Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas released on Wednesday. As many as 10.33 crore LPG connections have been released under the Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana (PMUY) for poor families who get the cooking gas at a subsidised price. Since the inception of the Scheme, about 222 crore LPG refills have been delivered to the PMUY households as about 13 lakh refills are being taken daily.



## Adani stocks up on positive developments, market cap jumps to nearly Rs 12.8 lakh crore

**Mumbai, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Adani Group shares saw a bullish trend on Wednesday, as buying was seen in almost all of the group's stocks, led by Adani Green Energy and Adani Power. At 1.19 p.m., Adani Green Energy gained 2.47 per cent, Adani Power gained 2.33 per cent.

## India to clock faster GDP growth for Oct-Dec, inflation easing: HSBC Research

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** India's GDP growth momentum has improved in the October-December quarter of the current financial year (FY25) and inflation has eased, according to an HSBC Research report released on Wednesday. "GDP growth came in at a disappointing 5.4 per cent in the quarter ending September. Our analysis of 100 activity indicators suggests that the growth momentum



has improved in the quarter ending December," the report stated. As many as 65 per cent of the indicators are growing at a positive clip in the December quarter compared to 55 per cent in the previous one. The improvements have been the clearest in agriculture, exports and construction.



## Jefferies cuts Zomato stock to 'hold' as quick commerce competition heats up

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Global brokerage firm Jefferies has downgraded Zomato's shares to 'hold' as it revised the target lower, citing increasing competition as a threat to the online food aggregator's profitability. Although valuations appear reasonable considering Zomato's strong execution and growth opportunities, Jefferies is "worried on the rise in quick commerce competition." Jefferies has set a target price of Rs 275 per share from Rs 335 apiece earlier, as analysts expect a year of consolidation for the stock after it doubled in value in 2024. Additionally, Jefferies sharply cut its EBITDA forecast for Blinkit, Zomato's quick-commerce arm, for fiscal years 2026-27. The brokerage also

halved its target multiple for Blinkit to six times. The market capitalisation of Zomato has grown to Rs 2.55 lakh crore in the last 12 months, as its stock rallied by almost 100 per cent. Meanwhile, Anand Rathi Share and Stock Brokers Ltd. initiated coverage on Zomato and Swiggy with a 'buy' rating, as these firms diversify their portfolios beyond food delivery to capture a larger share of the growing intracity e-commerce market. Amid the surge in quick commerce industry, the food collection take-away segment in India is projected to register a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of over 7.7 per cent during 2023-28.

## RBI purchased another 8 tonnes of gold in Nov as safe-haven asset

**Mumbai, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) bought another eight tonnes of gold in November 2024 as Central banks around the world continued their buying spree with a collective purchase of 53 tonnes of the precious metal during the month, according to the latest World Gold Council (WGC) report. The decline in gold prices during November, following the US election, may have provided some central banks with the added impetus to accumulate the precious metal, the report pointed out. RBI has, like other central banks, been buying gold as a safe-haven asset. The strategy of hold-

ing gold is primarily aimed at hedging against inflation and reducing foreign currency risks, especially in times of uncertainty triggered by geopolitical tensions. With the addition of eight tonnes of gold to its reserves in November, the RBI has increased its buying to 73 tonnes in the first 11 months of 2024 and its total gold holdings to 876 tonnes, maintaining its position as the second largest buyer during the year after Poland. The People's Bank of China (PBoC) has resumed gold purchases after a six-month gap, adding five tonnes of gold to its reserves, increasing its year-to-date net purchases to 34 tonnes and its total reported gold hold-



ings to 2,264 tonnes (5 per cent of total reserves), the report said. Meanwhile, the Monetary Authority of Singapore was the month's largest seller, reducing its gold reserves by 5 tonnes, bringing the year-to-date net sales to 7 tonnes and overall gold holdings to 223 tonnes, it added. The RBI's gold purchases have shot up by five-fold over the quantity of the pre-

vious metal bought in the same period of 2023, according to WGC figures. According to the data, the RBI's total gold reserves have now gone up to 890 tonnes, of which 510 tonnes are held in India. According to WGC, the central banks that bought gold during the month are those of Poland adding 21 tonnes and Uzbekistan buying nine tonnes.



## Average affluent Indian managing over 434 peer-to-peer banking transactions annually

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The financial activities among the affluent class in the country is experiencing unprecedented levels, with the median individual managing over 434 peer-to-peer banking transactions annually and experiencing accelerated flows of earning, investing and spending, a report showed on Wednesday. The dramatic increase in financial complexity has driven widespread adoption of digital personal finance management products over the past 12 months, according to the report by CRED Money, used by over 10 lakh Indians.

## Empowered 2.4 million Indians with AI skills : Microsoft

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Microsoft on Wednesday said it has empowered 2.4 million Indians, including civil servants, college students and people with disabilities, with artificial intelligence (AI) skills. Last year, Microsoft Chairman and CEO Satya Nadella launched an India-specific initiative to equip two million individuals with AI skills by 2025.

"Our aim is to not only enhance employability but also bridge the digital divide and create a more inclusive future for every Indian," Puneet Chandok, President of Microsoft India and South India, said in a statement. Those involved in the programme said as the use of AI tools spreads across the workforce, those who don't learn how to use them risk falling behind. "Once upon a time, humans discovered fire and were afraid of it. But then we learned to channelise it and put it to good use. Similarly, AI needs to be used wisely for the benefit of humanity, rather than letting us be devoured by it," said Neha Jain,



Special Secretary, IT and Electronics, UP government. On Monday, Prime Minister Narendra Modi met Nadella, saying he was glad to know about the tech giant's ambitious expansion and investment plans in the country. Nadella thanked the Prime Minister for his leadership, saying the tech company is excited to build on "our commitment to making India AI-first and work together on our continued expansion in the country to ensure every Indian benefits from this AI platform shift". Microsoft's AI tools, such as Copilot, TechSaksham and Seeing AI, have profoundly transformed people's lives through AI skilling initiatives

in the country. For example, Raghavendra Pratap Singh, 33 who is a review officer in the Uttar Pradesh government and analyses new policies then helps disseminate them to the local officers responsible for carrying them out, has found these AI tools handy. A few months ago, Singh attended a one-day digital skills course run by Microsoft together with the state IT agency. There, he learned tools like Microsoft Copilot and Copilot for Word, PowerPoint and Excel as well as OpenAI's ChatGPT. Since then, he has started using AI tools to summarise documents and draft letters.

## AI to bring new urgency to reinvention, become personal brand ambassador : Report

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** As artificial intelligence (AI) diffusion accelerates across enterprises and society at a rate that is faster than any prior technology, 69 per cent of executives, including in India, believe it brings new urgency to reinvention and how technology systems and the processes it enables are designed, built and operated, a report showed on Wednesday. The 'Accenture Technology Vision 2025' also predicted



that AI will increasingly act as a technology development partner, a personal brand ambassador, power robotic bodies in the physical world, and foster a new symbiotic relationship with people to bring out the best in each other.



## Mahakumbh 2025 : Police attendance goes digital

**Mahakumbh Nagar, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The Uttar Pradesh Police have taken a significant step towards attaining a digital Mahakumbh by implementing a fully biometric attendance system for its personnel. Shifting from traditional paper-based records, the attendance of police personnel deployed for the grand event will now be recorded digitally, thereby saving time and facilitating maintenance of records. All police personnel assigned duty for the Mahakumbh-2025 are being trained for their roles at the event. Their attendance during the ongoing training sessions is re-

corded biometrically, saving time and simplifying record management. Around 50,000 police personnel will be deployed to ensure the safety of an estimated 40 crore devotees participating in the Mahakumbh-2025. SSP Kumbh Mela, Rajesh Dwivedi, emphasised the importance of ongoing training, which covers soft skills, disaster management, and geographical awareness of the event site. He noted that biometric attendance not only saves time but also enhances record accuracy. "Earlier, it was difficult to maintain a traditional register for attendance, but digital attendance has

freed us from these hassles," he remarked. The first and second phases of training, involving over 10,000 police personnel, have already been completed, while the third phase is currently underway. Personnel from nearly all districts of Uttar Pradesh have arrived for duty in the Mahakumbh. Their complete details have been securely stored in the biometric system, ensuring proper monitoring and management of the workforce during the event. Maha Kumbh Mela, the world's largest public gathering, will see devotees taking a holy dip of faith in river Ganga.

## Tamil Nadu: BJP praises CPI-M leader for questioning DMK rule

**Chennai, Jan 8 (IANS):** Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson and senior party leader A.N.S. Prasad has commended CPI-M state secretary K. Balakrishnan for "courageously questioning" the DMK government and Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. In a statement on Wednesday, Prasad lauded Balakrishnan for boldly asking, "Have you declared an undeclared emergency in Tamil Nadu?" He alleged that following these remarks, Murasoli, the DMK's party organ, issued veiled threats against Balakrishnan.



## Sexual assault case: Anna University asks students to use only bicycles inside campus

**Chennai, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Anna University has issued a circular mandating that students should henceforth use only bicycles within the campus. The circular, signed by the university registrar on Wednesday (January 8), stated that cars and two-wheelers must be parked in designated parking lots. The circular also restricts delivery executives from venturing beyond the university

entrance gate, while construction workers are required to leave the campus after working hours. These measures have been implemented following the sexual assault of a second-year female student inside the university's Guindy campus on the night of December 23. The circular emphasised that immediate action must be taken against complaints of sexual harassment.

## Kerala HC rejects plea for CBI probe in ADM Naveen Babu's suicide, family to appeal

**Kochi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The Kerala High Court on Wednesday dismissed a petition seeking a CBI probe into the death of Kannur Additional District Magistrate (ADM) Naveen Babu, who was found hanging at his official residence on October 15. Minutes after the verdict, Babu's wife, K. Manjusha, announced plans to appeal the decision. "This is not the end. We will file an appeal with the High Court division bench," Manjusha said. Babu's brother, Praveen, expressed disappointment with the ruling. "We are not satisfied. While the court has directed a DIG of Police to monitor the investigation with periodic reviews, we expected a CBI probe. We will now approach the division bench or even the Supreme Court if nec-

essary," he said. The Pinarayi Vijayan-led state government, which had initially pledged support to Babu's family, opposed the demand for a CBI probe during court proceedings. Naveen Babu, a reputed and upright officer, was found dead a day after his official farewell from Kannur. The controversy began when P.P. Divya, Kannur District Panchayat President and a CPI(M) leader, attended Babu's farewell event uninvited and accused him of corruption. The family alleged that Divya's remarks were politically motivated and caused immense distress to Babu. Divya, who was later arrested and briefly jailed in connection with the case, resigned from her position amidst mounting criticism.



Manjusha's petition for a CBI probe cited irregularities in the investigation. Her counsel argued that the inquest and post-mortem were conducted hastily, without the family's presence. Forceful ligature marks were found on Babu's neck, requiring scientific examination. Divya's strong political connections might hinder a fair investigation by the state police.

## After meeting top industrialists, Assam CM to hold roadshow in Mumbai

**Guwahati, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma is set to attend a roadshow in Mumbai on Wednesday to attract potential investors for the upcoming investment and infrastructure summit -- 'Ad-

vantage Assam'. CM Sarma has been in Mumbai for the last three days and held meetings with top industrialists regarding investment in the state. He said the government has been working towards making Assam a favourable destination for investors.



## To boost fish production in N-E, Rs 2,114.73 crore invested since 2014-15

**Guwahati, Jan 8 (IANS) :** To boost the fish production in the northeastern region, Rs 2,114.73 crore has been invested in the region since 2014-15 under Blue Revolution and Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY), officials said here on Wednesday. According to officials, with about 422 reported fish species, the northeastern region has witnessed remarkable growth through government investments and this has expanded fish production from 3.78 lakh MT in 2013-14 to 6.41 lakh MT in 2023-24, alongside advancements in hatcheries, scientific fish farming techniques, and infrastructure. An official said that Union Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying Minister Rajiv Ranjan Singh would hold a review meeting in Guwahati on Monday to study the

implementation of Pradhan Mantri Matsya Sampada Yojana (PMMSY). A statement said that the Northeastern Region (NER) of India, renowned for its rich aquatic biodiversity and vast water resources, holds immense potential to drive economic growth, ensure food security, and uplift livelihoods. Renowned as a global hotspot for fish diversity, the region's diverse ecosystems nurture a wide array of fish species, positioning fisheries as a vital part of its economic and social framework. The Union Minister will also inaugurate and lay the foundation for key projects amounting to about Rs 50 crore under PMMSY, underscoring the government's commitment to advancing and targeting self-sustaining the fisheries sector in the northeastern Region, the statement said.



## Odisha CM announces aid for kin of 2 shot dead by robbers

**Bhubaneswar, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Odisha Chief Minister Mohan Charan Majhi on Wednesday announced an ex-gratia of Rs 2 lakh each for the next of kin of two persons who were shot dead by armed robbers at Panikoili in Jajpur district on Wednesday. CM Majhi expressed deep grief over the death of the victims. "Expressing grief over the shooting incident at Panikoili in Jajpur district, CM Majhi announced financial assistance of Rs 2 lakhs each for the deceased's family," a post on the official X handle of CM Office read. The Chief Minister also announced that the state government will bear the treatment cost of the persons injured in the incident. As per reports, three bike-borne robbers stormed into a jewellery shop located at Panikoili market in Jajpur district on Wednesday afternoon.

## Lack of genuine political leadership led to Manipur violence : Apex Meitei body

**Imphal, Jan 8 (IANS) :** An apex civil society organisation (CSO) of the Meitei community in Manipur on Wednesday attributed the ethnic conflict in the state to a "lack of genuine political leadership". Thockhom Somorendro, the Coordinator of the Coordinating Committee on Manipur Integrity (COCOMI), said that the ethnic crisis in Manipur was a result of a lack of true political leadership. Criticising both ruling BJP and opposition Congress leaders, he, flanked by other leaders, told the media that they are prioritising party interests over the welfare of the people. Raising serious concerns over the deteriorating law and order situation in Kangpokpi district.



## CRPF jawan's wife demands justice for slain journalist, who helped in her husband's release

**Jammu, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Meenu, the wife of a CRPF trooper who was kidnapped by Maoists in Chhattisgarh and released due to efforts of local journalist Mukesh Chandrakar, on Wednesday, demanded justice for the latter after his body was discovered in Bijapur district. Chandrakar, known for his pivotal role in securing the release of CRPF trooper Rakeshwar Singh Manhas after he was kidnapped by Maoists during a 2021 encounter, was a respected figure in the region. His tragic death has sparked widespread

shock and calls for action. Speaking to IANS, Meenu expressed her deep sorrow over the incident. "For us, he was an angel. I was shocked to hear about this incident. If such things are happening to journalists, what could happen to the common people?" she asked. She emphasised the importance of journalists in such dangerous regions, stating: "The forces have to continue providing their services there. If anything happens, it's journalists who come forward first, just like they helped us."





### EAM Jaishankar meets US NSA Jake Sullivan; discusses bilateral ties

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar on Wednesday met US National Security Advisor (NSA) Jake Sullivan in New Delhi to discuss a wide range of strategic, regional, and bilateral issues.

The meeting took place as Sullivan, the outgoing US NSA, embarked on a two-day visit to India, concluding one of the last high-profile engagements of the Biden administration before the inauguration of Donald Trump as the 47th President of the United States on January 20.

Sullivan's visit is aimed at reviewing the India-US Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technologies (iCET), a significant partnership framework to expand strategic ties between the two nations. His itinerary includes meetings with NSA Ajit Doval and a visit to the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Delhi, where he will interact with young Indian entrepreneurs and deliver a speech on the bilateral innovation alliance under iCET. In his discussions with Doval, Sullivan is expected to delve into the implementation of iCET initiatives. These include cooperation in areas such as space, defence, strategic technology, and shared security priorities in the Indo-Pacific region.



### Punjab Congress seeks Bharat Ratna for Dr. Manmohan Singh

**Chandigarh, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Leader of the Opposition in the Punjab Assembly and Congress leader, Partap Singh Bajwa, has written to all political parties in the state Assembly, urging them to collectively honour former Prime Minister Dr. Manmohan Singh by recommending him for the Bharat Ratna, India's highest civilian honour.

### UNIFIL accuses Israel of destroying its property, Lebanese army infrastructure in Lebanon

**Beirut, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) accused the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) of destroying its property and a Lebanese army's infrastructure in southern Lebanon. "This morning peacekeepers observed an IDF bulldozer destroying a blue barrel marking the line of withdrawal between Lebanon and Israel in Labbouneh, as well as an observation tower belonging to the Lebanese Armed Forces immediately beside a UNIFIL position there," UNIFIL said on social media platform X.

"The IDF's deliberate and direct destruction of both clearly identifiable UNIFIL property and infrastructure belonging to the Lebanese Armed Forces is a flagrant violation of resolution 1701 and international law," it said.

UNIFIL called on all actors to avoid any actions, including the destruction of civilian property and infrastructure, that could jeopardise the cessation of hostilities, Xinhua news agency reported.



Also on Saturday, International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) President Mirjana Spoljaric said during her visit to Lebanon that "civilians cannot

afford for the ceasefire to lapse, plunging them back into heavy fighting that would bring more death and destruction."



### UN agency warns of impending disruption in services for Palestinian refugees

**Gaza, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The UN agency for Palestine refugees warned that its operation could be crippled as an impending Israeli ban on it is expected to take effect by the end of January. In a brief statement, the UN Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) on Wednesday said, "Time is running out for a possible ban on the agency that would prevent it from providing services to millions of Palestinian refugees," Xinhua news agency reported. The statement added that the United Nations "does not plan to replace the agency, and the Knesset, the Israeli parliament, must reverse its decision to ban it." On October 28, 2024, the Israeli parliament approved two laws -- one bars UNRWA from operating in Israel, set to take effect in three months, while the other ends all Israeli dealings with the UN agency, nullifying all previously signed agreements.

The UN has expressed grave concern over the adoption of the laws, calling on the Israeli government to continue to allow UNRWA to operate and to respect Israel's obligations under international law.

Earlier, UN humanitarian said that Israelis have ordered more relocations in besieged North Gaza because of impending attacks in retaliation for rocket fire into Israel.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said the latest directive was for civilians in the Al-Bureij area of Deir al Balah governorate to move west, Xinhua news agency reported.



### Cong should apologise to Hema Malini first: Bidhuri defends 'road like Priyanka's cheeks' remarks

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Ramesh Bidhuri, the BJP candidate from Kalkaji Assembly constituency, who stoked controversy with his 'road like Priyanka's cheeks' remarks, issued a clarification on Wednesday, stating that his intention was not to hurt anyone's feelings or sentiments. He however rejected Cong's demands for apology and sought to turn the tables on the Opposition by stating that it was they who first need to apologize for Lalu Yadav's comparison of Bihar's roads to Hema Malini's cheeks. Defending his statement, Bidhuri pointed out that Lalu Yadav had made a similar comment about BJP leader Hema Malini years ago.

### No end to violence in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province as Kurram DC critically shot

**Islamabad, Jan 8 (IANS):** The Deputy Commissioner (DC) of the Kurram District of Pakistan's restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP) province was critically injured as his vehicle came under attack in Mandoori, Kojalai Baba village near Bagan, on Wednesday. The incident took place three days after the rival sectarian tribes of Shia and Sunni Muslims signed a 14-point peace agreement that was supposed to pave the way for a ceasefire in the region devastated by violence for over two months now.

The peace deal was supposed to finally see the arrival of humanitarian aid in the region which has been cut off from the entire country for over 88 days, resulting in deaths of more than 150 people, including women and children, due to lack of food supplies and non-availability of medicines.

However, the 75-truck convoy with aid supplies for the suffering residents of the district capital of Parachinar could not move due to the closure of the Thall-Parachinar Sadda highway and firing on DC Kurram Javaid Ullah Mehsud and two other security personnel on Saturday.



### Austrian chancellor to resign after coalition talks collapse

**Vienna, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Austrian Chancellor Karl Nehammer said that he would step down in the coming days after coalition talks between his People's Party and the Social Democrats collapsed earlier that day.

He will also resign as the leader of the People's Party. Nehammer on Wednesday said

on X that his party has ended the negotiations with the Social Democratic Party to form a new government due to disagreement over key issues, Xinhua news agency reported. His surprise move came just one day after the NEOS party pulled out of the coalition negotiations to form an unprecedented three-party government. Following the NEOS' withdrawal, the People's Party and the Social Democratic Party confirmed late on Friday to continue their two-party coalition talks. Negotiations between the three parties had dragged on since mid-November following Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen's decision in October to task the People's Party with forming a government. In September's

parliamentary election, the far-right Freedom Party came first with around 29 per cent of the vote, followed by the People's Party and the Social Democratic Party with 26.3 per cent and 21.1 per cent respectively. While the Freedom Party won the parliamentary presidency, it has so far been unable to find coalition partners to form a government.



### 'Action only if probes name anyone', says Ajit Pawar on calls for Munde's resignation

**Mumbai, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Amid demand for NCP minister Dhananjay Munde's resignation following the murder of Massajog sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh from Beed district, Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister and party chief Ajit Pawar on Wednesday clarified that no action will be taken until the three ongoing investigations name anyone. Ajit Pawar on Monday revealed the party's official stand

saying: "There are SIT, judicial and CID probes going on. Let these agencies complete their investigations. If the probe names anyone, only then there will be action." Ajit Pawar was speaking to reporters after his meeting with the NCP's National Working President Praful Patel and his party leader and the State Food and Civil Supply Minister Dhananjay Munde. Thereafter, Ajit Pawar also met Chief Minister Devendra



Fadnavis and discussed at length the political scenario amid the all-party demand for Munde's resignation. He has reportedly registered his displeasure over the BJP legislator Suresh Dhas' statements against Munde in connection with

the killing of sarpanch Santosh Deshmukh. Earlier, Munde after his meeting with Ajit Pawar dropped hints that he would not step down.

### MP HC to hear other parties before disposal of Union Carbide's waste

**Bhopal, Jan 8 (IANS) :** During a court hearing in Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday, the court said it would hear concerns raised by the other parties as well and then provide further direction for the disposal of Union Carbide's hazardous waste.

Chief Minister Mohan Yadav said on Monday that his government has submitted the status report on the Union Carbide factory's hazardous waste shifted from Bhopal to Pithampur.





## 26 Myanmar nationals deported from Manipur

**Imphal, Jan 8 (IANS):** Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Wednesday said that 26 Myanmar nationals, who had earlier entered India through the state's border, were deported to their country. Biren Singh, who also holds the Home portfolio, in a post on X said: "A group of 26 Myanmar nationals who entered India through Manipur's porous border were deported to their home country today. "The government of Manipur reaffirms its commitment to providing humanitarian assistance to those fleeing war, ensuring their care and dignified departure. However, the state maintains a firm stance against allowing illegal migrants to stay back in Manipur." A senior Manipur Home Department official said that the Myanmar nationals were handed over to the authorities of the neighbouring country by Manipur police and the central forces deployed along the bordering Moreh town. Since

March 8 last year, 141 Myanmar nationals, including women and children, in four different phases have been deported to their country. In coordination with the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and central security forces, last year deported 115 Myanmar nationals, including women and children, in three phases. After the military junta seized power in Myanmar on February 1, 2021, around 35,000 people, including women, elderly people and children, from the neighbouring country took shelter in 11 districts of Mizoram. The Myanmar nationals are staying in more than a hundred relief camps in six districts while several thousand others live in relatives or friends' houses as well as in rented accommodation, a Mizoram Home Department official said. Over 6,000 Myanmar nationals took shelter in Manipur's different bordering districts.

## 2 MW solar power plant installed in remote Kaza: Himachal CM

**Shimla, Jan 8 (IANS):** Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Sukhu on Wednesday said a two megawatt (MW) solar power plant has been installed to ensure and improve the power supply in the remote region of Kaza in Lahaul-Spiti district. He appreciated the efforts of the officers and employees of the Himachal Pradesh State Electricity Board Ltd, who worked diligently to set up the project. He said within a few months the plant would be fully operational with the addition of a one MWh battery storage system. The Chief Minister said the state government was focusing on maximising the use of solar energy to make Himachal Pradesh a 'green state'. To support this, EV charging stations are being set up in various areas based on demand.



## Bharat Gaurav special train between Rajasthan and Guwahati to offer a unique travel experience

**Guwahati, Jan 8 (IANS):** In a bid to promote tourism, Indian Railways is operating a Bharat Gaurav special train between Rana Pratap Nagar in Rajasthan and Kamakhya in Guwahati, officials said here on Wednesday. The Northeast Frontier Railway (NFR) Chief Public Relations Officer (CPRO) Kapinjal Kishore Sharma said that the tour programme of this special tourist train would be for seven days which has commenced its journey from January 3 and would conclude on January 9. He said that the train departed from Rana Pratap Nagar on January 3 to reach Kamakhya in Guwahati on January 5 and would halt for 2 days for visits to various places of tourist interest.

Again, the train would depart from Kamakhya on January 7 to reach Rana Pratap Nagar on January 9. The special tourist train will run via Berach junction Cabin, Ajmer junction, Madar, Jaipur junction Agra Cantonment, Etawah junction, Govindpuri, Prayagraj junction, Varanasi junction, Pt. DD Upadhyaya junction, Patliputra, Barauni junction, Katihar, New Jalpaiguri, New Coochbehar and New Bongaigaon railway station during its both-way journey. The train will consist of Sleeper class and AC-3 tier coaches for the accommodation of tourists. This Bharat Gaurav Special train aims to offer a unique travel experience, celebrating the cultural diversity and heritage of India, the CPRO

said. He said that people from North Bengal areas and its adjacent states would highly benefit from this tour programme that covers most of the destinations in a single go, however, it would cost much higher if planned individually. Bharat Gaurav is the first such type of tourism special train for travel enthusiasts and it is in line with the Government of India's initiatives 'Ek Bharat Shrestha Bharat' and 'Dekho Apna Desh', Sharma said. The Kamakhya temple, reconstructed in 1565, and located at a distance of 7 km from Guwahati, is one of the biggest Shakti shrines in the country. Situated on the Nilachal hills, this temple is an important pilgrimage centre for tantric worshippers and Hindus.

## Vegetable grafting unit at Hisar university opened

**Chandigarh, Jan 8 (IANS):** Haryana Chief Secretary Vivek Joshi on Wednesday inaugurated the Vegetable grafting unit at Chaudhary Charan Singh

Haryana Agricultural University in Hisar. Established at a cost of Rs 175 lakh, the unit aims to enhance vegetable crop production and increase farmers' incomes.



## Declared 'unsafe', building near DC's office in Chandigarh collapses

**Chandigarh, Jan 8 (IANS):** A five-decade-old commercial building near the Deputy Commissioner's office in Chandigarh's Sector 17, which had been declared unsafe earlier, collapsed on Wednesday morning.

However, there was no causality in the building collapse located in the heart of the city. Eyewitnesses said the building collapsed at around 7 a.m. The adjoining building.



## J&K Chief Secy assesses grievance disposal quality on 'JK Samadhan' portal

**Jammu, Jan 8 (IANS):** Jammu and Kashmir Chief Secretary, Atal Dulloo convened a meeting of all Administrative Secretaries and Deputy Commissioners to assess the quality of disposal of grievances by different departments and offices of Deputy Commissioners on 'JK Samadhan' grievance portal, an official statement said on Wednesday. During the meeting, the Chief Secretary had a live demonstration of the 'JK Samadhan' grievance portal to view certain grievances registered by the citizens. He took this occasion to assess the timeline by which the grievances had been resolved besides the quality of responses given by the concerned departments.

## Open 'Sheesh Mahal' for public darshan, BJP's Parvesh Verma writes to Delhi CM Atishi

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS):** Adding spice to the Delhi Assembly election campaign, BJP candidate from the New Delhi Assembly seat Parvesh Sahib Singh Verma has written to Chief Minister Atishi, demanding that 'Sheesh Mahal' - the controversial official residence of ex-CM Arvind Kejriwal - be thrown open for public darshan and promoting transparency. His letter virtually coincided with a similar suggestion made by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday during a public rally, calling for giving the public access to 'Sheesh Mahal' which, he said, was an example of AAP's monumental

corruption. "Sheesh Mahal is the biggest example of their (AAP leaders) dishonesty," PM Modi said. Earlier, seeking permission for public visit to 'Sheesh Mahal' between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m., Verma wrote to the CM, saying, "I want to bring it to your notice that during the tenure of former Chief Minister and Aam Aadmi Party's National Convener Arvind Kejriwal, the official residence was specially furnished and given a grand look. It has become popular as 'Sheesh Mahal' among the common people." The people of New Delhi Assembly constituency, who elected Kejriwal as their MLA for three successive terms, have a desire to see this building, he said. "This building

has become an important symbol of the history of governance and administration of Delhi. The public wants to know as to how the place, where their elected representative spent his term, looks like." Verma, who is fighting the upcoming Assembly election against Kejriwal, wrote in his letter that the decision to allow the public to see the renovated CM residence will enhance transparency.



## Nation-first approach should be a priority, Vice Prez Dhankhar tells NCC cadets

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS):** No nation in the world can progress unless its citizens are deeply committed to nationalism, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar said on Wednesday. Addressing NCC cadets while inaugurating the 2025 NCC Republic Day camp, Dhankhar said: "Nationalism must override all other interests, whether personal or organisational. A 'nation-first' approach should be our only approach. Uphold these values as a tribute to our motherland.

## India's demand for petroleum products expected to rise by 4 pc: Report

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS):** India's demand for petroleum products such as petrol, diesel and LPG is expected to rise by three to four per cent in the current financial year ending on March 31, 2025, according to a Fitch Ratings report. The growth is driven by rising consumer, industrial and infrastructure demand, the rating agency said in the report. For India's oil marketing companies (OMCs), refinery margins are expected to fall below their mid-cycle levels in FY25 amid lower product cracks, regional oversupply, and lower benefits from price differences between crude varieties.



## Yemen's Houthis claim overnight rocket attack on Israeli power plant

**Sanaa, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Yemen's Houthi group on Wednesday took responsibility for an overnight rocket attack on Israel, claiming to have targeted the Orot Rabin power plant.

"We carried out a military operation targeting the Orot Rabin power plant south of Israel's Haifa," Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said in a statement aired by Houthi-run al-Masirah TV. "The operation was carried out with a hypersonic ballistic missile, and it achieved its goal successfully," he said. "Our military operations supporting the Mujahideen in the Gaza Strip will continue," he said, vowing that the group

would continue to launch attacks against Israel to "force it to stop its aggression and lift its siege on Gaza." Meanwhile, Israeli media reported earlier in the day that the Israeli defence forces "had intercepted a missile fired from

Yemen". A few hours after the Houthi rocket attack on Israel, al-Masirah TV said the "US-British" navy coalition had conducted three strikes early Sunday morning, targeting the eastern part of the Yemeni city of Saada. Residents said on social media that the strikes had targeted a Houthi military site in Saada city.



## 35 evacuated after fire breaks out in Singapore

**Singapore, Jan 8 (IANS) :** About 35 residents were evacuated on Wednesday morning after a fire broke out in a vacant three-story semi-detached house in eastern Singapore, authorities said.

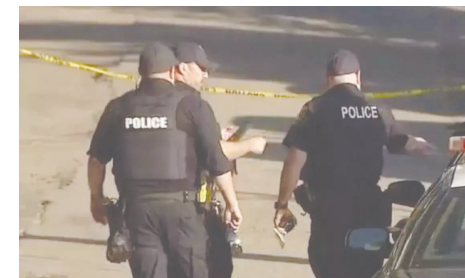
The Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) reported that it was alerted to the fire at about 12:45 a.m.. Firefighters from the Kallang Fire Station and the Paya Lebar



Fire Station arrived to find the blaze engulfing the first floor and spreading to the upper levels.

## Five Indian-origin men charged with murder in New Jersey

**New York, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Five Indian-origin men have been arrested and charged with the murder of an Indian, whose bullet-ridden body had been found in a forest in New Jersey, according to officials. The last of the five, Sandeep Kumar, was arrested on Wednesday, Ocean County Prosecutor Bradley Billhimer and New Jersey Police Colonel Patrick Callahan said on Wednesday. Kuldeep Kumar's body was found with gunshot wounds in the Greenwood Wildlife Management Area, a nature preserve in New Jersey, on December 14. Although Kumar's family in New York had reported him missing on October 26, according to the prosecutor's office, it was almost two months before someone discovered his body and informed the prosecutor's Major Crimes Unit. The alleged murder happened around October 22, leaving the body in a stage of "advanced decomposition" and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) helped identify Kumar, the prosecutor's office said.



## South Korea : Court dismisses Yoon's objection to execution of detention warrant

**Seoul, Jan 8 (IANS) :** A Seoul court on Wednesday dismissed the injunction filed by President Yoon Suk Yeol that sought to invalidate the court warrants to detain him and search the Presidential residence, court officials said. The Seoul Western District Court made the decision days after Yoon's legal defence team lodged the objection to suspend the effect of the warrants that they called "illegal." No details on the grounds for the court's dismissal were immediately available. Yoon's legal team said they would consider appealing the ruling. "We will consider whether to file an appeal with the Supreme Court," Yun Gap-geun, Yoon's lawyer, said. "The dismissal does not mean that the warrants are legally valid." The same court approved the warrant to detain Yoon for questioning over his role in the failed December 3 martial law bid. It also issued a warrant to search the presidential residence compound in central Seoul.

## Two engines of crashed Jeju Air jet moved to hangar for investigation

**Seoul, Jan 8 (IANS) :** South Korea's Transport Ministry said on Wednesday that authorities have moved two engines from the Jeju Air jet involved in a deadly crash last weekend to a hangar for a full-scale investigation. The Jeju Air plane, with 181 people onboard returning from Bangkok, crashed while

landing at Muan International Airport in the southwestern county of Muan on December 29, killing all but two, aboard. One of the engines was transported to the hangar Friday, while the other was moved the previous day, the Transport Ministry said. Authorities have also completed transcribing the two-hour audio recorded in the cockpit voice recorder.



## Libya deploys intensive desert patrols to secure border areas with Tunisia

**Tripoli, Jan 8 (IANS) :** The Libyan Stability Support Agency has launched intensive desert patrols to secure areas along the border with Tunisia. In a statement, the agency said the step came as part of a comprehensive plan to combat the growing threats of illegal migration and smuggling. The statement stressed that these patrols operate around the clock through teams trained to deal with geographical and security challenges in rugged border areas.



## Zambia reports fourth monkeypox case

**Lusaka, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Zambia's health authorities have reported the country's fourth case of monkeypox, also known as mpox. The case involves a one-year-old boy who possibly contracted the virus through close contact with a known case, said Minister of Health Elijah Muchima. "The child is under home isolation, receiving medical care, and in stable condition," he told reporters during a press briefing.

Last month, the health authorities reported two cases from the Kitwe city in the Copperbelt province, Xinhua news agency reported. In October 2024, Zambia reported the first mpox case involving a Tanzanian national who came for a visit.

In August, 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared mpox a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC), sounding the alarm over its potential for further international transmission. The ongoing global outbreak of clade II mpox has caused more than 100,000 cases in 122 total countries.

## Egyptian, US top diplomats discuss developments in Gaza, Syria

**Cairo, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Egyptian Foreign Minister Badr Abdelatty held phone talks with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, where they discussed the developments in the Gaza Strip and Syria, said the Egyptian Foreign Ministry in a statement. During the talks held Wednesday night, Abdelatty stressed the importance of continuing regional and international efforts to achieve "an immediate ceasefire" in Gaza and ensure unhindered access of humanitarian aid to the enclave, according to the statement.

The Egyptian foreign minister said the step came as part of a comprehensive plan to combat the growing threats of illegal migration and smuggling. The statement stressed that these patrols operate around the clock through teams trained to deal with geographical and security challenges in rugged border areas.

agency reported. Israel has been launching an ongoing large-scale offensive in Gaza to retaliate a rampage by Hamas militants through the southern Israeli border on October 7, 2023, during which about 1,200 Israelis were killed and nearly 250 taken hostage. Since then, the Israeli war in Gaza has killed 45,805 Palestinians and injured 109,064 others, according to the latest update released by Gaza's health authorities



on Sunday. The UN human rights office said in a November report that of the 8,119 victims it verified from November 2023 to April 2024, about 70 percent were women and children.

## Hillary Clinton and Soros among 19 chosen by Biden for Presidential Medal of Freedom

**Washington, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Outgoing US President Joe Biden on Wednesday will present the 'Presidential Medal of Freedom' - the country's highest civilian honour - to 19 individuals, including former first lady, senator and US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and controversial Hungarian-born billionaire US investor George Soros. The list also includes basketball legend Earvin 'Magic' Johnson, soccer star Lionel Messi, singer-activist Bono, actor Denzel

Washington and fashion designer Ralph Lauren. "The Presidential Medal of Freedom is the Nation's highest civilian honour, presented to individuals who have made exemplary contributions to the prosperity, values, or security of the United States, world peace, or other significant societal, public or private endeavours," read a statement issued by the White House. "President Biden believes great leaders keep the faith, give everyone a fair shot, and put decency above all else. These nineteen individuals are great leaders who have made America and the



world a better place. They are great leaders because they are good people who have made extraordinary contributions to their country and the world," it added. The awards will be presented at the White House on Saturday night, India time. "Secretary Clinton made history many times over decades in public service, including as the first First Lady elected to the United States Senate. After serving as Secretary of State, she became the first woman nominated for president by a major United States political party."

## Russia vows strong response after Ukraine's ATACMS attack in Belgorod

**Moscow, Jan 8 :** Russia on Wednesday issued a stern warning to Ukraine, saying it will respond to the Ukrainian Armed Forces' attempts to strike the Belgorod Region with American ATACMS operational-tactical missiles. "These actions by the Kyiv regime, supported by Western curators, will be met with retaliatory measures," read a statement issued by the Russian Defence Ministry.





## Marcus Rashford's camp opens talk with AC Milan for loan move : Report

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Marcus Rashford's representatives have opened talks with AC Milan about loaning the Manchester United forward in the January transfer window. According to a report by The Athletic, Dwaine Maynard, Rashford's brother and agent, flew to Milan on Wednesday to hold discussions with recruitment staff at the Serie A

side. Rashford's contract with the Red Devils expires in the summer of 2028 which makes a deal in the winter transfer window unlikely. Alongside AC Milan, Borussia Dortmund are hoping to sign him on a season-long loan. A deal similar to what the German club had struck with United for Jadon Sancho in the 2023/24 season. Rashford has not featured for the side since December 1 when he scored a brace in the 4-0 win against Everton, which was Amorim's first league win at the club.

## ISL: Mohun Bagan vs East Bengal 'Kolkata derby' to take place in Guwahati

**Kolkata, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Mohun Bagan Super Giant have announced that the Kolkata derby against East Bengal FC, scheduled on January 11, has been moved to Guwahati from Kolkata and will now be played at the Indira Gandhi Athletic Stadium. The match between the two Kolkata giants was scheduled to be held at the Salt Lake Stadium in Kolkata. But due to the upcoming Gangasagar Mela police convened to organise Mohun Bagan that they will be unable to provide adequate security for the game.



## Newcastle beat Arsenal 2-0 to take control of Carabao Cup SF

**London, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Arsenal have been left with a tough ask to reach this season's Carabao Cup final after losing the first leg of our semifinal 2-0 to Newcastle United at Emirates Stadium. Newcastle United will take a two-goal advantage back to St. James' Park after a superb semifinal first leg performance against the gunners. Alexander Isak gave the visitors the lead on 37 minutes with his 14th goal in 15 games. Isak's smart finish - his 50th goal for the club - racked up his half century in just his 89th appearance in a black and white shirt.

Anthony Gordon then doubled the Toon Army's lead in the 51st minute, slotting in the rebound after Raya could only parry Isak's shot. Newcastle were good value for their victory, too, bagging two opportunistic goals and protecting their lead thanks to an outstanding, committed defensive display that has left them just 90 minutes away from making sure of their return to Wembley for March's final.



## Won't be surprised if Bumrah takes over Test captaincy very soon: Gavaskar

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Legendary India batter Sunil Gavaskar said he won't be surprised if fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah takes over as the side's Test captain in near future, citing that he doesn't pressurise players much when he's been at the helm of the team.

In India's recent 3-1 defeat to Australia in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy, Bumrah captained the visitors' in two games, one of which was a 295-run series opening match in Perth. "He will be the next man, because he leads from the front. He's got a very good air about him, the air of a leader, but he's not somebody who's going to put pressure on you. Sometimes you have captains who put a lot of pressure on you.

## Yuva Kabaddi Series: Aravalli Arrows beat Palani Tuskers; Murthal Magnets get first win in Division 1

**Coimbatore, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Yuva Kabaddi Series - Division 1, held at the Karpagam Academy of Higher Education in Coimbatore, delivered a day of surprises, with the Palani Tuskers suffering their first defeat and the Murthal Magnets finally breaking their winless streak.

The day began with the Murthal Magnets claiming their maiden win by defeating the Karpagam Raiders 40-32. Vinay delivered a stellar all-round performance, contributing 15 raid points and three

tackle points. Despite R. Gowtham's 14 raid points for the Raiders, a lack of support from his teammates resulted in their loss.



## Younis Khan to join Afghanistan team as mentor for 2025 Champions Trophy: Sources

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Former Pakistan captain Younis Khan will join Afghanistan as their mentor for 2025 Champions Trophy, said sources in the Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) on Wednesday. Younis previously worked as Afghanistan's batting coach on a short-term contract in 2022. "It's confirmed that Younis will be with the Afghanistan team as their mentor for the 2025 Champions Trophy. He will join the Afghanistan team in their preparation and conditioning camp before the event begins in Pakistan and will accompany the team till the end of the Champions Trophy," sources in the ACB further said to IANS.

Younis retired from international cricket in 2017, after scoring 10,099 runs in 118 Tests, including a career-best score of 313. The former right-handed batter amassed 7249 runs in 246 ODIs for Pakistan at an average of

31.24, including seven centuries and 48 fifties. He also captained Pakistan to its maiden Men's T20 World Cup triumph in 2009 in England. In his coaching career, Younis worked with the Pakistan senior men's team as their batting coach but resigned after just six months in mid-2021. In franchise cricket, Younis had coaching stints with Peshawar Zalmi in the Pakistan Super League (PSL).



## 'I'd love to see three, three, three': Ashleigh Gardner calls for expanded women's Ashes

**Sydney, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Australian all-rounder Ashleigh Gardner has advocated for more Test matches in the women's Ashes series, expressing her desire that the multi-format series be expanded to nine matches, comprising three T20s, three ODIs, and three Tests.

## Clarke hails Bumrah as 'best fast bowler ever' across all three formats

**New Delhi, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Former Australia captain Michael Clarke has hailed Jasprit Bumrah as the greatest fast bowler across all formats after the Indian spearhead delivered a sensational Player of the Series performance in the Border-Gavaskar Trophy.

Bumrah was a standout performer in the series, claiming 32 wickets at an average of 13.06 and his devastating bowling left Australia reeling in multiple occasions in the series. The India pacer's 32 wickets in the series brought him tantalisingly close to breaking Sydney Barnes'

1911-12 record of 34 wickets in a series by a touring pace bowler in Australia. However, his injury in the SCG Test prevented him from equalling or surpassing the historic feat. "The thing I've thought about Bumrah, after the series finished and I was sitting and thinking about his performances, I actually think he's the best fast bowler ever across all three formats," Clarke said on ESPN's Around the Wicket.

"I know a lot of great fast bowlers, Curtly Ambrose, Glenn McGrath, didn't get to play T20 cricket, so I'm not talking about those guys, but in regards to anyone who has played all three formats, I think he might be the best ever. He's actu-

ally that good in any conditions, that's what makes him great; any conditions, any format, this guy's a freak," he said. Bumrah dominated Australia with remarkable performances, including eight wickets in Perth, a six-wicket haul at the Gabba, and a game-chang-



ing burst at the MCG. At the SCG, he dismissed Khawaja and Labuschagne early but bowled just one over after lunch on Day 2 with the match finely poised.



## Theekshana becomes seventh Sri Lanka bowler to claim hat-trick in ODI

**Hamilton, Jan 8 (IANS) :** Maheesh Theekshana on Wednesday became the seventh bowler from his country to take a hat-trick in one-day international (ODI) cricket. Theekshana's feat came across two overs during the second ODI of the three-match series at

Seddon Park. In the 35th over, he struck twice in consecutive deliveries, removing New Zealand captain Mitchell Santner and Nathan Smith. The 24-year-old returned in the 37th over to dismiss Matt Henry with the first ball, completing his hat-trick.