

6 WORLD

- Biden administration approves new weapons sales to Israel
- Poland says 'everything indicates' a Russian missile briefly entered

8 NATION

- PM unveils new look temple town ahead of Ram temple consecration
- Kirodi Lal Meena, Rajyavardhan Rathore among 22 sworn in as ministers



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Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister

Launch of 200 AC E-Buses for Guwahati by Government of Assam

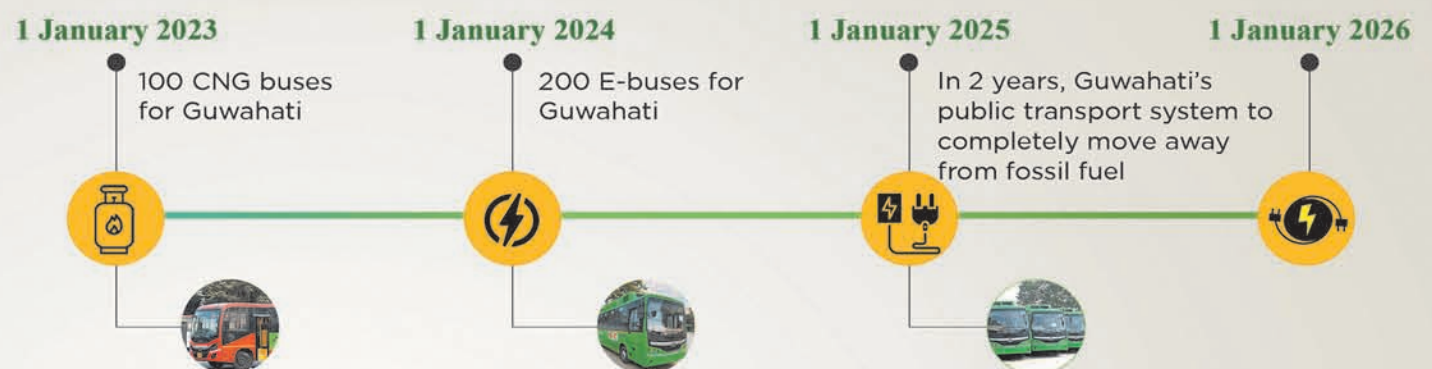
Chief Guest

Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma
Chief Minister, Assam

1 January 2024

10 AM

ASTC Complex, Rupnagar, Guwahati



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TN govt keen on upgrading EV infrastructure in state: Industries minister



CHENNAI, Dec 30: The Tamil Nadu government is in discussion with the state electricity board to enable setting up of charging facilities along arterial roads and highways as part of its efforts to boost the EV sector, minister for industries T R B Rajaa has said.

The government has instructed electric vehicle (EV) manufacturers also to invest in charging stations, he added.

The move comes in the backdrop of the government giving a big push to the electric vehicle industry in the state. To boost growth, the government had released the EV policy, he said.

"Of all electric vehicles sold in the country, about 70 per cent of the two-wheelers and 40 per cent of four-wheelers are manufactured in Tamil Nadu. That is a huge number and the consumption of EVs in Tamil Nadu is also picking up now," he told PTI in an interview.

"We will have the ecosystem for the EV industry. Infrastructure is also being built and charging stations are also coming up, so I think that will help boost the EV industry in Tamil Nadu," he said.

Responding to a query, he said, "we have asked all the (EV) manufacturers also to invest in charging stations and are also in talks with TANGEDCO (Tamil Nadu Generation and Distribution Corporation) to provide space for charging stations along the highways."

To another query on the possible

time-frame for the launch of charging facilities for battery operated vehicles, he said, "by the Global Investors Meet (scheduled to be held on January 7 and 8, 2024) you will have some good announcements."

To boost the battery operated vehicles industry, the state government unveiled its EV policy which aims to attract investments to the tune of Rs 50,000 crore and generate 1.50 lakh jobs.

Tamil Nadu has transformed into a leading electric vehicle manufacturing hub, with new entrants including Ather Electric and Ola Electric having set up their production facilities, the policy said.

The EV policy was launched in the backdrop of the government expecting battery operated vehicles to play a crucial role in the electrification of last mile connectivity.

"To support this goal, Tamil Nadu aims to electrify the vehicular fleets operating in the state by leveraging its vibrant automotive ecosystem comprising original equipment manufacturers, auto component ancillaries, highly skilled workforce and robust R&D capabilities," the policy said.

The Tamil Nadu government has announced 100 per cent road tax exemption till December 31, 2025 for battery operated vehicles - two-wheelers, private cars, three-seater autorickshaws, transport vehicles and light goods carriers among others. (PTI)

inDrive mulling insurance for riders

KOLKATA, Dec 30: Ride-hailing platform inDrive is planning to provide insurance to commuters during rides, a company official said on Saturday.

Launched in India in 2019, the US-based inDrive now operates in major metros like Kolkata, Delhi, Mumbai and some other towns.

It will start services in Bangalore next year, the official said.

"We are thinking of providing insurance during rides to those availing of the inDrive service. It is now in the planning stage," he said.

The app-based platform registers "30,000 rides daily in Kolkata with 10,000 driver partners in its fold," he claimed.

The official said inDrive will shortly launch a safety feature in its app, which will not share the phone numbers of riders with drivers.

"We will introduce Voice over Internet Protocol (VoIP) so that the phone number of the rider is not seen by the driver. The VoIP calls will be secured," he said.

inDrive has also started operations with electric cars in New Delhi, the official added. (PTI)

Registration of properties in Mumbai city may rise 33 pc in Dec: Report

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Registration of properties in Mumbai municipal area is likely to rise by 33 pc annually to around 12,500 units during this month on better demand, according to Knight Frank.

As many as 9,367 properties were registered in Mumbai city (area under BMC jurisdiction) during the same month last year.

Real estate consultant Knight Frank India has compiled the data of registration of properties from Department of Registrations and Stamps, Maharashtra government.

As per the latest data of December, 12,134 units were registered till 12 noon and the number is set to reach around 12,500 units by late evening.

"Homebuyers in Mumbai continue to demonstrate confidence in the property market, buoyed by stable demand and an enhanced positive sentiment. This optimism has resulted in a significant surge in property registrations in Mumbai," the consultant said in a statement on Saturday.

The overall registered properties, residential units constitute 80 per cent.

Mumbai city is estimated to see registrations of more than 1,27,000 units this year and will lead to revenue collection of more than ₹ 10,000 crore.

Mumbai city is set to record the highest registration of properties in 11 years. It will surpass the number achieved in the 2022 calendar year at 1,22,035 units.

Knight Frank CMD Shishir Bajjal said the demand has been driven by rising income levels, better affordability, and a positive homeownership outlook.

"Notably, a 57 per cent increase in share of high-value property registrations attests to the robustness of the market," he said.

Supported by stable interest rates and an increasing preference for bigger and better homes, homebuyer confidence continues to fuel Mumbai's real estate momentum, Bajjal said. (PTI)



A photograph of a modern high-rise apartment building with a glass facade, surrounded by greenery.

Lower rates could add more fuel to the broader market's momentum in 2024 Resilient economy energises investors, as financial markets end 2023 up 24%

NEW YORK, Dec 30: The S&P 500 closed out 2023 with a gain of more than 24% and the Dow finished near a record high, as easing inflation, a resilient economy and the prospect of lower interest rates buoyed investors, particularly in the last two months of the year.

Stocks closed Friday with modest losses.

The S&P 500 slipped 13.52 points, or 0.3%, to 4,769.83. The benchmark index still posted a rare ninth consecutive week of gains and is just 0.6% shy of an all-time high set in January of 2022.

The Dow Jones Industrial Average fell 20.56 points, or 0.1%, to 37,689.54 after setting a record Thursday.

The Nasdaq slipped 83.78 points, or 0.6%, to 15,011.35, but that was barely a blemish on an annual gain of more than 43%, its best performance since 2020.

For most of the year, gains in the broader market were driven largely by seven stocks -- Apple, Microsoft, Alphabet, Amazon, Nvidia, Meta Platforms and Tesla. Dubbed the Magnificent 7, they accounted for about two-thirds of the gains in the S&P 500 this year, according to S&P Dow Jones Indices. Nvidia lead the group with a gain of about 239%, driven by the mania surrounding artificial intelligence.

A strong rally in November and December marked a big psychological shift for

investors, said Quincy Krosby, chief global strategist at LPL Financial, because it went beyond the big technology companies. The Russell 2000 index of smaller companies jumped more than 20% over the two months and finished 2023 with a 15.1% gain after falling 21.6% in 2022.

"It was broad participation in the market that reinforced and confirmed gains for smaller company stocks that were particularly important," Krosby said.

Investors in the U.S. came into this year bearing the bruises of sharp losses for both stocks and bonds in 2022. They expected inflation to ease further as the Federal Reserve pushed interest rates higher. The trade-off would be a weaker economy and possibly a recession. But while inflation has come down to around 3%, the economy has chugged along thanks to solid consumer spending and a healthy job market.

The stock market is now betting the Fed can achieve a "soft landing," where the economy slows just enough to snuff out high inflation, but not so much that it falls into a recession. As a result, investors now expect the Fed to begin cutting rates as early as March.

The Fed has signaled three quarter-point cuts to its benchmark interest rate next year. That rate is currently sitting between 5.25% and 5.50%, its highest level in two



A photograph of a busy city street with tall buildings, a large white sculpture, and people walking.

decades. Lower rates could add more fuel to the broader market's momentum in 2024. Wall Street is forecasting stronger earnings growth for companies next year after a largely lackluster 2023, when companies wrestled with higher input and labor costs and a shift in consumer spending.

Bond market investors appeared headed for a third losing year in a row until things turned around starting in late October. Excitement about potential cuts to interest rates sent bond prices soaring and yields

dropping. The yield on the 10-year Treasury, which hit 5% in October, stood at 3.88% Friday, up from 3.85% on Thursday.

The yield on the two-year Treasury, which more closely tracks expectations for the Fed, fell to 4.25% from 4.28% from late Thursday. It also surpassed 5% in October.

Many global markets also saw solid gains this year. Indexes in France and Germany made double-digit advances, while Britain's has climbed just under 4%.

PROD STATES ON LABOUR REFORMS

Govt to launch 2nd version of National Career Service portal in 2024

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: The government will launch the second version of the National Career Service (NCS) portal as well as persuade states to roll out labour reforms as part of efforts to further improve the ease of doing business and provide social security for the unorganised labour, particularly gig and platform workers, in 2024.

Union labour and employment minister Bhupender Yadav told PTI that his ministry will soon launch the "advanced version, namely NCS 2.0, to facilitate better job matching and search facility for jobseekers along with a recommendation engine for skilling by the use of latest technologies and leveraging Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning".

The NCS project was launched in July 2015 to provide various employment-related services, including career counselling, vocational guidance, information on skill development courses, appren-

ticeship and internships, through a digital platform.

As of November 30 this year, the NCS platform had more than 3.64 crore registered jobseekers, 19.15 lakh employers and a listing of more than 1.92 crore vacancies. The portal registered more than 13.49 lakh active vacancies in November.

The portal is integrated with facilities of 28 state/Union Territories to develop a comprehensive pan-India network. It has also been integrated with various private portals like monster.com, Freshersworld and HireMee to have a listing of vacancies.

It is also linked with the government's Skill India portal Udyam Portal (MSME), e-Shram, EPFO, ESIC and DigiLocker, among others.

Regarding labour reforms, the minister said that in 2024, "as India continues to march towards being a developed economy under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's



leadership, I am hopeful states will begin rolling out the labour reform introduced by the Centre".

"... so that the India of Amrit Kaal has a healthier and socially secure workforce that contributes to the country's growth and at the same time gains from it; and also so that we continue to firm up ease of business in the country," he noted.

To roll out labour reforms in the country, the Centre has formulated four Labour Codes -- the Code on Wages, 2019; the Industrial Relations Code, 2020; the Code on Social Security, 2020; and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020.

Among other objectives, these codes seek to strengthen the protection available to workers, including unorganised workers, in terms of statutory minimum wage, social security and healthcare.

As a step towards implementation of the four codes, rules are required to be framed by the central government as well as by the state governments.

The central government and several states/Union Territories (UTs) have pre-published the draft rules under the four codes for stakeholder comments.

The Centre wants to enforce rules under the four codes simultaneously with states for uniform applicability of these laws as labour

is in the concurrent list of the Constitution of India.

Meanwhile, this year saw a significant development with respect to higher pensions on higher contributions for subscribers of the Employees' Pension Scheme 1995 run by the retirement fund body EPFO.

Earlier this year, an online facility was made available by the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) for submitting applications for Validation of Option/Joint Options for pension on higher wages. The facility was for eligible pensioners' members in compliance with the Supreme Court order on November 4, 2022.

The facility will allow the subscribers and pensioners to contribute more on their actual basic wages, which are higher than the threshold of ₹ 15,000 per month. This will enable them to get higher pensions commensurate with their actual basic wage. (PTI)

Will the Parandur Airport create a new industrial hub in South India?

CHENNAI, Dec 30: The Parliamentary Committee on Government Assurance has recommended the Civil Aviation Ministry to expedite the process of granting necessary approval to the proposed second airport in Chennai.

The 77th Report of the Committee on Government Assurance, which was presented to Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar on Tuesday, mentioned the recommendation of the panel chaired by Rajya Sabha MP M Thambidurai of All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK).

"The Committee observed that the Ministry has not taken a final decision in respect of the proposed second airport at Parandur near Chennai. The Committee, therefore, recommended to expedite the process of granting necessary approval to the proposed second airport at Chennai," mentioned the report, which was considered and adopted by the Committee at its

meeting held on December 4.

As per the report, the Tamil Nadu government has identified two locations Mamandur and Parandur for the development of a second airport in Chennai.

However, the response from the state government regarding the finalisation of the site is awaited.

The Ministry of Civil Aviation vide its Implementation Report laid by the Ministry of Parliamentary Affairs on the table of the House on August 7 this year stated that in its continuous endeavour to upgrade airport infrastructure in the country has constructed a new integrated Terminal Building in an area of 136,295 sqm at ₹ 1,260 crore at Chennai, pointed the report.

"With this, the passenger handling capacity of Chennai Airport has been augmented to 30 million passengers per annum (MPPA) from 23

MPPA. The New Integrated Terminal Building has been inaugurated on April 8 this year. The Ministry also provided the details of upgradation and construction of New Integrated Terminal Building at Chennai," it further said.

"On examination, the Implementation Report was treated as part-fulfilment of the assurance as the assurance pertains to seeking details of upgradation of the Chennai Airport with international standards and establishment of second airport in Chennai. However, in the instance Implementation Report no information was provided whether a final decision has been taken in respect to proposed second airport at Parandur near Chennai," the report added.

New Chennai Greenfield International Airport is a proposed greenfield airport project. It will be built near Parandur of Kanchipuram district. The proposed airport will be spread around 5,000 acres. (PTI)

Federal agency orders recall of hazardous magnetic-ball kits sold at Walmart.com

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 30: A federal agency on Friday recalled toys sold at Walmart.com containing powerful magnetic balls that could pose a hazard to children if swallowed.

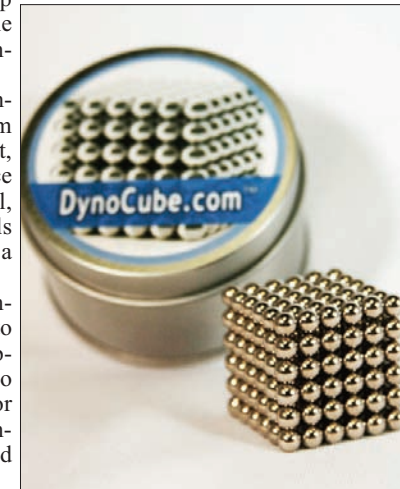
The Consumer Product Safety Commission said the balls, which are 5 millimeters (0.2 inches) in diameter, exceed federal standards for magnetic strength and could clump together to block parts of the digestive system when ingested.

The commission said no injuries had been reported from use of this particular product, called the Relax 5mm Science Kit. It contained 216 small, multicolored magnetic balls with what the CPSC called a "strong magnetic flux."

The agency said that ingested magnets could attach to each other or other metal objects, potentially leading to perforations, twisting and/or blockage of the intestines, infection, blood poisoning and death.

The CPSC estimates that 2,400 magnet ingestions were treated in hospital emergency rooms between 2017 and 2021 and said the agency is aware of seven deaths related to the ingestion of hazardous magnets, including two outside of the U.S.

The magnet kit was sold at Walmart.com by Joybuy Marketplace Express, a unit of the Chinese e-commerce giant JD.com. As of mid-afternoon Eastern Time, the kits were no longer visible on Walmart.com. (AP)



A photograph of a small container of colorful magnetic balls, with some balls scattered next to it.

Google settles \$5 billion privacy lawsuit

SAN FRANCISCO, Dec 30: Google has agreed to settle a \$5 billion privacy lawsuit alleging that it spied on people who used the "incognito" mode in its Chrome browser — along with similar "private" modes in other browsers — to track their internet use. The class-action lawsuit filed in 2020 said Google misled users into believing that it wouldn't track their internet activities while using incognito mode. It argued that Google's advertising technologies and other techniques continued to catalog details of users' site visits and activities despite their use of supposedly "private" browsing.

Plaintiffs also charged that Google's activities yielded an "unaccountable trove of information" about users who thought they'd taken steps to protect their privacy.

The settlement, reached Thursday, must still be approved by a federal judge. Terms weren't disclosed, but the suit originally sought \$5 billion on behalf of users; lawyers for the plaintiffs said they expect to present the court with a final settlement agreement by Feb. 24. (AP)

Japan, S Korea showing interest to Gujarat's semiconductor policy

AHMEDABAD, Dec 30: Aligning with India's Semiconductor Mission, Gujarat became the first state to introduce its semiconductor policy in 2022, with several companies from Japan, South Korea, and those based out of New Delhi and Bengaluru expressing interest in investing in the sector during events organised ahead of the upcoming Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit 2024, officials said. As per a government release, the state's semiconductor policy aims to play a significant role in the global realignment of supply chains in the strategic sector and raise India's economic position. (PTI)

ANNUAL MAINTENANCE CONTRACT AND OTHER WORKS

E-Tender Notice No. Sr.DEE/LMG/32 of 2023-24; dated: 28-12-2023. E-tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: **SN.1: Tender No: EL/LM/23-24/04/RT-1: Name of work: Comprehensive Annual Maintenance Contract of Diesel Generating Sets of different make and capacities for a period of 2 years over Lumding Division. Tender Value: ₹96,84,732/-; Earnest Money: ₹1,93,700/-; SN.2: Tender No: EL/LM/23-24/CP/08-RT2: Name of work: Day to day maintenance of Running Room at New Guwahati (NGC) including the work of cleaning, beautification of garden area, meal preparation and serving, washing, distribution & collection of linen etc. for a period of 03 years (1095 days). Tender Value: ₹3,53,61,157.70; Earnest Money: ₹3,26,800/-; E-tender will be closed at 11:00 hrs. on 19-01-2024 and Opened after 11:30 hrs. on 19-01-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 11:00 hrs. on 19-01-2024 on website www.ireps.gov.in**

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ELECTRICAL TRD MODIFICATION WORK

E-Tender Notice No.: TRD-LMG-14 of 2023-24; Dated: 27-12-2023. E-Tender are invited by the undersigned for the following work: **Tender No.: EL-TRD-NFR-SZR-OHE-MOD-11; Name of work: Electrical TRD Modification work in connection with construction of new FOB over three (03) nos. of line at Sarupathar station under 'Amit Bharat Scheme'. Advertised Value: ₹59,31,972.75; Earnest Money: ₹1,18,600/-; Date & time of closing of tender at 15:00 hrs. on 22-01-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available in the website www.ireps.gov.in**

Sr. DEE/TRD & GS, Lumding
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Arunachal announces cash reward for info on whereabouts of NSCN leader



Ex-MLA murder

ITANAGAR, Dec 30: Days after the Yung Aung faction of the banned militant outfit NSCN-K claimed responsibility for the murder of former Arunachal Pradesh legislator Yumsen Matey earlier this month, the state government announced a cash reward for information on the whereabouts of the mastermind behind the killing.

The former Congress lawmaker was shot dead by gunmen at Raho village in Tirap district along the India-Myanmar border on December 16. Tirap SP Rahul Gupta announced on Friday a cash reward of

₹ 2.5 lakh for information on the whereabouts of Tonglu Akham Hasik, the self-styled brigadier of Naga Army No 130076 of the outfit, who was allegedly involved in the gruesome murder of Matey.

In a statement on Thursday, the outfit claimed that Matey was killed due to his "active involvement in anti-NSCN activities". The statement further elaborated, "He was masterminding anti-NSCN propaganda in Tirap district of Arunachal Pradesh. He conspired against the NSCN/GPRN." The outfit clarified that "this case is not in any way re-

lated to the upcoming Arunachal Pradesh state assembly election, as some suspected, because the NSCN/GPRN will never meddle in state politics." Matey, along with three of his supporters, had gone to the village for some personal work when someone lured the former MLA towards a jungle and shot him.

Matey was elected as an MLA from Khonsa West assembly constituency on a Congress ticket in 2009. He joined the BJP in 2015 and earlier this year, declared his willingness to contest the assembly polls in 2024. Before entering politics, he had served as an adult education officer in Changlang district.

On December 21, the state government decided to transfer the case to the National Investigation Agency (NIA). Subsequently, the state home department forwarded the case to the ministry of home affairs for appropriate direction to the NIA in this matter. According to official data, of the 239 insurgency-related fatalities in the state since March 2000, 183 have been reported in the Tirap-Changlang-Longding (TCL) region. (PTI)

Peace pact with ULFA important milestone: Assam Guv Peace pact set to transform NE, Bharat: CM

HT Bureau
GUWAHATI, Dec 30: Governor Gulab Chand Kataria and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma have hailed the Central government for taking the "monumental initiative" of signing a peace accord with a key faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom (ULFA).

The ULFA's pro-talks faction on Friday signed the accord with the central and the Assam governments in New Delhi in the presence of Union home minister Amit Shah and chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma.

"The peace agreement is an important milestone in Assam, and will definitely herald a new chapter of peace and development. This monumental initiative signifies a crucial development towards regional peace and stability," Kataria said in a statement here.

Kataria also congratulated the signatories as they embark on a transformative journey, aligning with our nation's vision of development, taking all sections of peo-



ple on board.

Meanwhile, the chief minister said that the peace agreement with the pro-talk faction of the ULFA will have a huge impact across the North East and Bharat.

He said this in a reply to Union minister Kiren Rijiju, who congratulated him for signing the accord along with other BJP leaders.

"Thank you for your kind words Hon'ble Minister. This peace agreement will have a huge impact

across the North East and Bharat," Sarma wrote on micro-blogging site X.

He further said that a peaceful, prosperous and developed North East is a dream of every Bharatiya and that is being fulfilled due to the relentless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "The Ashthalakshmi is steadily becoming the engine of growth and inclusivity in the country," he added.

The chief minister expressed

hope that the signing of the agreement with ULFA will ensure all-round development of not only Assam but the entire region.

"Totally agree with you Hon'ble chief minister; the signing of peace agreement with ULFA will ensure all-round development of not only Assam but the entire region. With Hon'ble Prime Minister's blessings, North East will together contribute towards building a Viksit Bharat," he avowed.

He further emphasised the absence of a place for violence in contemporary times, expressing optimism that this stance would motivate others to join the mainstream and contribute to nation-building. "Indeed a landmark occasion in Assam's history, Dada. Our people longed for permanent peace with ULFA so that the development journey can continue unbridled," he added.

Sarma said that with the blessings of the Prime Minister and home minister and with peace prevailing in the state, Assam is poised for greater heights.

HT BRIEFS

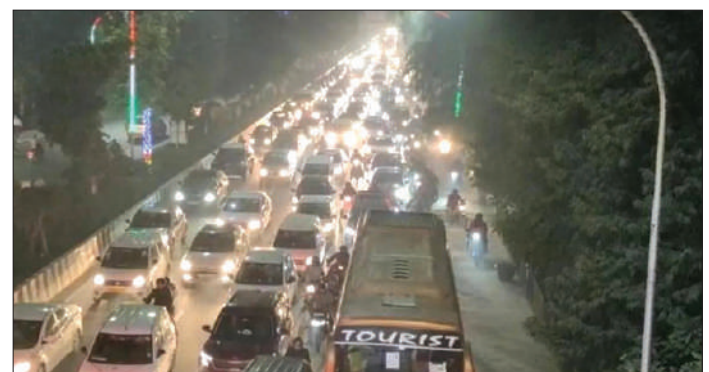
Nonia student meet

BAKALIA: Nonia Student Freshers' Meet was held at sports complex auditorium hall, Bakaliaghat on Saturday. More than a hundred student of college and various Higher Secondary schools took part in the programme. It is the first time that Freshers Meet for Nonia community was organised in Karbi Anglong district. Former deputy chairman of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Mahesh Chauhan, attending the occasion appealed to the Nonia community to unit and work to develop the district along with other community. Joint secretary, Rachanatkam Nonia Sanjukta Sangha (RNSS), Central Committee, Dharmendra Chauhan; chairman, Bakaliaghat Municipal Board, Hemsing Teron; secretary, Bakaliaghat Press Club, Lambudor Bora; secretary RNSS KAD committee, Bhunswar Chauhan and others were present at the function.

Bithung village

DONGKAMUKAM: On Saturday Fr Januarius Sangma provincial of Guwahati province inaugurated the corner Bithung village Chappell in presence of Fr CA John Parish priest of Satgaon Parish; Fr CB John Parish priest Sojong; Fr Albert Thymiang; Fr Justin; Fr Charles Sangma; Sisters congregation KAGU president Martin Marak, social worker Peter Marak and others.

District admin launches strict traffic enforcement drive ahead of New Year in KA



HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 30: In an effort to curb traffic violations ahead of the New Year celebration until Magh Bihu, the Karbi Anglong administration is conducting a strict enforcement drive, said deputy commissioner (DC) Madhumita Bhagawati on Saturday.

Bhagawati further informed that the district transport department has initiated a regular enforcement drive to detect drunken driving.

"The district administration recently imposed Section 144 CrP, banning roadside parking on highways, and strict enforcement drives have been conducted by the transport, police, and excise departments, with special emphasis

on picnic-goers and drunken driving. During the checking, one driver was found drunk and was detained until he sobered up. Similarly, a driver from Dimapur was detained for drunken driving, and another driver was assisted," the DC added.

She also mentioned that the Government of Assam has allocated funds for a quick response to road accidents, adding, "An ambulance has been purchased and stationed at Bokajan". "A black spot along National Highway-129 at Disobai and Borjan has been rectified as the construction of a four-lane highway is in progress, and another twenty places have also been identified (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Evil elements trying to disturb peace: Manipur CM

IMPHAL, Dec 30: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday appealed to all sections of society to shun violence and engage in dialogue to restore peace in the state. He condemned the killing of a village guard by unidentified individuals in Kadangband, Imphal West district, stating that evil elements were attempting to disrupt peace.

Addressing a press conference at the CM's secretariat, Singh said, "Let's abandon violence, come to the negotiating table, and initiate a dialogue to restore normalcy." He mentioned that investigations were ongoing and security forces had begun combing operations to apprehend the killers of the village guard.

The CM assured that civil society organizations and the government machinery were working towards peace in both the hills and valley areas. Unidentified individuals killed a village guard identified as Jamesbond Ningombam in Kadangband around 3.30am. Police said suspected militants from a nearby hill were responsible for the attack. Ningombam's body was taken to the Regional Institute of Medical Sciences for post-mortem examination. Kadangband, located on the outskirts of Imphal West district, shares border with Kangpokpi district which has experienced continuous violence since the outbreak of ethnic strife on May 3.(PTI)

Drugs worth over ₹ 27 crore destroyed in Karbi Anglong

HT Bureau
DIPHU, Dec 30: In a significant operation against the drug menace, the police in Karbi Anglong took a decisive step by destroying drugs worth over ₹ 27 crore.

The narcotics, including 12.55 kg of heroin, 189.35 kg of ganja, 2.8 kg of morphine, and 2098 tablets, worth ₹ 27.55,16,500 were meticulously burned in an open area at 9 Mile Diphu-Manja road.

The operation was carried out under the supervision of key offi-

cials, including superintendent of police (SP), Karbi Anglong, Sanjib Kumar Saikia; ADC, Chandan Burghain; 20 Bn CRPF commandants, Swam Singh; additional SP (Crime), Nayanmoni Burman, and others. The destruction of these drugs, which received clearance from the State Pollution Control Board, serves as a strong message in the fight against illicit substances within the region. This operation underscores the relentless commitment of the Karbi Anglong District

police in tackling the challenge of drug trafficking. The eradication of this significant quantity of narcotics demonstrates a proactive stance in shielding the community from the adverse effects of illicit substances. It is worth mentioning that the district police are actively engaged in cooperation with pertinent agencies to track the origins and distribution networks of these narcotics.

Ongoing investigations aim to pinpoint and apprehend individuals involved in the illegal drug trade.

Manipur Police along with central forces dismantle 12 illegal bunkers

IMPHAL, Dec 30: Manipur police, in its ongoing joint combing operations with the central security forces, dismantled as many as 12 illegal bunkers along the Imphal East-Kangpokpi inter-district border on Saturday, said police.

As per police, the combined team also recovered a cache of arms and ammunition during the operation. A combined team of Imphal East district police, CRPF and Assam Rifles under the supervision of Imphal East SP Dr S Ibomcha Singh conducted the combing operation at Mother Ridgeline of Leitanpokpi top to Purum Likli Hill starting from 7am on Saturday.

During the operation, 12 bunkers were destroyed while a cache of arms and ammunition was found inside one of the bunkers at the western hill slope of Purum Hill towards Gangpijyang village which falls under the jurisdiction of Saikul police station of Kangpokpi dis-

trict, police also said.

The recovered arms and ammunition were one CMG, nine 36HE hand grenades, 15 tube launching, 12 tube launching ring, 12 HD carts, four grenade caps, 16 old 36 HE hand grenades, one grenade key and 36 mini flare green carts.

"The recovered arms and ammunition were handed over to Saikul police station where a case was registered for investigation," police added.

In the strife-torn Manipur, the police in close coordination with the state and the central security forces have been conducting combing operations in fringe and vulnerable area of violent affected districts to recover illegal arms and ammunition in the possessions of the miscreants and also to recover arms and ammunition looted from the police and state security forces during the initial stage of the ethnic conflict.

151 Myanmarese soldiers flee to Mizoram



AIZAWL, Dec 30: At least 151 Myanmarese soldiers fled to Mizoram's Lawngtlai district after their camps in the neighbouring country were overrun by an armed ethnic group, an Assam Rifles officer said on Saturday.

The Myanmarese army personnel, also known as the 'Tatmadaw,' fled with their arms and approached the Assam Rifles at Tuisentlang in Lawngtlai district on Friday after their camps near the international border were overrun by the Arakan Army fighters, he said. The officer said that there had been intense gunfights between the Myanmar army and the Arakan Army fighters for the past few days in areas close to the Indian border.

He said that some of the Myanmarese Army personnel, who entered Mizoram on Friday, were critically injured and first aids

were administered to them by the Assam Rifles.

The Myanmar army soldiers are now in the safe custody of Assam Rifles at Parva in Lawngtlai district near the Myanmar border, he said.

The Myanmar soldiers will be sent back to their country in some days as talks are going on between the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) and the Myanmar military government, he added.

In November, a total of 104 Myanmar soldiers fled to Mizoram after their military camps along the Myanmar-India border were overrun by pro-democracy militia - People's Defence Force (PDF).

They were airlifted by the Indian Airforce to Moreh in Manipur, from where they crossed the international border and entered Tamu, the nearest border town in Myanmar. (PTI)

'India is not only beautifying its pilgrimage sites but is also dominating the world of technology'

Light 'Shri Ram Jyoti' at home on Jan 22 to celebrate Deepawali: PM

AYODHYA (UP), Dec 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Saturday said the world is waiting for the historic Ram temple consecration ceremony here on January 22, stressing the strength of "vikas" (development) and "virasat" (heritage) will take the country forward. He appealed to people to light special diyas - Shri Ram Jyoti - in their homes to celebrate the day of 'pran pratishtha' at Ram temple as 'Deepawali' and said the campaign to speed up work for building a developed India is getting a new energy from the city of Ayodhya.

There was a time Lord Ram was "living under a tent", but now he will get a concrete house like the four crore poor people who got pucca houses, he said, addressing a public meeting after inaugurating a renovated railway station and an airport in the city.

Modi said that for any country to reach new heights of development it will have to preserve its heritage, and it is for this reason that India today is moving ahead by assimilating the new and the old.

"Our heritage inspires us, shows us the right path. Therefore, today's India is moving forward by assimilating both the old and the new. Today, not only Ram Lalla has got a pucca house, but four crore poor people have also got pucca houses,"



he said. "Today, India is not only beautifying its pilgrimage sites but is also dominating the world of technology," he said. "The joint strength of 'vikas' (development) and 'virasat' (heritage) will take Bharat ahead in the 21st century."

"Today in the country, not only Kedar Dham has been revived, but more than 315 new medical colleges have also been built. Today, not only Mahakal Mahalok has been constructed in the country, but more than two lakh water tanks have also been built to supply water to every house," he said.

While people are eager to come to Ayodhya on January 22 it is not possible for everyone to visit on the same day, he said. Only those who

have been invited should come on the day and others can follow later on, the prime minister appealed to the people.

"It is my 'karbaddh prarthana' (prayer with folded hands) because everyone wishes that they (people) themselves should come to Ayodhya to witness the event of January 22, but you also know that it is not possible for everyone," he said.

The prime minister said the entire world is eagerly waiting for the historic moment on January 22.

"Hence, the immense enthusiasm ('ate-utsaah') among the residents of Ayodhya is quite natural. I am a worshipper of every particle of the soil of India and of every person of India. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Jaishankar's visit to Russia provided opportunity to boost strategic partnership: MEA

MOSCOW, Dec 30: External affairs minister S Jaishankar's visit to Russia this week provided an opportunity to review ongoing bilateral cooperation and examine ways to further bolster the Special and Privileged Strategic Partnership between the two countries," MEA said in a statement.

"India-Russia relations have remained strong and steady building upon strategic convergences, geopolitical interests, and mutually beneficial cooperation between the two countries," it said.

During Jaishankar's meeting with Putin at the Kremlin on Wednesday, the Russian president invited Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Russia next year.

"We will be glad to see our friend, Mr Prime Minister Modi in Russia," Putin told Jaishankar.

So far, 21 annual summits have taken place alternatively in India and Russia. The last summit took place in New Delhi in December 2021.

The ties between India and Russia remained strong notwithstanding Moscow's invasion of Ukraine. India has not yet condemned the Russian invasion of Ukraine and it has been maintaining that the crisis must be resolved through diplomacy and dialogue. Jaishankar also interacted with Russian think tanks/academics and exchanged views on Indian foreign policy perspectives as well as Russia-India relations. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

"The EAM's visit to Russia pro-

The New Year and the eternal rhythms of existence



By: Dipak Kurmi

As the New Year approaches, hearts flutter with excitement, each person weaving dreams and aspirations for the upcoming chapter. It's a time of resolutions and plans, where businessmen sketch out ambitious strategies, spenders envision disciplined financial paths, and those battling vices make solemn vows of transformation. Amidst the anticipation, a collective hope dances in the air - a belief that the New Year will usher in positive changes, bringing an end to conflicts, pandemics, and the dawn of brighter days. Everyone welcomes the turning of the calendar with the optimism that "There will be a new morning again..." and the sweet anticipation of Sewali flowers blooming in the metaphorical spring of life.

Dreams vary, painting a kaleidoscope of visions across different ages. Yet, for some seasoned souls, a tinge of melancholy creeps in as they reflect on the fleeting nature of time - "Who keeps track of how many dreams have fallen away..." While many revel in the joy of the approaching New Year, others may cast a wistful gaze upon the past, acknowledging the bittersweet passage of time.

Time, as pondered by philosophers and deep thinkers, unfolds in a singular, unyielding direction - a relentless current that propels us forward with the inevitability of a one-way journey. It is akin to the design of our "One way fly overs," a continuous progression where the option to revisit moments, like our cherished days of youth, remains elusive. Unlike a highway adorned with speed breakers allowing select pauses, time flows seamlessly, indifferent to our desires.

If only there were temporal barriers, one might choose to linger in the days of innocence, the vibrant tapestry of school and college, or the carefree moments that embraced joy. Alas, such wishes remain confined to the realm of fantasy, for the current of time admits no reversal. Every creature, from humans to the humblest of animals, dances in step with this unidirectional rhythm.

Ultimately, life's journey culminates in an encounter with death - a meeting akin to a waterfall's embrace. This unyielding procession, though undeniably harsh, paints the canvas of existence with the stark reality that time, much like a relentless bus, ceaselessly transports us from the platform of birth to the station of mortality.

The profound exploration of time's philosophical underpinnings as a unidirectional current invites contemplation on the concepts of origin and culmination. Within this framework, the role of a divine entity, a God or Creator, emerges as the custodian of time's formula, orchestrating the meaningful progression of life along its inexorable flow.

Diverse religions, such as Hinduism, Christianity, Judaism, and more, paint a canvas where death does not signal life's termination. Instead, it becomes a passage through heavenly and hellish realms, a cyclical return to mortality.

Amidst this cosmic journey, individuals navigate the river of time at their own pace, unaware of past lives due to the amnesia shrouding previous memories.

Yet, echoes of profound truths emerge, as in the Bhagavad Gita where Krishna imparts wisdom to Arjuna. "Basansi jirmani yatha bihay/Narami grihati naropaharani/Tatha sharirapi bihay jiranyanyani samyati nabahi dehi." The soul, like a traveler changing garments, transitions from one body to another, akin to an actor donning new costumes for successive performances.

Swami Kriyananda beautifully captures this cosmic

drama, revealing that behind the veil of appearances, the actors persist. Backstage, beyond the illusions, they live on, reappearing in diverse guises, a testament to the eternal rhythm of existence.

In the realm of saints and philosophers, the tenet emerges that mastery over life hinges upon the pursuit of virtuous deeds; failure to do so consigns one to the relentless cycle of life's tribulations. A potent belief in pre-incarnation or reincarnation resonates deeply within certain communities, prompting the practice of naming grandchildren after their uncles.

Within this tradition, the conviction thrives that an ancestor returns in the embodied form of a grandson. This notion raises a profound inquiry: does time itself unfold in an eternal cycle? The dance of life, governed by deeds and re-birth, suggests a circular narrative where individuals may find themselves navigating the tapestry of existence repeatedly. In the ebb and flow of this cosmic rhythm, the echoes of ancestors reverberate through the chosen names, symbolizing a timeless continuum where past and present intertwine in a harmonious cycle of life's eternal dance.

In the grand tapestry of existence, time echoes its return through cosmic changes, mirroring the cyclical nature of life itself. The seamless dance of seasons unfolds in a rhythmic cadence, each one making its presence felt at regular intervals - summer, rain, autumn, winter, and the rejuvenating embrace of spring. These celestial cycles, known by various names like Bohag, Zeth, Ahar, and Xaun, weave a timeless narrative as the months, donned in the attire of January, February, March, and beyond, perform their eternal roundelay.

Despite the division of time into distinct names and segments, the ceaseless movement of time remains unbridled. It is a perpetual journey where months, weeks, and seasons reprise their roles, yet the moments within that time, once passed, elude return. Each passing instant is unique, a distinct facet of the ever-unfolding present. In this perpetual flux, time remains forever new, a constant reminder that the only constant is change, and each moment is an opportunity to embrace the novelty of existence.

In the intricate corridors of philosophical musings, a prevailing sentiment emerges - that the very essence of time is but an elusive illusion, a perplexing enigma challenging our comprehension. These thinkers provoke us to ponder: where do these delineations of past, present, and future truly exist? The past stands immutable, a fallen relic, while the future remains an ethereal realm, shrouded in uncertainty and imagination. Only the current moment, a fleeting snapshot of reality, holds tangible existence.

Yet, in the blink of an eye, it too slips away, a testa-

ment to the ever-flowing river of time. No amount of pleas, entreaties, or fervent requests can beckon its return. Time maintains its relentless pace, relenting only when an individual reaches the culmination of their journey - the final stage where the ceaseless dance of seconds, minutes, and hours comes to a momentary standstill.

In our reflections on the past - whether in celebration, nostalgia, or rueful sighs for days gone by - it's remarkable how the living present often receives less acclaim. Simultaneously, the future becomes a canvas of endless speculation, with minds captivated by vibrant dreams that overshadow the significance of the precious present. Amidst this fervour for what lies ahead, the current moment tends to slip away unnoticed.

The tendency to romanticize bygone days or obsess over the allure of an uncertain tomorrow often leads to a neglect of the immediate, tangible reality. In this pursuit of temporal mirages, people inadvertently miss the opportunity to make meaningful use of the time that exists here and now, where the true essence of life unfolds in every passing moment.

Time, that elusive and mysterious invisible current, weaves itself intricately into the fabric of human thoughts and emotions. It holds the power to evoke laughter and tears, to inflict wounds and cleanse them away. As people eagerly anticipate joyous moments, there exists an equal apprehension towards confronting challenging times.

Defining time proves to be a daunting task, for it is a realm where perceptions diverge, transcending the uniformity of clock measurements. To the idle, time stretches into an endless expanse, while the busy find it slipping through their fingers like sand. The hues of time vary, painting a canvas where moments of preference seem fleeting, while the mundane appears to linger.

A fascinating aspect unfolds as different ages - children, youth, middle-aged, and the elderly - bear witness to time through unique lenses of perception. Despite the myriad shades attributed to time by individual mentalities, its essence remains stable, unwavering, and inexorable. In our quest to quantify time, clocks stand as diligent guardians, measuring the flow in minutes, seconds, and hours.

A fascinating historical note connects time with the Sanskrit word 'pulse,' signifying the first vibration of creation. From this pulsation emerged the commencement of time's measurement. Often referred to as the Lord of creation and destruction, time, in its eternal grandeur, earns the poignant epithet of Mahakala - an acknowledgment of its timeless dominion over the cosmic tapestry. In the realms of mythology, the smallest unit of time bore the name 'ksana,' while the grandest expanse was known as 'kalpa.' A Kalpa, an epoch of unfathomable magnitude, unfolds only after the passage of countless ages, rendering it beyond the grasp of common understanding.

Yet, within this vast tapestry of time, the minuscule increments - errors, moments, seconds, minutes, and hours - emerge as invaluable resources. In the grand mosaic of existence, let us harness these fleeting units with purpose and intent.

As we stand on the threshold of a New Year, let the echoes of past wars and epidemics fade, replaced by a collective welcome to the upcoming chapter with renewed enthusiasm. If action is the essence of spirituality, why not embark on the path of righteousness through purposeful deeds? In the symphony of time, let our actions harmonize with the rhythm of virtue, creating a melody that resonates through the very fabric of our existence. (The writer can be reached at dipaknewslive@gmail.com)

In our reflections on the past - whether in celebration, nostalgia, or rueful sighs for days gone by - it's remarkable how the living present often receives less acclaim. Simultaneously, the future becomes a canvas of endless speculation, with minds captivated by vibrant dreams that overshadow the significance of the precious present. Amidst this fervour for what lies ahead, the current moment tends to slip away unnoticed. The tendency to romanticize bygone days or obsess over the allure of an uncertain tomorrow often leads to a neglect of the immediate, tangible reality. In this pursuit of temporal mirages, people inadvertently miss the opportunity to make meaningful use of the time that exists here and now, where the true essence of life unfolds in every passing moment

New Year, New Hopes, New Dreams, New Goals

By: Priyanka Saurabh

As the year passes, it bequeaths us with both joy and sorrow, unveiling the mystery of the unknown. What is unknown? It's the melody of a new dawn, a song waiting to be sung. Don't dwell on losses; instead, anticipate the happiness that every breath promises.

Year after year, we embark on a new journey with optimism, a song in our hearts, and a spring in our steps. We anticipate the magical solutions to our problems and the fulfillment of our deepest desires - a dream house, a proposal, a job, a partner, and countless aspirations. However, as the year unfolds and challenges arise, the initial fervour wanes. By the first quarter, the novelty fades, replaced by mediocrity and fleeting hopes. Midway through the year, we find ourselves entangled in the realities of life, far from the promises made at the beginning. As the year concludes, we eagerly await the New Year, ready to share our best wishes:

*Wishing you joy and prosperity in the coming year,
May every face be adorned with happiness.
Live a proud life, scripting immortal records,
Saurabh, sketch this beautiful lifeline.*

New Year arrives, making us pause in amazement at the swift passage of time. These moments of reflection occur at least once a year, reminding us that an internal observer witnesses life's events. This sense of witnessing remains constant, allowing us to perceive the changing events over time. Past events, now mere dreams highlight the dream-like nature of life. True knowledge lies in understanding this dream. Acknowledging this dream-like quality empowers us, making us resilient to the fluctuations of events. Yet, events hold significance in our lives, offering valuable lessons. The New Year brings new hopes, dreams, goals, and ideas, and everyone welcomes it with joy.

*Years come and go; refrain from regret,
Saurabh, pray for universal happiness.
Life is short; let go of animosity, embrace friendship,
Greet the new dawn, fostering love.*

While it's natural to harbour hopes for the New Year, it's essential to recognize that hopes often accompany disappointments. Life is a game of conflicts, and the New Year is no exception. Reflecting on the past year reveals that it may not have delivered everything we desired, but it imparted valuable lessons and experiences. These experiences, seemingly insignificant in isolation, prepare us for the gifts that time has yet to unveil. If the year has taken something precious, it has compensated in equal measure. As the year concludes, our balance sheet reflects fairness. Let's enter the New Year with confidence, understanding that, regardless of events, there will be compensation for disappointments and lessons for unfulfilled desires.

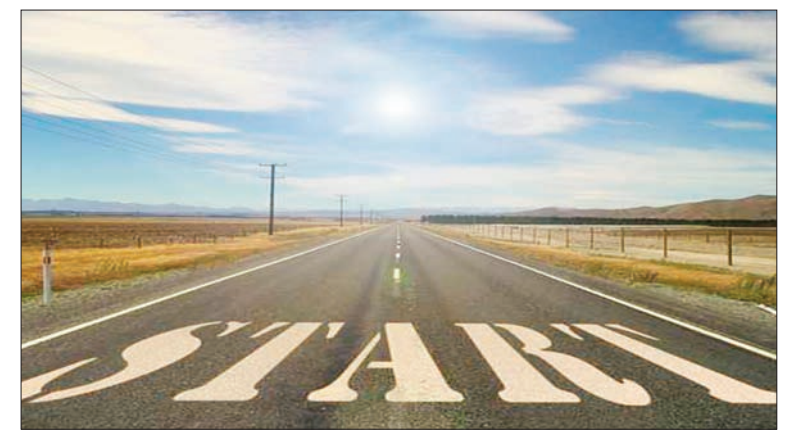
*The dispersed fog takes the form of silence,
A bright mind emerges from the mist.
The sunshine of belonging blossoms in relationships,
May pain and suffering end, and calamities dissipate.*

Set goals for the New Year; it's crucial for students and working individuals alike. Define efforts to improve the future, and resolve to achieve them. Resolutions serve as constant reminders of your goals. The essence of our lifetimes lies in hopes, disappointments, successes, and failures. Sticking to resolutions requires thoughtfulness, seeking support from others, and sharing your goals with friends and family. Create a reward system, celebrate short-term successes, and be kind to yourself. Strive for new heights without dwelling on imperfections.

*Reveal all secrets and reach new heights,
May consciousness and sub-consciousness flourish, Saurabh this New Year.
May laughter, happiness, and peace prevail,
May joy thrive on the dry branches of the mind.*

Celebrating the first day of the year with enthusiasm is believed to set the tone for the entire year. According to Indian tradition, the New Year signifies a fresh beginning, urging us to move forward. Regardless of the successes or failures of the past year, let's carry new hope into the future, creating a year that defines us positively.

*Life should bloom, and desires should exude fragrance,
Hope for a happy new year and delightful acquaintances.
The sweet notes of love playfully linger,
On the wings of the New Year, soar with full fragrance.*



Politicalisation of 2024 in the name of Ram

By: Dr. Ratan Bhattacharjee

Unfortunately the year 2024 is coming in a high voltage political hype which is deeply mingled with religious fanaticism. The world including India appears slated for more shakes in 2024. People are apprehensive rather than hopeful of events that may change the history of a nation not just politically, but culturally and spiritually.

In 2023, despite challenges and setbacks, the Chandrayaan-3 mission's ultimate success enabled India to dominate astro-politics going beyond geo-politics.

Success breeds success. BJP and RSS have done their best to organize openly the epic character Lord Ram Chandra to emerge as the saviour of India and in 2024, Ram may lead a new Bharat if the BJP chariot can continue its victorious journey. Politicalisation of 2024 in the name of Ram will be complete.

The year 2023 already brought a lot of tensions and geopolitical shifts with India overtaking China as the world's most populous country and the Russia Ukraine War breaking all records of wild violence and the Hamas launching deadliest civilian massacre in Israeli history in a surprise attack out of Gaza.

For India the race is between incumbent Narendra Modi - a pro-Hindu nationalist who, at the G20 summit that he hosted in September, sat behind the nameplate 'Bharat', the Hindi name for

India. While in 2023 he tried to promote his nationalist agenda, in 2024 he came out with his Ram Mandir campaign to get India saffronised with open mixture of religion with politics.

In 2019 the Supreme Court ordered the government to build a Ram Temple on the land that became a vacant by obliterating the Babri Masjid through acts of crimes and fraud.

The smuggling of Hindu gods and goddess into the Babri Masjid in 1949 and the unlocking of Babri Masjid in 1986 and its demolition in 1992 under the protection of state government and inaction of Union government finally ended in the building of Ram Temple at Ayodhya and BJP is dreaming of getting mileage in the coming Lok Sabha election.

Prime Minister Modi tried to pose himself as a saviour of Lord Rama by announcing that Ram's exile has ended and he is being brought back to Ayodhya.

January 22 is going to be a historic moment for BJP and RSS who are now claiming themselves to be the protector of Ram indirectly gaining the right to determine religion for the Hindus in the days and years ahead.

Lal Krishna Advani who began the campaign is no longer in the limelight and the Ramjanmabhoomi campaign is now regarded as political campaign and in a similar way the building of Ram Temple is also less spiritual than political.

Ram is just a politically expedient name for politicalising India in 2024. Sonia Gandhi or other political leaders are trying to complete the ritual of repentance by not going to Ram Temple celebration. They cannot any more control the saffronisation of Hindu culture in the coming days of 2024.

Ayodhya's Ram Temple inauguration is anticipated to be a momentous occasion with enormous possible economic implications.

The number of tourists visiting Ayodhya is rising, which is driving up demand for lodging - that is, hotels and resorts.

Beyond this immediate effect, there are also the far reaching impact on Indian culture. The secular nature of India is being changed abruptly. The domination of the Hindu fundamentalists and the rise of BJP

as the biggest political power all over North India in spite of the challenges from the South of India and West Bengal can change the existing Indian history of tolerance and inclusion.

Even in education policy the saffronisation will occur in a massive way. India has nothing to do against Ram. In Hinduism, Lord Rama is worshipped as - Maryada Purushottam - an epitome of perfect human life. Chanting Lord Rama Mantras can bring peace of mind and helps to overcome anxiety and depression.

Chanting Ram Naam is one of the best



tools to remove destructive energy and improve decision-making abilities & creativity.

Only people do not want Ram to be a broken idol in the psyche of the devotees. Ram is a symbol of the victory of justice and spirituality.

Congress or the Indian Communists by their policies of pseudo secularism lost the ground of saying anything on the issue of Ram. They simply waver in their policies towards Hindu Muslim amity. They could not control riots. One big achievement of BJP over the last ten years is that no communal riots have occurred all over the country. India is asserting itself as a Hindu nation taking

recourse to the ancient values where the Vedas, Bhagabat Gita.

Puranas and other religious rituals of Hindus are getting priority.

Despite criticisms of the politicalization of Ram, the opposition finds itself in a dilemma regarding attendance at the Ram Mandir consecration ceremony. The fear of being branded anti-Hindu if they abstain clashes with concerns of playing into BJP's hands if they partici-

BJP capitalizes on this discomfort, daring to politicize 2024 in the name of Lord Ram. (The author is currently Affiliate Faculty of English Virginia Commonwealth University Richmond, USA and a multilingual writer. He can be reached at bhattacharjr@vcu.edu)

Through the Lens of a Hobbyist: Jiban Mazumdar

By: Priyakahi Duarah Bordoloi

“The best thing about a picture is that it never changes, even when the people in it do.” ~ Andy Warhol

People typically capture photos to preserve memories, but for those who immerse themselves in the art of photography, it becomes a means of capturing moments that can visually mesmerize viewers, releasing a surge of happiness.

Challenging the conventional belief that DSLRs are a photographer's best friend, Jiban Mazumdar, a passionate hobby artist hailing from Karimganj, Assam, has successfully debunked this myth by exclusively utilizing his phone camera.

In 2016, Jiban transitioned from being a hobbyist to a professional photographer. Besides his photography pursuits, he also owns a cloud kitchen in Guwahati, showcasing his culinary talent by serving delectable momos and healthy, oil-free cuisines.

In this exclusive interview, we delve into the mind of this young talent.

What attracted you to photography?

I am an ardent lover of nature, and its beauty has always fascinated me. I spare no effort in capturing nature through my lens.

Can you share your biggest turning point in your photography journey?

During my B.Ed studies in 2016, my professor Tridip Sarma persuaded me to participate in a National level photography exhibition in Mumbai after seeing my work. To my surprise, I won a gold medal and a cash prize of Rs. 50,000. This experience pushed me to participate again, where I secured a bronze medal and Rs. 25,000. It inspired me to think outside the box and strive for more such opportunities.

Why do you prefer using a mobile instead of a DSLR? Do you notice any difference in the outcomes?

Coming from a middle-class background, DSLRs were a luxury for me. However, I firmly believe that talent shines through regardless of the device used.

Photography is about perspective, vision, creativity, and hard work. I find no difference in handling cameras; the outcomes depend on the connection and emotions I share with the subject during the shoot.

Your photos seem perfectly framed. Do you spend a lot of time editing?

Perfect timing is crucial. I invest a significant amount of time in capturing an image and preparing the stage—typically a minimum of two hours. Editing is minimal; the key lies in capturing the essence during the shoot.

Describe your photography style briefly for the readers.

My style involves curiosity, inquisi-

teness, establishing a connection between the subject and the device, and recognizing patterns and designs.

Who is your greatest inspiration?

Alan McFayden, a UK-based wildlife photographer, inspires me. His passion for kingfishers and extensive knowledge of birds resonate with me, motivating me to delve deeper into this field.

Can you shed light on your recent achievement?

The Janarita Armooti Art Gallery, in collaboration with the Embassy of India, Amman, organized an exhibition promoting cultural bonding between India and Jordan. I exhibited a photograph capturing my grandmother collecting night jasmine flowers, earning me a silver medal. I was honoured by the Ambassador of the Indian Embassy, H.E. Anwar Haleem, and esteemed artists from Jordan. It has been my most enriching experience to date.

What message do you wish to convey to viewers through your photography?

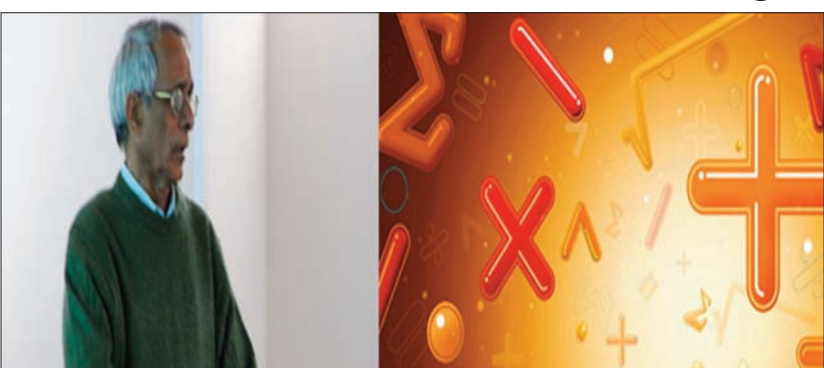
I want my viewers to be curious about the images I capture, as photography has the power to change perspectives on the world.

Any plans for the future?

I have upcoming exhibitions across the globe. I aim to participate and bring glory to the nation.



Maths anxiety



By: Kamal Baruah

School children normally feel a lot of anxiety about their Maths paper and many dropped out of school even before matriculation. Different students possess different forms of intelligence and I wonder why there is only one Mathematics paper for all at school level, when most students have more than one forms of intelligence.

Many opine that Maths is indispensable for commerce of science stream only but the narrower aim of teaching Maths at school is to develop useful capabilities particularly those relating to numeracy- numbers, number operations, measurements, decimal and percentage.

Parents often get upset from their little one's bad grade on a test or a report card at primary education. The other day I had to calm down one such parent on a lighter note. Who is the Maths teacher and by the way who taught Maths at home? Parents had to take the blame for low scoring.

Not every student learns in the same way, and therefore not every student can accurately demonstrate mastery of educational topics and concepts in a similar fashion.

The Maths phobia remains with this writer too and I got caught so on numerous occasions. The whole class VI was failed once in our half yearly examination except one and I was the only odd man out to qualify.

I also recollected once when our daughter was asked at school about her Maths teacher at home after scoring hundred upon hundred at Class VI. It's the teacher from his/her experience and insights can develop a mindset for learning and understanding Maths. One just can't find faults with those young minds. They need your support.

I was blessed to learn Mathematics only at a much later stage of my university days from the land of Ramanujan, a self-educated mathematician, who was known for his theorems that contributed significantly to understanding number series, infinite series and continued fractions. It was another Prof M Venkataraman, when I met him as our class teacher at Madurai Kamaraj University. The fascinating tale of people at the temple city Madurai was truly reminiscing in my mind.

It was in the late 90s, we had one assembled for the very first class of the day for our yearly seminar at MKU. It wasn't like any other class room that filled with only students across India but there were defence personnel deputized by their department for MBA program. The university's praiseworthy effort to organize all students at their campus in one dais was a remarkable coincidence. We were also shocked to see, when a PSO was guarding a Brigadier outside the class for security cover and a batman was brought for his orderly. All the students stared at the Flag Car of the one-star in shocked silence.

As we all preoccupied in the class room, it reminded us that no matter how much we learn there is always something new to be experienced. It

was sharp 9 O'clock in the morning. A dhoti clad gentleman in all white outfits centered our class. It holds deep rooted significance in Tamil Nadu's cultural fabric and is considered a symbol of timeless elegance and cultural pride.

Before we guessed anything seriously, Prof chalked a cross mark on the blackboard. Someone at the back-bencher spoke in a whisper - it's Red Cross. He greeted us all with a smile and introduced himself. I'm your Maths teacher and we will learn Quantitative Methods and Statistics. So let's try to re-memorize our basic Maths within an hour before we go for another hour of mathematical jargons.

He delivered his speech in English with a strong Tamil accent. To some Maths can be fun! To some Maths can be surprising and some Maths can be unexpected. In our daily life, we are confined ourselves with addition, subtraction, multiplication and division only.

He went ahead with very general and fundamental formulas of basic Maths, simplifying equations from BODMAS Rule to fractions, percentage, formula for proportion, and expression. Maths is the science of structure, order, and relation that has evolved from basic practices of counting, measuring, and describing the shapes of objects. It deals with logical reasoning and quantitative calculation.

Though most of the students from Armed Forces had little or no experience with Maths, he used a variety of materials to inspire us that used to provide mathematical solutions for real-world problems. His focus was sharp, clear and powerful and soon he covered up all basic Maths just within an hour and we all from varying background of science, commerce, humanities and soldiers from Armed Forces were enlightened then. With his massive and relentless focus, he could complete the entire chapters in just two weeks with overall effectiveness.

So the other day I realized. It really matters, who taught you Maths at home and I could give some understanding of Maths in our daughter's early grades for learning the fundamentals. We were jubilant over her board examination scoring 100 out of 100 in both the Maths paper. So I also did my Maths paper in one sitting.

Today, computers are slowly replacing humans in experimental Mathematics. Computers can be valuable tools for helping mathematicians solve problems since it has technology such as Maple, Mathematica or Sage computing software packages on its side.

Even access to calculators in the elementary grades does not negate the need for students to develop paper-and-pencil and mental methods. Rather calculators play a key role in developing students' fluency with numbers, operations and estimation skills, when used appropriately. Prof M Venkataraman is a credit to my Maths paper in the post graduate programme in management. It certainly helped to deepen my understanding in Maths and I regret today any Maths anxiety that I may, unwittingly, have caused.

Raman: A man of impeccable integrity and brilliant comprehension

By: Vinod Chandreshkhar Dixit

I recently had the privilege of delving into the well-researched, thought-provoking, and enlightening book, "From a Car Shed to the Corner Room & Beyond," authored by Sunder Rajan Raman, the former CMD of Canara Bank, Executive Director of Union Bank of India, and former WRM at SEBI. The book candidly recounts the personal and professional journey of S. Raman, a man of impeccable integrity and brilliant comprehension.

S Raman, a Post Graduate in Economics with a Diploma in Business Management and a Senior Diploma in German Language, in addition to CAIIB from the Indian Institute of Bankers and ACIB from the Chartered Institute of Bankers, London, took charge as CMD of Canara Bank with two-year tenure until September 2012. His journey began as a Clerk at the State Bank of

India at the age of 19, progressing to become a University Topper and Rank-Holder in B.Com before joining Bank of

India at 21 as a Direct Recruit Officer. With 35 years of service across India and two stints abroad, Raman's ascent from humble beginnings, having spent six years of his childhood living in a car shed, is a testament to his resilience and determination.

The book eloquently illustrates the ideal career path for an honest banker and how circumstances can thoroughly test an

individual. Having had the opportunity to work under S. Raman during his tenure as the Zonal Manager in Bank of India

Ahmedabad Zone, I feel fortunate to witness the joys of success and sorrows of setbacks marked his personal and professional journey, and the equilibrium he maintained throughout his successful tenure.

In the realm of business endeavours across industries, individuals are constantly pressured to excel. Raman exemplifies that success is not merely about

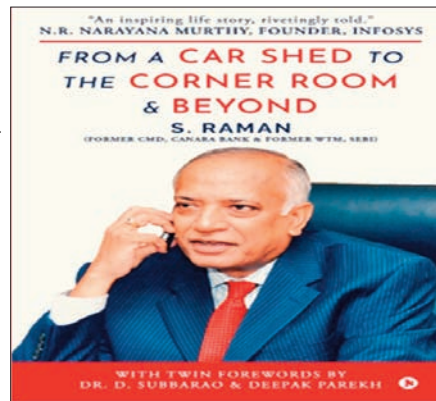
climbing to great heights but about consistently making a positive difference in the world. His career is a testament to the belief that success is the result of consistent hard work and making choices that lead to lasting benefits rather than opting for easy solutions.

Raman's biography, a well-crafted narrative, resonates with universal themes of honest hard work and strong determination. He effortlessly transforms minor incidents into major events that capture the reader's attention. The book imparts impactful leadership lessons through straightforward language, urging readers to continue exploring its pages.

It unveils Raman's philosophy of hard work - doing what is necessary, even if it doesn't immediately inspire, to achieve long-term goals. The book delves into Raman's professional learnings, detailing the tougher situations he faced and articulating his beliefs in spirituality and truthfulness.

Post-retirement, Raman encountered formidable challenges, and the book illuminates his resilience and approach in navigating through these difficult times. His story, a seamless blend of professional and personal life, serves as a testament to the transformative power of mentorship and the impact of meaningful relationships.

The author adeptly presents insights into overcoming challenges, making the book a motivational read for anyone aspiring to achieve their goals. Beyond its relevance to bankers, the book caters to individuals with diverse interests, thanks to its broad applicability and engaging style. In the epilogue, the author rightly emphasizes, "Positive thinking has ensured that all in our family have retained our optimism and confidence." Undoubtedly, this book will be etched as an inspiring and remarkable narrative for all of us. (The author can be reached at dixitprakar@yahoo.in)



Bye-Bye 2023

By: Raju Vernekar

The year 2023 is fading out, It was eventful no doubt,

Cyclone Michaung caused disruption, The South India suffered massive destruction,

Many lives were lost in the Odisha rail mishap, The nation mourned, the railways received a rap,

Uttarkashi tunnel mishap, Arnold Dix came out with the app,

He left no gap, Rescued all, unfolded the trap,

Ethnic violence erupted, Manipur was on the boil, The Meiteis and Kukis clashed, the state was in turmoil,

Many lives were lost, Manipur faced destruction, The frequent violence led to commotion,

Hindenburg report stirred the nation, Adani Group faced consternation,

Shares crashed, market faced commotion, Adonis dubbed the report as misinformation,

Mangalyaan Mission made India proud, The jubilation was enthusiastic and loud,

India hosted G 20 Summit, The best arrangement made the meet hit,

I.N.D.I.A turned out to be new outfit, To prove the BJP unfit,

State Polls proved BJP more fit, Secured more states, the party proved its wit,

The passing of Women's Reservation Bill, Enhanced Eves' grit and will,

SC confirmed the stripping of J & K's special status, Now the region has no semi-autonomous status,

Israel-Hamas aggression, Gaza faced near extermination,

Tension prevailed in the region, Hamas faced heavy destruction,

In the Russia-Ukraine war, The solution remained afar,

The sanctions did not stop the war, Russian strikes continued wide and far,

Saharashri's passed away,

After The End

By: Navan Debnath

In grief, I pictured this warmth, It faded away quick like the skin on my slit wrist when bloods warmed.

The dry crest of crimson, Hollow bravado of false conviction, life not yet even started met an end, cold and grimson.

What's the worth of reason, If there is no purpose of being this contradiction

Be it purposes made or given, unassured voices of yourself in harmony of senseless pleas toy our foolish illusion.

The moist imprint of those tears that run down on my flesh like unseen sapphire, if I speak of happiness I am only a liar.

Beauty Of Nature

By: Himadri Shekhar Bordoloi

Come, walk with me, To the mountain's blessed abode and into the wild, To see the stunning expanse of the beauty of Nature, And fall in love with such serene paradise on earth,

That echoes the charms of Divine handiwork, Spreading the blessings from Asia to Africa, America to Europe and throughout Antarctica,

Listen in silence to the rhythm - Seen in the rapid currents of water and the howling winds blowing,

The melodious tunes of birds chirping and the euphony of fluttering wings of birds flying in harmony,

And the reverberation or movements of animals as part of communications or mating displays,

Observe and become spellbound, How a seed sprout into a sapling and becomes a tree,

withstanding various storms of life, Oh, revered Mother Nature,

In whose bosom flourish wonderful life of flora and fauna,

Has glorious trust with the cultures of races, tribes and nomads,

Living in consonance with Nature in dense forests, frozen mountains or in barren deserts,

So, come, walk with me, To enjoy and become mesmerized with the pristine surroundings of nature,

That stands in its full glory, since time immemorial, But, do not destroy, my friends,

Such monochrome beauty of landscape or the calmness of nature,

Because if nature ceases to be motherly and turn into its wrathful form,

That might mean the end of the entire human race, which would then be lost in time and space.

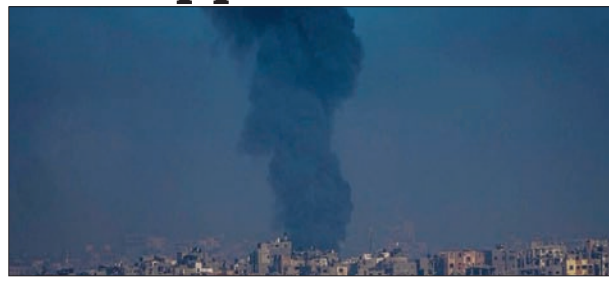
The United States has shielded Israel diplomatically and has continued to supply weapons

Airstrikes hit camps in central Gaza as Biden administration approves new weapons sales to Israel

DEIR AL-BALAH (GAZA STRIP), Dec 30: Israeli warplanes struck two urban refugee camps in central Gaza on Saturday, as the Biden administration approved a new emergency weapons sale to Israel despite persistent international cease-fire calls over mounting civilian deaths, hunger and mass displacement in the enclave. Israel says it is determined to pursue its unprecedented air and ground offensive until it has dismantled Hamas, a goal viewed by some as unattainable because of the militant group's deep roots in Palestinian society. The United States has shielded Israel diplomatically and has continued to supply weapons.

Israel argues that ending the war now would mean victory for Hamas, a stance shared by the Biden administration which at the same time urged Israel to do more to avoid harm to Palestinian civilians.

The war, triggered by the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attack on southern Israel, has displaced some 85% of the Gaza Strip's 2.3 million residents, sending swells of people seeking shelter in Israeli-designated safe areas that the military has nevertheless also bombed. That



has left Palestinians with a harrowing sense that nowhere is safe in the tiny enclave.

Residents in the urban refugee camps of Nuseirat and Bureij, two recent hot spots of combat, reported Israeli airstrikes overnight and into Saturday. Nuseirat resident Mustafa Abu Wawee said a strike hit the home of one of his relatives, killing two people.

"The (Israeli) occupation is doing everything to force people to leave," he said over the phone while searching along with others for four people missing under the rubble.

"They want to break our spirit and will but they will fail. We are here to stay."

A second strike late Friday in Nuseirat targeted the home of a journalist for Al-Quds TV, a channel linked to the group Islamic Jihad whose militants

also participated in the Oct. 7 attack. The channel said the journalist, Jaber Abu Hadros and six members of his family were killed. Bureij resident Rami Abu Mosab said sounds of gunfire echoed across the camp overnight, followed by heavy airstrikes Saturday.

With Israeli forces pushing deeper into Khan Younis and the camps of central Gaza, tens of thousands of Palestinians streamed into the already crowded city of Rafah at the southernmost end of Gaza in recent days. Drone footage showed a vast camp of thousands of tents and makeshift shacks set up on what had been empty land on Rafah's western outskirts next to U.N. warehouses. People arrived in Rafah in trucks, in carts and on foot. Those who did not find space in the already overwhelmed shelters put up tents

on roadsides slick with mud from winter rains.

The State Department said on Friday that Secretary of State Antony Blinken told Congress he approved a \$147.5 million sale for equipment, including fuses, charges and primers, that is needed for 155 mm shells Israel bought previously.

It marked the second time this month that the Biden administration is bypassing Congress to approve an emergency weapons sale to Israel.

The department cited the "urgency of Israel's defensive needs" as a reason for the approval, and argued that "it is vital to U.S. national interests to ensure Israel is able to defend itself against the threats it faces." The emergency determination means the purchase will bypass the congressional review requirement for foreign military sales. Such determinations are rare, but not unprecedented, when administrations see an urgent need for weapons to be delivered without waiting for lawmakers' approval. Blinken made a similar decision on Dec. 9 to approve the sale to Israel of nearly 14,000 rounds of tank ammunition worth more than USD

106 million.

Both moves have come as President Joe Biden's request for a nearly USD 106 billion aid package for Ukraine, Israel and other national security needs remains stalled in Congress, caught up in a debate over U.S. immigration policy and border security. Some Democratic lawmakers have spoken of making the proposed USD 14.3 billion in American assistance to its Mideast ally contingent on concrete steps by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government to reduce civilian casualties in Gaza during the war with Hamas. More than a week after a U.N. Security Council resolution called for the unhindered delivery of aid at scale across besieged Gaza, conditions have only worsened, U.N. agencies warned.

Aid officials said the aid entering Gaza remains woefully inadequate. Distributing goods is hampered by long delays at two border crossings, ongoing fighting, Israeli airstrikes, repeated cuts in internet and phone services and a breakdown of law and order that makes it difficult to secure aid convoys, they said. (AP)

South Africa launches case at top UN court accusing Israel of genocide in Gaza

THE HAGUE, Dec 30: South Africa launched a case on Friday at the United Nations' top court accusing Israel of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza and asking the court to order Israel to halt its attacks — the first such challenge made at the court over the current war. Israel swiftly rejected the filing "with disgust."

South Africa's submission to the International Court of Justice alleges that "acts and omissions by Israel ... are genocidal in character" as they are committed with the intent "to destroy Palestinians in Gaza" as a part of the broader Palestinian national, racial and ethnic group.

South Africa has been a fierce critic of Israel's military campaign in Gaza. Many there, including President Cyril Ramaphosa, have compared Israel's policies regarding Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank with South Africa's past apartheid regime of racial segregation. Israel rejects such allegations.

South Africa asked The Hague-based court to issue an interim order for Israel to immediately suspend its military operations in Gaza. A hearing into that request is likely in the coming days or weeks. The case, if it goes ahead, will take years, but an interim order could be issued within weeks.

The Israeli government rejected "with disgust" the genocide accusations, calling it a "blood libel." A Foreign Ministry statement said South Africa's case lacks a legal foundation and constitutes a "despicable and con-

temptuous exploitation" of the court. Israel and Hamas give Egypt's plan to end war a cool reception but stop short of rejecting it fully.

Israel also accused South Africa of cooperating with Hamas, the Palestinian militant group behind the deadly Oct. 7 attack in southern Israel that triggered the ongoing war.

The statement also said Israel operates according to international law and focuses its military actions solely against Hamas, adding that the residents of Gaza are not an enemy. It asserted that it takes steps to minimize harm to civilians and to allow humanitarian aid to enter the territory.

South Africa can bring the case under the Genocide Convention because both it and Israel are signatories to it.

Whether the case will succeed in halting the war remains to be seen. While the court's orders are legally binding, they are not always followed. In March 2022, the court ordered Russia to halt hostilities in Ukraine, a binding legal ruling that Moscow flouted as it pressed ahead with its attacks.

South Africa's foreign ministry said in a statement that the country is "gravely concerned with the plight of civilians caught in the present Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip due to the indiscriminate use of force and forcible removal of inhabitants."

The ministry added that there are "ongoing reports of international crimes, such as crimes against humanity and war crimes, being committed as well as reports that acts meeting the

threshold of genocide or related crimes as defined in the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide, have been and may still be committed in the context of the ongoing massacres in Gaza."

South Africa's president earlier accused Israel of war crimes and acts "tantamount to genocide." And South Africa last month pushed for the International Criminal Court, which also is based in The Hague, to investigate Israel's actions in Gaza.

The ICC prosecutes individuals for war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide, while the International Court of Justice settles disputes between nations.

In the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the Palestinian Foreign Ministry welcomed South Africa's accusations against Israel. In a statement on social media, it urged the court to "immediately take action to protect Palestinian people and call on Israel, the occupying power, to halt its onslaught against the Palestinian people."

Balkees Jarrah, associate international justice director at Human Rights Watch, said South Africa's case "provides an important opportunity for the International Court of Justice to scrutinize Israel's actions in Gaza using the Genocide Convention of 1948." She said South Africa is looking to the United Nations' highest judicial body "to provide clear, definitive answers on the question of whether Israel is committing genocide against the Palestinian people."

Jarrah stressed that the ICJ case "is not a criminal case against individual alleged perpetrators, and it does not involve the International Criminal Court (ICC), a separate body. But the ICJ case should also propel greater international support for impartial justice at the ICC and other credible venues." (AP)

5.9 magnitude earthquake shakes Indonesia. No casualties reported

BANDA ACEH (INDONESIA), Dec 30: A strong and shallow undersea earthquake shook part of Indonesia's Aceh province on Saturday, but there were no immediate reports of serious damage or casualties.

The US Geological Survey said the magnitude 5.9 earthquake was centered 362 kilometers (225 miles) east of Sinabang, a coastal town in Aceh province at a depth of 10 kilometers (6.2 miles).

Indonesia's Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysical Agency said there was no danger of a tsunami but warned of possible aftershocks. The agency put a preliminary magnitude at 6.3. Variations in early measurements of quakes are common.

Indonesia, a vast archipelago of more than 270 million people, is frequently hit by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions because of its location on the "Ring of Fire," an arc of volcanoes and fault lines in the Pacific Basin.

A magnitude 5.6 earthquake on Nov. 21 killed at least 331 people and injured nearly 600 in West Java's Cianjur city. It was the deadliest in Indonesia since a 2018 quake and tsunami in Sulawesi killed about 4,340 people.

In 2004, an extremely powerful Indian Ocean quake set off a tsunami that killed more than 230,000 people in a dozen countries, most of them in Indonesia's Aceh province. (AP)

British Sikh medic knighted in King Charles III's 2024 New Year Honours

LONDON, Dec 30: A British Sikh senior medical professional with over 30 years of general practice (GP) experience has been knighted by King Charles III in the 2024 New Year Honours list.

Dr Amritpal Singh Hungin, Emeritus Professor of General Practice at Newcastle University, receives a Knighthood for services to medicine on a list including nearly 30 Indian-origin healthcare professionals, philanthropists and community activists honoured for their selfless service to society.

The list was released here on Friday night. Professor Pali Hungin, as he is known, was the founding Dean of Medicine at Durham University and a former president of the British Medical Association (BMA).

"The New Year's Honours List recognises the exceptional achievements of people across the country and those who have shown the highest commitment to selflessness and compassion," said British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

"To all honourees, you are the pride of this country and an inspiration to us all," he said. The list, released annually by the government's Cabinet Office in the name of the British monarch, includes Commanders of the Order of the British Empire (CBEs) for Staffordshire GP Dr Chandra Mohan Kannganti for services to General Practice and Senior Clinical Fellow of Imperial College London Dr Mala Rao for services to public health, the National Health Service (NHS), and to equality and diversity. Also receiving the prestigious CBE honour is Bidish Sarkar, Chief Financial Officer at the Department for Business and Trade, for public service.

"This year's New Year Honours List celebrates the most selfless, compassionate people in the UK. I send them all my

Poland says 'everything indicates' a Russian missile briefly entered its airspace and left



WARSAW, Dec 30: Poland's defense forces said an unknown object entered the country's airspace on Friday morning from the direction of Ukraine and then vanished off radars, and that all indications pointed to it being a Russian missile.

"Everything indicates that a Russian missile intruded in Poland's airspace. It was monitored by us on radars and left the airspace. We have confirmation of this on radars and from allies" in NATO, said Poland's armed forces chief, Gen. Wieslaw Kukuła.

Poland's defense forces said the object penetrated about 40 kilometers (24 miles) into its airspace and left it after less than three minutes. The defense forces said both its radar and NATO radar confirmed that the object left Polish airspace.

Kukuła said steps were being taken to verify those findings and eliminate the possibility of a technical error.

Polish state TV relaunches its main newscast as the new government shakes up the media

There was no comment from Russian officials.

NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg said on X, formerly Twitter, that he had spoken with Poland's president about the "missile incident" and said NATO was vigilant and monitoring the situation "as the facts are established."

U.S. National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan spoke with the head of Poland's National Security Bureau, Jacek Siewiera, to express the "United States' solidarity with Poland, our close NATO ally, as it deals with reports of a missile temporarily entering Polish airspace," the White House said.

Sullivan pledged technical assistance to Poland and assured that President Joe Biden was following the issue closely.

It was not immediately clear where the object disappeared from radar or in which direction it had been going. Troops were mobilized to identify and find it. There were no immediate reports of any explosion or casualties.

The governor of Lublin province in east-

ern Poland, Krzysztof Komorski, told the Onet news portal that the object appeared on radars near the town of Hrubieszow, where a border crossing with Ukraine is located. Komorski said he had no information to indicate it landed in Lublin province.

Poland's border with Ukraine is also the European Union and NATO border with Ukraine.

Prime Minister Donald Tusk convened a meeting with the defense minister, military commanders and heads of national security bodies, followed by a meeting of the National Security Bureau with President Andrzej Duda, the supreme commander of Poland's armed forces.

Duda said through an aide that there was "no threat at the moment" and nothing to suggest that "anything bad" should be expected.

"The most important is that no one was hurt," said the aide, Grazyna Ignaczak-Bandych.

On Friday, Ukrainian officials said Russia launched more than 100 missiles and dozens of drones against Ukrainian targets overnight in what an air force official called the biggest aerial barrage since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

It was not clear whether the object that Poland reported was related to the barrage.

"As a result of such massive attacks, this can happen. The enemy is attacking our border territories, including in the west. This is another signal for our partners to strengthen the Ukrainian air defense," Yuriy Ihnat, spokesperson for Ukraine's Air Force, said on national television about the incident.

Poland has been supporting Ukraine with military, humanitarian and political assistance.

This is not the first time an unauthorized object has entered Poland's airspace from the direction of Ukraine since Russia's full-scale invasion. In November 2022, two men were killed when a missile struck the village of Przewodow, a few kilometers from the border. Western officials said they believed a Ukrainian air defense missile went astray. (AP)

Nine top PLA generals dismissed from China's Parliament

BEIJING, Dec 30: In a major purge of the Chinese military, nine senior generals of the People's Liberation Army (PLA), including senior officials of the country's Rocket Force, have been dismissed from China's Parliament, official media reported on Saturday.

Those dismissed from the National People's Congress (NPC), the country's Parliament, include five past or current top commanders of the PLA Rocket Force, which handles the missiles division and a key component of the country's nuclear arsenal besides a former Air Force commander, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

The report carried the announcement of the Standing Committee of the NPC.

No reason for their disqualification has been mentioned.

A substantial number of members of the Chinese military who formed part of the ruling Communist Party of China (CPC) are appointed to the NPC.

Their dismissals came after the NPC appointed former naval commander General Dong Jun as the new defence minister, two months after the summary dismissal of General Li Shangfu without any explanation. (PTI)

Separatist Bosnian Serb leader Milorad Dodik vows to tear his country apart despite US warnings

BANJA LUKA, Dec 30: The Bosnian Serbs' separatist leader vowed to carry on weakening his war-scarred country to the point where it will tear apart, despite a pledge by the United States to prevent such an outcome.

"I am not irrational, I know that America's response will be to use force ... but I have no reason to be frightened by that into sacrificing (Serb) national interests," Milorad Dodik, the president of Bosnia's Serb-run part, told The Associated Press in an interview Friday.

He said any attempt to use international intervention to further strengthen Bosnia's shared, multiethnic institutions will be met by Bosnian Serb decision to abandon them completely and take the country back to the state of disunity and dysfunction it was in at the end of its brutal interethnic war in the 1990s.

Because Western democracies will not be agreeable to that, he added, "in the



next stage, we will be forced by their reaction to declare full independence" of the Serb-controlled regions of Bosnia.

The Bosnian War started in 1992 when Belgrade-backed Bosnian Serbs tried to create an "ethnically pure" region with the aim of joining neighboring Serbia by killing and expelling the country's Croats and Bosniaks, who are mostly Muslims.

More than 100,000 people were killed and upward of 2 million, or over half of the country's population, were driven from their homes before a peace agreement was reached in Dayton, Ohio, late in 1995.

The agreement divided Bosnia into two entities — the Serb-run Republika Srpska and the Bosniak-Croat Federation — which were given wide autonomy but remained linked by some shared, multiethnic institutions. It also instituted the Office of the High Representative, an international body charged with shepherding the implementation of the peace agreement that was given broad powers to impose laws or dismiss officials who undermined the fragile post-war ethnic balance, including judges, civil servants, and members of parliament.

Over the years, the OHR has pressured Bosnia's bick-

ering ethnic leaders to build shared, statewide institutions, including the army, intelligence and security agencies, the top judiciary and the tax administration.

However, further bolstering of the existing institutions and the creation of new ones is required if Bosnia is to reach its declared goal of joining the European Union.

Dodik appeared unperturbed Friday by the statement posted a day earlier on X, formerly known as Twitter, by James O'Brien, the U.S. assistant secretary of State for European and Eurasian affairs, that Washington will act if anyone tries to change "the basic element" of the 1995 peace agreement for Bosnia, and that there is "no right of secession."

"Among Serbs, one thing is clear and definite and that is a growing realization that the years and decades ahead of us are the years and decades of Serb national unification," Dodik said. (AP)

Tripura BJP announces 18-member state committee ahead of 2024 LS polls



AGARTALA, Dec 30: The Tripura unit of the BJP on Saturday announced the formation of an 18-member state committee, months ahead of the Lok Sabha polls next year.

The party also named the chiefs of its different units in the state, including the Yuva Morcha (youth wing) and Mohila Morcha (women's wing).

Subal Bhowmik, who returned to the party fold, was declared as one of the panel's six vice-presidents.

The committee also has three general secretaries and six state secretaries, according to a release issued by the BJP's Tripura unit.

Mimi Majumder, who was denied a ticket in the 2023 assembly elections, has been made the Mohila Morcha president. She replaced Jharna Debbarma, who was made the chairperson of the Tripura Commission for Women, recently.

Sushanta Deb, a young MLA from Sepahijala district, will head

the party's Yuva Morcha, with outgoing president Nabadul Banik given the post of chairman of Tripura Industrial Development Corporation (TIDC).

The party's tribal wing, Janajati Morcha, got a new chief in former MLA Parimal Debbarma, replacing Bikash Debbarma, who has been given a ministerial berth, the release said.

Former state Congress veteran, Billal Miah, who joined the BJP, was made the president of the Minority Morcha.

Chief minister Manik Saha, in a post on X, congratulated the new committee members.

"I hope the new committee will work hard under the guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, party national president J P Nadda and state president Rajib Bhat-tacharjee, to strengthen the organisation," he said.

Rajya Sabha member and former Tripura CM Biplab Kumar Deb also conveyed his best wishes to the panel members. (PTI)

Tripura CM requests for special train for devotees to attend Ram temple inauguration



AGARTALA, Dec 30: Tripura chief minister Manik Saha has requested Railways Minister Ashwani Vaishnav to provide a special train from Agartala to Ayodhya for the pilgrims of the state to witness the inauguration of Ram temple.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the newly built Ram Temple in Ayodhya on January 22.

In a letter to the railways minister, Saha said a large number of devotees from the state is eager to participate and witness the significant event.

He mentioned that approximately 2,000 devotees from the state plan to join the auspicious occasion.

Saha requested Vaishnav to direct the railways to run a special train from Agartala to Ayodhya on January 20 and a return train on January 23. He said pilgrims would bear the cost of the fare themselves.

The inauguration of Ayodhya Ram Mandir holds immense cultural and religious significance for millions of Indians, Saha emphasized.

He added that this momentous occasion symbolises unity, harmony, and the rich cultural heritage of the nation. (PTI)

Woman returning from Delhi to Manipur tests Covid positive

The CMO also appealed the people not to be alarmed by the news but at the same time follow precautionary measures

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 30: A woman who recently travelled from Delhi to Dimapur via flight and subsequently took a car to Manipur was tested positive for Covid, The Morning Express quoted.

According to an official of the Integrated Disease Surveillance Programme (ISDP), department of health & family welfare, Nagaland, the woman, whose identity has not been disclosed, took a flight (Indigo) on December 16 from Delhi and reportedly halted for a night in Dimapur during her journey before taking a private car to Senapati in Manipur the next day.

After showing symptoms of Covid a few days later, the woman underwent test only to be tested positive on December 27, the ISDP official informed. The exact virus variant remains undetermined, as samples have been sent for genome sequencing. The samples have been sent to National Institute of Virology in Pune to verify whether the case is of JN.1 variant, it is learnt. The woman has been put under surveillance and is reported to be fine.

The official, meanwhile, revealed that Covid testing facilities have been reactivated across the state. The state health department is also expected to brief the press on this matter soon.

On whether the health department was working to tracing her contacts who may have been potentially exposed to infection, chief medical officer Dimapur Dr Limatula Aier informed that since the department received information only on Friday, contact tracing will be initiated once they get the details of the co-passengers.

The CMO also appealed the people not to be alarmed by the news but at the same time follow precautionary measures laid



out by the health department.

The surge in Covid-19 cases has become a new concern in the country with the emergence of sub-variant JN.1 and various states reporting fresh cases.

According to data shared by the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, India in the last 24 hours recorded 797 fresh cases of Covid-19. The active caseload increased by four, reaching 4,097.

According to health ministry data, a total of 157 cases of JN1 variant have been reported till December 28. The highest number of JN1 variant cases has been reported from Kerala. The state reported 78 cases of the JN1 sub variant, the majority of which were home isolated. This was followed by Gujarat at 34, according to IN-SACOG's data. Ahead of the New Year, both the central and state governments are keeping a close watch on the new Omicron sub-variant JN.1.

The official data stated that six deaths were reported in the last 24 hours - two in Maharashtra and one each in Delhi, Karnataka, Kerala and West Bengal. Since the outbreak of corona virus in January 2020, the total count has reached 4, 50, and 10,944. The total death toll in India has risen to 5, 33,946.

The number of daily cases had dropped to double-digits till December 5, 2023 but cases have again gone up after emergence

Manipur CM announces several schemes for students, women, sportspersons

Ima Nongthang Leima Yaipha Tengbang Scheme will provide ₹ 500 per month to women above 40 years

IMPHAL, Dec 30: Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh on Saturday announced that several welfare schemes promoting sports, improving education, and providing assistance to women will be launched in January.

Addressing a press conference here, Singh said, "To promote sports, Khungang Ama, Sanabung Ama (one village, one playground) scheme will be launched on January 1. In the first phase, one playground will be constructed in each of the 60 assembly constituencies."

He added, "The Chief Minister's Sportspersons Livelihood Guarantee Scheme will be introduced for sportspersons who are unable to achieve global and national recognitions and government jobs. Under this scheme, players will receive skill development training and financial assistance to support their livelihood."

Singh said the Ima Nongthang Leima Yaipha Tengbang Scheme will provide ₹ 500 per month to women above 40 years who are not benefiting from any government scheme.

The chief minister also announced a scheme for improving schools and colleges.



He said, "Under the School Fagathansi 2.0 (Let's improve schools), two schools will be selected in each constituency and provided with additional infrastructure,

including smart classrooms. This will help students who cannot afford to go to private schools."

"Similarly, under College Fagathansi (Let's improve colleges), 20 selected colleges will receive ₹ 2.5 crore to enhance infrastructure and teaching capabilities," Singh added.

Additionally, Singh declared financial packages for displaced individuals who lost their homes due to violence and are yet to return.

Singh explained, "Starting in January, the previously announced grant of ₹ 1 lakh for displaced families whose houses were burned will be distributed. Beneficiaries will receive ₹ 25,000 in the first instalment and the rest later."

"For displaced individuals who have been unable to return home for almost eight months, we will provide ₹ 5 lakh for temporary houses, ₹ 7 lakh for semi-permanent houses, and ₹ 10 lakh for permanent houses through the respective district collectors," he said.

To revive the economy, Singh said, "Under the Chief Minister's Farmer Livelihood Scheme, unused land will be utilised for agricultural and horticultural production." (PTI)

Naga Hoho celebrates silver jubilee with a call for unity among Nagas

KOHIMA, Dec 30: Naga Hoho, an apex tribal body of the Nagas, on Saturday observed its 25 years of existence here with a call for oneness and unity among Nagas.

Naga Hoho was formed in 1998 with the motto 'unity and fraternity' considering the turbulent period of Naga political struggle when inter-factional clashes between the Naga insurgent groups were happening on a daily basis.

The Naga Hoho is composed of Nagas in four states - Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Manipur and Nagaland - and also parts of Myanmar.

Worried about the unceasing factional killings, the Naga tribal bodies came together and formed the Naga Hoho and worked together in reaching out to the Naga nationalist groups to stop factional clashes and also to facilitate peaceful negotiations between the Government of India and Naga groups for an early solution to the decades-old Naga Political Issue.

Celebrating the silver jubilee of the organisation, former president of Naga Hoho, Kevileto Kiewhuo said "We must celebrate our achievements and also admit our failures during these 25 years".

He said the pioneers of the Hoho had envisioned bringing the Nagas together and also to be friends, not enemies.

"Our pioneers had given their best and did well," he said while lamenting that the present Naga Hoho was "divided and fragmented" with Naga tribes coming up with their own organisations to counter the existence of the apex body like the Central Nagaland Tribes Council, Eastern Nagaland Peoples' Organisation, Tenyimi Union Nagaland, etc.

Naga Hoho was built by the Naga tribes but since the grievances of the tribes were somehow overlooked, the tribal bodies in Nagaland started moving out from the Hoho, he opined.

Appreciating the incumbent leaders of the Hoho for continuing to uphold the principle of apex body, Kiewhuo said

Nagas all over should be equal.

"Nagas are divided as people and we need to overcome this to achieve greater goals," he said while citing the need for oneness and unity for an early solution to the Naga Political Issue.

Convener of Forum for Naga Reconciliation, Rev Dr Wati Aier hoped that the celebration would be an opportunity for the Nagas to plan better for the future generation.

The dream during the formation of Naga Hoho was an inclusive Naga belonging and was not to give rise to a cult, he said.

As the convener of FNR, which has played a significant role in bringing about reconciliation between the Naga groups, Rev Dr Aier said "We have to know that we are different as tribes but we have to love and cooperate with each other for better unity".

He said that currently, Nagas have the challenge to move from idealistic nationalism to constructive nationalism without distorting the historical, fundamental and political rights of Naga people.

Delivering solidarity messages representatives of United Naga Council Manipur, Naga Hoho of Arunachal Pradesh, Zeliangrong-Rengma Joint Council Assam, Naga Students Federation, Naga Mothers' Association and Naga Peoples' Movement for Human Rights had the common voice on the need for Nagas to get together and chalk out the best way forward.

Viewing that Nagas have so many organisations and continue to be divided further, they opined that Nagas need to be united and strengthen the Naga Hoho.

Naga Hoho president H K Zhimomi stressed the need to uphold the legacy of the pioneers and the present leaders should come together to rebuild and strengthen the Hoho lest Nagas can never achieve the desired goal for an early solution to the Naga issue through unity. (PTI)

73 ft tall national flag hoisted

ITANAGAR, Dec 30: BJP MLA Tsering Tashi hoisted a 73 feet high-mast national flag in Tawang district of Arunachal Pradesh at a height of 15,200 feet above sea level, an official release said on Saturday.

Speaking on the occasion, Tashi, the local MLA, on Friday told the border guarding troops to continue their selfless service to the nation.

He exuded confidence that the installation of the national flag will be a source of inspiration for unity, integrity and national strength, the release said. (PTI)

Manipur village guard gunned down by unidentified men

IMPHAL, Dec 30: Unidentified men gunned down a village guard at Kadangband in Manipur's Imphal West district around 3.30am on Saturday, police said.

The deceased, identified as Jamesbond Ningombam, was guarding the village when he was shot dead by suspected militants from a nearby hill, they added. (PTI)

No. DPRD/BTC(SOPD)Udl-22/2023/9 Dated Kokrajhar, the 30th Dec, 2023

PRESS NOTICE
(e-Procurement)

The Director, P&RD, BTC, Kokrajhar invites bids for implementation of work "Const, of E/F and S/G road with 1 No. Box culvert in Edenbari village from Petr's house to Pucca road (Fega's tea Garden)" against tender value for an amount not exceeding of Rs.37,60,000.00 (Rupees thirty seven lakhs sixty thousand) only under SOPD fund for the financial year 2023-24 from the registered contractors of Class-I & Class-II (A, B & C) category of Assam PWD (Roads) / (Building), BTC.

Details may be seen at website <http://assamtenders.gov.in> and also at the Office of the undersigned during office hours.

Sd/- Director,
Panchayat & Rural Development,
BTC, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1049

No. KOK/BLDG/Tech-40/Pr-IV/2018-19/4444 Date 28/12/2023

SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER

Sealed tenders affixing Non-refundable Court fee stamp of Rs.8.25 (Rupees eight & paise twenty five) only with a validity period of 180 (One hundred eighty) days which will subsequently be converted and drawn up in the printed F-2 Form are invited from the intending Registered contractors of all classes of the BTC/ Assam PWD (Bldg.) for submitting tender for the works stated below. The tenders will be received by the undersigned up to 1.30pm of 03-01-24 and will be opened on the same date and place at 2.00Pm.

Sl. No.	Name of work	(Approx.) Estimated value of work	Earnest money 2% for GNL & 1% for ST/ SC/ OBC/MORC	Cost of tender document	Time of completion
1	Construction of New Amguri Saothal Bhaban Amguri under Kokrajhar Dev. Block.	Rs. 4,69,975.00	Rs. 9400/- & Rs. 4700/-	Rs. 500/-	4 (four) months

Detailed NIT may be seen in all working days in the office of the undersigned. Tender paper will be issued to the contractor or their authorized agent up to 1.00 pm in all working days from 02-01-2024 to 03-01-2024 in the office of the undersigned on payment in the form of Banker cheque/Bank draft/Demand draft duly pledged in favour of the Principal Secretary, BTC. The contractor should submit up-to date Registration Certificate of contractor, latest clearance certificate of Income Tax and GST etc. along with the tender paper. In case the office is remain closed/bandh for any circumstances on tender receiving/opening date, then the same will be received/opened in the next working days.

Sd/- Executive Engineer, PWD,
Kokrajhar District & Chirang District
Territorial Building Division, Kokrajhar

IPR(BTC)-2023-24/1044

AYODHYA 2.0

PM unveils new look temple town ahead of Ram temple consecration

AYODHYA, Dec 30: Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in a festooned, festive Ayodhya on Saturday to unveil a 'new look old' city with an airport, a revamped train station and projects worth ₹ 15,700 crore ahead of the consecration of the Ram temple next month, his day an artful blend of heritage, culture and development.

The flower-bedecked temple town, associated with the Ramayana for centuries and at the centre of modern day politics since the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, was the cynosure of attention as Modi said the strength of 'vikas' (development) and 'virasat' (heritage) would take India forward.

"The whole world is waiting for the historic moment of the 'pran pratishtha' ceremony in Ayodhya on January 22," Modi said at a rally here while appealing to people to not come on the day itself. Stressing that the business of people from across the country and the world coming to Ayodhya had started and would go on till eternity, the prime minister also appealed for a resolve to make town the cleanest in the country.

Addressing the meeting after inaugurating the Maharshi

Valmiki airport and the redeveloped station named Ayodhya Dham from where he flagged off two Amrit Bharat and six Vande Bharat trains, some virtually, he appealed to all citizens to light diyas in their houses on January 22 so the whole country basks in the glory of the temple.

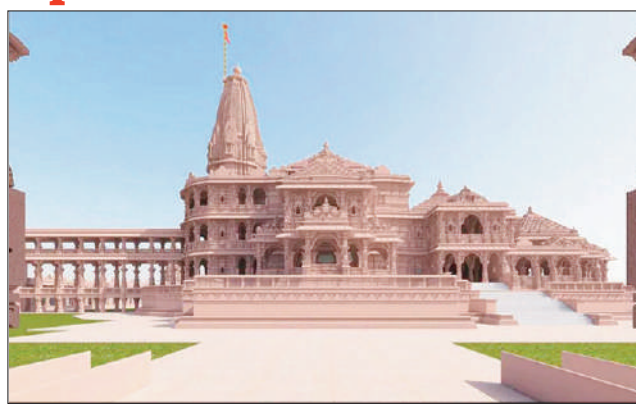
Marking January 22 as a special day, he also asked people to launch cleanliness drives at pilgrimage sites and temples across the country from Makar Sankranti on January 14 till the temple consecration day.

There was a time Lord Ram was "living under a tent", but now he will get a concrete house like the four crore poor who got pucca houses, he said.

The Ujjwala scheme, he said, had transformed the lives of crores of mothers and sisters. Only 14 crore gas connections were given in five decades, but his government in a decade gave 18 crore, including 10 crore free of cost under the scheme, the prime minister pointed out.

Earlier in the day, he stopped by at the home of an Ujjwala beneficiary Meera Majhi. He met the family in her humble home and was also seen drinking a cup of tea.

Modi inaugurated, dedicated



to the nation and laid the foundation stone of multiple development projects worth more than ₹ 15,700 crore.

These comprise projects worth about ₹ 11,100 crore for the development of the city and its surrounding areas, and those worth about ₹ 4,600 crore related to other works in Uttar Pradesh.

The day in Ayodhya, which in 1992 catapulted to global headlines with the demolition of the Mughal-era Babri Masjid by a group of kar sevaks who believed it was built on the birthplace of Lord Ram, was one of dances, music and the many folk colours of Uttar Pradesh and other states.

After he arrived in Ayodhya,

Modi held a roadshow from the airport to the railway station and was greeted by hundreds of people lining alongside the route.

Modi greeted people from his car and at one point opened the door of his vehicle to wave back at them. People showered flower petals, waved BJP flags and raised slogans in his praise.

The prime minister also witnessed performances by cultural troupes along the route. Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath's office on Friday said that more than 1,400 performers would present folk art and cultural programmes on 40 stages along the route from the airport to the railway station.

While one group of women from Rajasthan danced the 'Chakri' to lilting tunes, another from Prayagraj performed the ancient folk dance 'Dedhiya'.

"It is believed that women of Prayagraj danced the 'Dedhiya' when Ramji and others had returned from Lanka after Lanka Dahan. Now, Ram Lalla is also getting a new temple, so the divine feeling have come back, so this performance. As also to welcome the PM," lead dancer Preeti Singh told PTI.

The inauguration of the airport and railway station took place after the roadshow.

After inaugurating the station, the prime minister took a tour of the facility. He was accompanied by Adityanath, Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav and others. Modi was briefed by Vaishnav about the station, the facade of which is inspired by traditional temple architecture.

The Phase-I of the redeveloped station -- Ayodhya Dham Junction Railway Station -- has been completed at a cost of more than ₹ 240 crore, officials said.

The three-storey railway station building is equipped with features such as lifts, escalators, food plazas, shops for puja needs, cloak rooms, child care rooms and waiting halls.

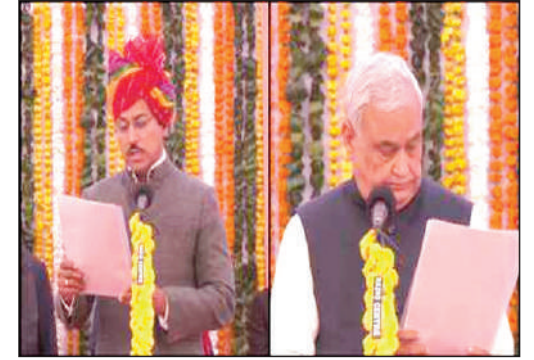
The station building is "accessible for all" and an "IGBC certified green station building", according to officials.

The prime minister visited the Lata Mangeshkar Chowk, where a giant-size veena has been installed. In keeping with the place and the mood, a bhajan by the late music queen played in the backdrop.

During the inauguration of the airport, Union Minister for Civil Aviation Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Minister of State for Civil Aviation Gen (Retired) VK Singh and Adityanath were among those who accompanied Modi. The facade of the terminal building depicts the architecture of the upcoming Ram temple here, while its interiors are decorated with paintings and murals depicting the life of Lord Ram.

Phase-1 of the airport has been developed at a cost of more than ₹ 1,450 crore, according to officials. The airport's terminal building will have an area of 6,500 sqm, equipped to serve about 10 lakh passengers annually. The airport will improve connectivity in the region, leading to a boost in tourism, business activities and employment opportunities, they said. (PTI)

Kirodi Lal Meena, Rajyavardhan Rathore among 22 sworn in as ministers



JAIPUR, Dec 30: Former Union minister Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore and senior BJP leader Kirodi Lal Meena were among 12 MLAs sworn in as cabinet ministers in the Bhajan Lal Sharma-led BJP government in Rajasthan on Saturday. In addition, 10 ministers of state were also inducted into the government during a ceremony at the Raj Bhawan here. Governor Kalraj Mishra administered the oath of office to the new ministers. The MLAs inducted into the Rajasthan cabinet are Meena, Madan Dilawar, Rathore, Gajendra Singh Khimsar, Babulal Kharadi, Jogaram Patel, Suresh Singh Rawat, Avinash Gehlot, Joraram Kumawat, Hemant Meena, Kanhaiya Lal Choudhary and Sumit Godara. Sanjay Sharma, Gautam Kumar Dak, Jhabar Singh Kharrar, Surendra Pal Singh and Heeralal Nagar took oath as ministers of state (independent charge). Otaram Dewasi, Manju Baghmur, Vijay Singh Choudhary, K K Vishnoi and Jawahar Singh Bedham were made ministers of state.

Kirodi Lal Meena, a six-time MLA, is representing the Sawai Madhopur assembly seat. He is also a two-time Lok Sabha MP and one-time Rajya Sabha MP.

Gajendra Singh Khimsar, a four-time MLA, represents the Lohawat constituency of Jodhpur district. He is also a former minister. Rajyavardhan Singh Rathore, who won from the Jhotwara assembly seat, is a former Union minister and two-time Lok Sabha MP from the Jaipur Rural seat. He is a first-time MLA. Rathore is an Olympic medallist and former Army officer. Babulal Kharadi, a four-time MLA, is representing the Jhadol assembly seat of Udaipur.

Ramganj Mandi MLA Madan Dilawar is a six-time legislator and former minister. He currently is the BJP's state general secretary. Suresh Singh Rawat is a legislator from Pushkar. A three-time MLA, Rawat has been a parliamentary secretary. Two-time MLA Avinash Gehlot represents the Jaitaran seat of Pali district. Two-time MLA Joraram Kumawat represents the Sumerpur seat of Pali. Hemant Meena is a first-time MLA from Pratapgarh. He is the son of former minister Nandlal Meena. Kanhaiya Lal Choudhary is also a three-time MLA from Malpura (Tonk). Another cabinet minister Sumit Godara, a second-time MLA, is representing the Lunarkansar seat of Bikaner district.

Ministers of State Sanjay Sharma, Gautam Kumar Dak (Badi Sadri), Jhabar Singh Kharrar (Srimadhapur) and Heeralal Nagar (Sangod) are two-time MLAs. BJP candidate from Karanpur Surendra Pal Singh, a former minister, was also inducted as an MoS (independent charge). Polling in this assembly segment will be held on January 5.

Otaram Dewasi, a three-time MLA, was the minister of state in the former BJP government led by Vasundhara Raje. He is from the Sirohi constituency.

Manju Baghmur, a Dalit face, is representing the Jayal seat of Nagaur district. MoS Vijay Singh Choudhary, a two-time MLA, is representing the Nawar (Nagaur) seat. K K Vishnoi (Gudhamalangi) and Jawahar Singh Bedham (Nagar) are first-time MLAs. Voting was held on November 25 for 199 out of 200 assembly seats in the state. The results were announced on December 3. In the assembly elections, the BJP won 115 seats and the Congress 69. Bhajan Lal Sharma took oath as the chief minister on December 15. MLAs Diya Kumari and Premchand Bairwa were made deputy chief ministers. (PTI)

Blast near Israel embassy: Police register FIR against 'unknown' persons



NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Days after a low-intensity blast took place near the Israeli embassy here, Delhi Police have registered an FIR against "unknown" persons, officials said on Saturday. The FIR was registered on Friday night under Section 3 (punishment for causing an explosion likely to endanger life or property) of the Explosive Substances Act and Section 427 (mischief causing damage to the amount of fifty rupees) of the Indian Penal Code at Tughlak Road police station based on a complaint lodged by a police officer, an official said.

The blast occurred on Tuesday evening in the area between the boundary walls of a house on plot number 4 -- Nanda's House -- and the Central Hindi Training Institute on plot number 2A on Prithviraj Road. The area has bushes, plants and trees and no CCTV camera.

It is behind the Israeli embassy on Dr APJ Abdul Kalam Road, running parallel to Prithviraj Road.

No one was injured in the blast. Police had found an "abusive" letter addressed to the Israeli ambassador near the blast site. According to sources, the one-page letter written in English is suspected to be related to an organisation called Sir Allah Resistance and mentions words like "Zionists", "Palestine" and "Gaza".

On Friday, police told PTI that they were planning to register an FIR as they had found "crucial evidence" pointing to a conspiracy to threaten the Israeli envoy.

Another official said on Saturday that the case might be handed over to the Special Cell to dig out the deeper conspiracy. Delhi Police officials, who are investigating the case, have scanned footage of multiple CCTV cameras installed around the blast site and spotted a suspect who had come from Jamia Nagar in an autorickshaw.

Police have questioned multiple autorickshaw drivers, including the one who brought the suspect to the spot before the blast took place. However, police are yet to trace the accused.

The officials said police had recovered a broken dial of a watch and some steel bearings from the blast site but it was too early to say if they were used in the explosion. Investigating officials are awaiting reports from the National Security Guard's (NSG) laboratory, where samples collected from the spot have been sent to ascertain the components used in the explosion.

Police have recorded statements of a dozen people who claimed to have heard the loud noise of the blast.

The statements reveal that the witnesses spotted a vehicle which broke down near the blast site. (PTI)

Govt releases draft guidelines to make railways more user-friendly for people with disabilities

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: The government has released draft guidelines on accessibility of railway stations, facilities there and in trains for people with disabilities, highlighting the need for integrating technology-enabled features such as text-to-speech and user-friendly pictograms.

The Department of the People with Disabilities (PwDs) has asked stakeholders and the public to give their comments, objections and suggestions by January 29 on the proposed guidelines to create a more user-friendly environment.

The proposed guidelines also highlight the need for dedicated website features catering to "divyangians", ensuring a flexible and accessible interface design.

These features will follow universal design principles and World Wide Web Consortium guidelines, integrating technology-enabled accessibility features such as text-to-speech and user-friendly pictograms, the draft guidelines state.

The draft includes the development of a dedicated mobile app and a one-click template for people with disabilities displaying all the information and facilities available



for them at stations as well in trains.

For inclusivity, credible announcements regarding facilities for PwDs will be integrated into public announcement systems at train stations and platforms. This includes sign language, captioning, and digital displays, the draft guidelines suggested.

Standardised illuminated signage across all stations, coupled with Braille signage, has also been proposed. Frontline staff will be trained in sign language to ensure effective communication, these stated. The guidelines call for accessible entry and exit points, ramps and handrails.

Designated accessible parking areas with clear signage are recommended for the convenience of differently-abled individuals.

Bihar Education Dept to start re-verification of more than one lakh recently recruited teachers

PATNA, Dec 30: The Bihar Education department has ordered re-verification of nearly one lakh teachers recruited last month, following complaints that those turning up for the job were imposters.

Additional chief secretary, Education Department, K K Pathak in a letter dated December 28 to all District Magistrates (DMs) has called for re-verification drive from January 15, blaming the anomalies on the "failure" of Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) to share thumb impressions of candidates who had appeared in the entrance examination with the department at the time of counselling in November.

"Following complaints of impersonation, the department recently called 4,000 selected teachers for random re-verification and also to find out whether the candidates who had appeared in the entrance examina-

tion were the same who joined the service. During the process, the department identified three imposters. Besides, three teachers, who had joined, fled away. Legal actions have been initiated against imposters by the department", says the letter.

The Bihar government provided appointment letters to 1,20,336 newly recruited teachers, who had cleared Teacher Recruitment Examination (TRE-1) conducted by the BPSC, at all district headquarters in the state on November 2 this year. The Commission recently declared TRE-2 results also to fill a total of 86,557 posts of teachers of different subjects in the state.

Despite repeated attempts by the PTI, Bihar Education Minister, Chandra Shekhar, was not available for his comments on the issue. (PTI)

Andaman & Nicobar Police deploy FIB for harbour patrolling in Port Blair

PORT BLAIR, Dec 30: The Andaman and Nicobar Police has deployed a state-of-the-art Fast Interceptor Boat (FIB) for round-the-clock harbour patrolling in Port Blair area for protection of natural resources, to stop illegal fishing and for carrying out search and rescue operations, a top official said.

The need for stringent security measures in Port Blair's harbour area was felt as CISF is restricted to the jetties and the Navy and Coast Guard primarily conduct sea patrolling beyond five nautical miles leading to a vacuum in the harbour area.

The top brass of Andaman and Nicobar Police after deliberations decided to engage a FIB in Port Blair.

Andaman and Nicobar Police DGP Dvish Chandra Srivastava told PTI "The focus area of the response team is to have proper access control of the restricted harbour area and to supplement and compliment Andaman and Nicobar Command, CISF and Port Control in carrying out fire fighting operations, search and rescue (SAR), medical evacuation, marine pollution control, protection of natural resources and illegal fishing within the harbour area".

Presently, there are 10 FIBs with Police Marine Force (PMF) and all of them are deployed all across the archipelago for coastal security. Out of 10, one of the Fast Interceptor Boat MV Trak (named after an Island in Nicobar) has been deployed

as 'Mobile Quick Response Team (MQRT)' at Phoenix Bay Jetty in Port Blair.

The MQRT stationed at Phoenix Bay Jetty comprises of Andaman and Nicobar Police Marine Force technical crew members along with trained India Reserve Battalion (IRBn) Commandos to meet any emergent situation.

The vessel is a fast-speed boat, with hi-tech surveillance cameras, communication systems and searchlights to improve search and rescue capabilities during night hours.

It is also fitted with - marine as well as police wireless sets to establish seamless communication with the Andaman and Nicobar Command and Port Control. (PTI)

Millet bar initiative in Varanasi helps tackle malnutrition among anganwadi children

VARANASI, Dec 30: A pilot initiative to distribute 'millet bars' to 50,000 children in 1,364 anganwadis in three blocks of Varanasi has given a further boost to the government's efforts to address child malnutrition.

The millet-bar initiative, which the Varanasi administration is implementing through Anil Agarwal Foundation (AAF) -- a CSR arm of Vedanta Ltd -- in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's constituency comes in the backdrop of the International Year of Millets celebrated in 2023.

Currently, there are a total of 3,914 anganwadi centres spread across nine blocks in Varanasi district. The millet bar initiative was piloted in only 1,364 anganwadi centres in three blocks -- Arajilina, Kashi Vidyapith, and Sewapuri -- including 264 modernised anganwadis called 'Nand Ghar' by AAF. This initiative supplements the government's nutrition programme undertaken through the

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme under which usually cooked meals are served to anganwadi children, and pregnant and lactating mothers.

"We are undertaking many initiatives to address child malnutrition in the district. Distribution of millet bar in anganwadis along with Vedanta in three blocks is one such and has definitely helped to improve the health of children and increased attendance," Varanasi district Chief Development Officer Himanshu Nagpal told PTI.

As 2023 is the international year of millets, prime minister started a 'millet' intervention in the constituency. The millet bars were introduced in three blocks after a proper study, he said.

A 20-gram millet bar, containing peanuts, rice syrup, ragi, jowar crisps, and watermelon seeds in three flavours is being distributed daily to children aged 3-6 years since March this year.

"It has helped bring down the

number of children suffering from Severe Acute Malnutrition (SAM) and Moderate Acute Malnutrition (MAM) in three blocks," he said.

In Varanasi district, children with SAM has come down to 0.6 per cent and MAM to 2 per cent in November 2023, while SAM stood at 7.3 per cent and MAM at 14 per cent as per the 2019 National Family Health Survey-5, he said. Further, Nagpal said in the remaining five blocks, the local administration has started from last month distribution of 'ragi ladoo' for one year under the CSR projects of other private companies. In the city area under the municipal corporation, dairy cooperative firm Amul is also supplementing with a 'millet kit'.

The millet-bar initiative supplemented the government's effort to address child malnutrition in anganwadis at a time when the state government had discontinued cooked meals under the ICDS scheme during the Covid-19 pan-



dem and began distributing 'take home dry ration' to the beneficiaries instead.

The state government has re-introduced cooked hot meals in anganwadi centres from November.

"The distribution of one millet bar daily has brought a positive change in children. It has not only improved their nutrition level but also enhanced their attendance," Laldev Maurya (50), an anganwadi worker at Nand Ghar Centre

in Harsons village, said. Bindu Patel (30), a mother of three children, is happy to see her four-year-old daughter gain weight in the last few months.

AAF spokesperson and Non-Executive Director at Vedanta Ltd Priya Agarwal Hebbur said the purpose of starting the pilot initiative was to ensure that all children, especially in the malnourished categories, have access to good nutrition to boost their growth. "The

past six months have garnered positive feedback as well as results".

In three blocks where millet bars were introduced, the number of children with SAM has come down to 5 per 1,000 children in November from 15 per 1,000 children in 1,364 anganwadis, according to the 'Poshan Tracker' of the Union Women and Child Development Ministry.

Similarly, the number of children with MAM has come down to 30 per 1,000 children in November from 47 per 1,000 children in March in the centres covered under the pilot project.

Thus, the reduction in SAM and MAM is 61.58 per cent and 35.41 per cent, respectively, across the 1,364 anganwadis aided by the introduction of multi millet bar.

That apart, the number of children enrolled in 1,364 anganwadi centres, including 'Nand Ghar', has also increased to 1.15 lakh in November from 1.07 lakh in

March this year, as per the official data.

"We will also try to continue the millet bar distribution in three blocks for another year. We are in touch with AAF," Nagpal said.

Anganwadis are government-funded child and mother care development centres in India that started in 1975. They were started as part of the government's flagship ICDS and are run by grassroots-level workers who are responsible for feeding children as well as pregnant women.

Besides the millet bar initiative, AAF has also modernised 1,421 anganwadis in Varanasi under its 'Nand Ghar' project. It is in the process of modernising another 57 in the district.

Besides Varanasi, AAF is modernising anganwadis in Amethi, Philibit, Raibareli and Hapur districts. Launched in 2016, AAF is implementing the Nand Ghar project in Uttar Pradesh and 13 other states. (PTI)

Amit Shah releases reference books on newly passed criminal justice laws

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Union Home Minister Amit Shah on Saturday released 12 reference books related to the recently enacted criminal justice laws and said the books have lucidly brought out changes made in the laws in a concise and simple manner.

Hailing the publishers for the reference books on the three laws, Shah said the books also give case law commentaries for easy understanding.

The three new laws -- the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita and the Bharatiya Sakshya Act -- got Parliament's approval last week and the president gave her assent on December 25.

The laws will replace the colonial era Indian Penal Code, the Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act of 1872 respectively.

"I congratulate Mohan Law



House for publishing the reference books related to the newly promulgated revolutionary criminal justice laws in a record short time," Shah

wrote on 'X'. He said these law books contain user-friendly comparative references for easy understanding of various

provisions and also highlight changes brought in the new laws. The home minister said heinous crimes against women such as rape was covered under Section 375 of the IPC but is now in Section 63 of the new law.

A grave crime like murder was under Section 300 of the IPC but is now covered under Section 101 in the new law.

"I thank Dr Vinay Ahuja, the Managing Director of the publishing house. Glad to launch the books today for the benefit of our law enthusiasts and luminaries," he said.

In another post, Shah congratulated Udit Mathur, the Managing Director and Shri Mahender Chaturvedi, the Sales Director of the publishing company Lexis Nexis for promptly releasing the books and said the newly published books will enhance the effective understanding of the laws. (PTI)

Bandh call by tribal outfit hits train, vehicular movement in parts of Jharkhand

JAMSHEDPUR, Dec 30: Rail services and vehicular movement were disrupted at some places in Jharkhand on Saturday, owing to a "symbolic Bharat bandh" call given by a tribal organisation in support of its long-standing demand for recognition of Sarna religion, officials said.

Among the affected rail networks were the Chakradharpur and Adra divisions of South Eastern Railway (SER), they said.

Trains, including the Ranchi-Howrah Vande Bharat Express, were detained at Purulia for over an hour as supporters of the 'Adivasi Sengel Abhiyan' (ASA) put up blockades on the Kantadhi-Tanagar line under Adra division, a railway official said.

The train was later diverted to continue its onward journey via the Purulia-Kotshila-Muri-Chandil-Tatanagar route, he said.

The Hatia-Kharagpur Express was cancelled for the day, while the Ranchi-Howrah Express and Hatia-Tatanagar Express were diverted via Muri-Chandil-Tatanagar.

Around 100 protesters also squatted on the tracks at Bahalda Road between Adityapur-Gamariah and Maluka-Dangaoposi stations under the Chakradharpur division, the official said.

The agitation was withdrawn around 12.20 pm in Adra and Chakradharpur divisions and train services normalised, a release issued by the Railways said.

The bandh supporters also put up blockades at various places on Tata-Hata Road in Karandih, Rola Chowk, Birsra Chowk, Seraikela as well as in Byhathu chowk on the Chaibasa-Ranchi Road, the officials said.

ASA president Salkhan Murmu claimed that the bandh evoked "good response not only in Jharkhand, but also in other parts of Eastern India including West Bengal and Odisha".

Murmu, a former parliamentarian, said tribals were left with no other option but to give a bandh call, "as our repeated pleas for

recognition of Sarnaism fell on deaf ears".

"The Sarna religion code is the identity of 15 crore adivasis of the country, as the tribals worship only nature," he said, adding, the outfit would intensify the agitation "if our legitimate demand was not met".

Sarna is the indigenous religious faith of tribal communities, who predominantly worship natural elements such as mountains, forests and wildlife. The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has suggested that Sarna religion be accorded independent category in the religion code of the Census.

Commenting on the Adivasi Sengel Abhiyan's move, Union Tribal Affairs Minister Arjun Munda, talking to PTI, said people will face a lot of inconvenience if such disruptions continue.

"The demand for Sarna religion should have been raised at an appropriate forum instead of harassing common people in this manner," Munda said. (PTI)

ADVERTISEMENT

Last Date of Application: 12/01/2024

No.E 400089/45
29th December 2023

In pursuance of approval of the Govt. of Assam vide letter No. ECF-417975/45 Dated, Dispur the 27th December, 2023 fresh applications are hereby invited from the Indian Citizens as defined under Article 5 to 8 of the Constitution of India, for filling up of 367 number of posts of Veterinary Field Assistant under the Directorate of A.H. & Veterinary Deptt. Assam, Chenikuthi, Guwahati-3. The vacancy will be filled up as per existing vacancy in the respective category of posts as per Post Based Roster Register considering the passed out VFA trainees as shown below.

Sl No	Caste	Nos of post
1	UR	14
3	OBC	235
4	ST(P)	41
5	SC	44
6	ST(H)	33
	Total	367 Nos.

Scale of Pay: Pay Band-2 of Rs. 14,000/- 49,000/+ Grade Pay of Rs. 6,200/-plus other allowances as admissible from time to time.

Age: A candidate should not be less than 21 years and more than 40 years of age as on 01/01/2023 as per Govt. Office Memorandum No. ABP.6/2016/51 dated 2nd September, 2020. The upper age limit is relaxable for the candidates of reserved categories as per existing provision. The upper age limit is relaxable by 5 years for SC/ ST candidates and 3 years for OBC/MOBC candidates. The age limit of the candidates will be calculated on the basis of the HSLC Certificate / HSLC Admit Cards/ Certificate issued by a recognised Board/ Council. No other documents shall be accepted in lieu thereof for the purpose.

Qualification: For direct recruitment to the cadre of Veterinary Field Assistant, a candidate shall have to pass the examination in elementary knowledge of Veterinary Science (one year Training Course) from the recognized "School of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry" established by the Govt. of Assam at Ghungoor, Silchar and having passed HSSLC (Sc.) Examination with Biology as a subject as the basic qualification. This is as per Rule 8 of "The Assam Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Subordinate Service Rules, 2002".

Physical Standard: A Candidate for direct recruitment to the cadre of VFA under Rule 3(d) shall be of sound health both mentally and physically and free from any organic defects or body infirmity likely to interfere with efficient performance of his duties and require to undergo medical examination before appointment to the service.

Selection Procedure: The Interview and the Selection Criteria for the post of Veterinary Field Assistant (VFA) and its allied posts shall be as per provision of Assam Animal Husbandry & Veterinary Subordinate Services Rules, 2002.

The shortlisted candidates will have to bring all the original testimonials i.e. Age Proof Certificate, Caste Certificate (in case of reserved category candidates), Educational Qualification Certificates, VFA Training completion Certificate from the School of Veterinary Science & Animal Husbandry, Assam, Ghungoor, Silchar and Declaration in Form-"A" under Rule 5(I) of the Assam Public Services (Application of Small Family Norms in Direct Recruitment) Rules, 2019 as available in the website of the A.H. & Veterinary Department for verification on the date and time to be notified later on.

How to Apply:-

- The intending candidates may apply in standard form as per part IX of the Assam Gazette for application along with testimonials and a self-addressed envelope affixing stamp of Rs. 5.00 for communication. The duly filled in Application should be addressed to the Director, A.H. & Veterinary Department, Assam, Chenikuthi, and Guwahati-781003 and be submitted physically in the Drop Box during office hours on or before 12/01/2024 (5.00 pm) at the Directorate or by Registered Post.
- Applicants must affix 1 (One) copy of recent photograph on the space provided in the application form firmly with good quality glue/adhesive and also should enclose another copy along with the application. The photograph must be signed prominently. The Directorate of A.H. & Veterinary shall not be responsible for detachment/ loss of the photograph.
- Since the practice of furnishing attested copies of certificates/mark sheets etc. by competent authority has been discontinued by the Govt., the applicant shall furnish copies of certificate/mark sheet etc. declared by himself/herself as certified to be true copy of the original along with the application.
- In case of detection of any false declaration / statement made by any applicant, his/her application will be rejected and will also be penalized as per Rules/Law. Self-attested photocopies of Certificate/ Mark Sheet from HSLC onwards and also Caste Certificate / Registration Certificate / Experience Certificate (where necessary) should be furnished invariably and should be tagged properly without any chance of getting lost during transit. The Directorate will not be responsible for any such loss due to improper tagging.
- Incomplete and defective applications in terms of the Advertisement will be summarily rejected. No documents will be entertained after the last date of submission of application.
- In-service candidates will have to apply through proper channel.
- The last date of receipt of application is 12th January, 2024 up to 5.00 pm.

N.B.

- The appointment shall be subject to the conditions laid down in "The Animal Husbandry and Veterinary Subordinate Services Rules, 2002" and in accordance with existing Government norms, procedures and policy.
- No TA/DA will be admissible.
- Canvassing directly or indirectly will disqualify a candidate.
- Government servants joining the service of the state on or after 01/02/2005 shall not be governed by the existing Assam Service (Pension) Rules, 1969 and order issued there under from time to time. So far as their pension and other retirement benefits are concerned, they will be governed by a new set of pension rules which are being formulated in the line with the contributory pension scheme of Govt. of India as per rule.

Sd/-
Director,

AH & Veterinary Department, Assam
Chenikuthi, Guwahati-3

Janasanyog/D/15579/23/31 December 2023

Police conduct raids, pick up wanted accused ahead of New Year celebrations

MUMBAI, Dec 30: Police has conducted raids at several places including gambling dens and illegal liquor outlets in the city and taken action against drug peddlers ahead of New Year celebrations, an official said on Saturday.

As many as 23 wanted or absconding accused were taken into custody during the operation that covered all five regions, he said.

Besides senior inspectors of all police stations, 13 Deputy Commissioners of Police and 41 Assistant Commissioners of Police took part in the operation that started late Friday night and continued till early hours on Saturday.

Fifty miscreants who were in the city despite being barred from living within Mumbai's limits were held.

Action was also taken against 49 persons for illegal possession of weapons. As many as 104 people faced action under the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act.

Police raided 95 places where gambling dens or illegal liquor outlets were operating, and apprehended 63 people.

Action was also taken against 264 hawkers for encroachment and 886 hotels and lodges were inspected, the official said. (PTI)

Human spaceflight tests, deep ocean exploration: 2024 packed year for Indian science

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: After the momentous landing on the moon's south pole, India has now set its sights on more challenging missions -- sending humans to space and getting samples from the lunar surface back to earth. Test flights for both the projects are scheduled in the new year.

For Indian scientists it is just not about the moon and beyond. Furthering deep ocean exploration, the country is scheduled to send aquanauts on board the "Samudrayaan", first to a depth of 500 metres in March, and later, achieve its targeted depth of up to 6,000 metres.

The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) is set to begin the new year with the launch of XPoSats.

The X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSats)? will seek to unravel the mysteries of the sources of X-Rays and study the enigmatic world of black holes. The satellite is set for launch on January 1 on board the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) from Sriharikota.

This would be followed by the insertion of the Aditya L-1 satellite at the Lagrange Point-1 on January 6 at 4 pm from where it will have an uninterrupted view of the sun, its object of study for the next five years.

The new year will also see the launch of the NISAR satellite, a USD 1.2 billion joint project by NASA and ISRO. It will be the most expensive earth imaging satellite ever made to study climate change.

The year gone by was an exciting one for science in India with the highlight being the launch of the "Chandrayaan-3" mission on July 14 and its soft-landing near the south pole of the moon on August 23.

The Vikram lander module of the mission also delivered a rover "Pragyaan" on the lunar surface that roamed around for a few metres, clicked pictures of the moon and scooped lunar soil "regolith" to study its properties.

ISRO also sprung a surprise by making the Vikram lander hop and touch-down a little away from its position, a demonstration of the ability of the spacecraft to take off from the moon's surface. Another surprise was to bring the propulsion module, that was orbiting the moon, back to the earth's orbit, providing a sneak peek into the possibilities of bringing back moon rocks to the earth.

The new year will witness two unmanned missions under the "Gaganyaan" project to validate the human-rated launch vehicle and the orbital module in actual flight.

In addition, multiple sub-orbital missions using a test vehicle are planned to validate the Gaganyaan Crew Escape System under various abort conditions, as ISRO eyes for a 2025 time slot to send an Indian to space in an Indian capsule.

The space agency, through its commercial arm NewSpace India Limited, also put 72 satellites of OneWeb, the Bharti Enterprises-backed satellite internet provider, into low-earth orbit on two separate missions of Launch Vehicle Mark-III (LVM-3), which was used for commercial launches for the first time.

The first mission to put 36 satellites in orbit was on October 23, 2022, and followed up by a similar mission on March 26. (PTI)

55 foreign terrorists among 76 neutralised in J-K in 2023: J&K DGP

JAMMU, Dec 30: A total of 76 terrorists, including 55 foreigners, were neutralised, 291 terrorist associates arrested and 201 overground workers booked under the Public Safety Act in Jammu and Kashmir this year, Director General of Police R R Swain said on Saturday.

Swain further said that only 31 local terrorists -- an all time low -- are left in the Union Territory, while the recruitment of locals into militancy has witnessed a drop of 80 per cent this year.

"In 48 anti-terrorist operations, we have neutralised 76 terrorists, including 55 foreigners. The trend of foreign terrorists getting killed more starting in 2022 and continued this year, making it clear that our actual fight is against infiltrators," he said, asserting that the anti-terrorist operations will continue next year with more vigour.

He said there are 31 identified local terrorists -- four in Jammu region's Kishtwar and 27 in the valley -- who are active and the number is at an all-time low.

"There is an 80 per cent decline in terror recruitment this year. Year-on-year comparison shows that 130 locals joined terrorism in 2022 and this year, till date the number is 22. We will try to stop the recruitment completely which is essential to end the cycle of violence."

"When there is recruitment, action happens and the fallout follows, continuing the cycle. I am seeing the decline in recruitment as saving 113 people from getting killed this year," he said.

The DGP said that against 31 civilian killings by terrorists last year, the number dropped to 14 this year and the terror-related incidents declined from 125 in 2022 to 46 in 2023, recording a drop of 63 per cent.

"Four policemen including a DSP and an inspector were martyred this year, against 14 last year, thus recording a 71 per cent decline," he said.

He said 291 terror associates, who provide logistic support, work as guides and identify targets, were ar-

rested this year compared to 373 last year.

"We have strengthened the record building and surveillance system by utilising technology and a repeat offender can now be easily identified and ensured a maximum sentence," he added.

The DGP said 201 overground workers (OGWs) -- 171 in Kashmir and the rest in Jammu zone -- were detained under the PSA, while 89 terror modules, including 78 in Kashmir and 11 in Jammu, were busted this year.

Swain said 18 terrorist hideouts were unearthed with 12 in the valley and six in Jammu region.

He said 99 properties, linked to terrorism and separatism, worth more than Rs 170 crore, were attached including 57 by the State Investigation Agency. Besides, several bank accounts were frozen in addition to the recovery of cash, he added.

He said police identified 8,000 fake social media accounts, mostly working from outside the country and appropriate legal action against all those were ensured.

He said the strike calls and stone-pelting continue to show a downward trend and compared to 2021-22, this year it was the lowest. "There was zero response to organised strike calls from separatists and terrorists operating from across the border, giving a silent endorsement from a common man who wants peace and development."

The DGP said the society will not be allowed to remain hostage to a handful of sections and action against such elements is inevitable.

Swain said the overall security environment in Jammu and Kashmir has improved, paving way for successful conduct of a number of important events like three-day national conference on legal services and G20 Tourism Working Group meeting in Srinagar, Amarnath yatra and Muharram procession after a gap of 34 years, besides Bharat Jodo Yatra of the Congress. (PTI)

Contd. from Page 3...

District admin launches

where accidents occur," she added. The DC mentioned that for the road from Kaziranga to Lahorijan NH-39, which accounts for a large number of accidents, the Public Works Departments are in the process of identifying black spots.

Recently, two black spots were identified; one at Gautam Basti and another at Amrajan on NH-39, and rectification works are underway.

"Awareness on road safety has been conducted in various schools and colleges. A regular eye check-up was also conducted for drivers by the health department.

Street plays on road safety were also held, in which renowned actor Rajib Kro participated," she further informed.

She said that the transport minister, Parimal Suklabaidya, has visited Bokajan, held road safety awareness, and will also come down to Diphu.

"The police have collected ₹ 2,91,05,300 in fines in 2022-2023, while the district transport department has collected ₹ 1,83,40,000," she concluded.

Light 'Shri Ram Jyoti'

And, I am also eager like you," Modi said. He also appealed to the people of the city to take a pledge to make Ayodhya the cleanest city of India.

"This is the responsibility of the residents of Ayodhya." "We have to make a new resolution for the country, fill ourselves with new energy.

For this, all of you should light Shri Ram Jyoti in your homes on January 22 and celebrate Deepawali. Now people from all over the country and the world will come to Ayodhya every day and this will continue till eternity ('anant kaal').

He also requested people to run a cleanliness drive at all religious sites and temples across the country from January 14-22.

Uttar Pradesh Governor Anandiben Patel, chief minister Yogi Adityanath, civil aviation minister Jyotiraditya Scindia and railway minister Ashwini Vaishnaw were present on the occasion.

Paying tributes to Maharshi Valmiki, after whom the newly built Ayodhya airport is named, Modi said, "The Ramayana written by Maharshi Valmiki is the knowledge path that leads us to Prabhu Shri Ram."

"In modern India, Maharshi Valmiki International Airport (in) Ayodhya Dham will link us to the 'divya' (divine), 'bhavya' (grand) and 'navya' (new) Ram Mandir."

On the trains that he flagged off earlier in the day, Modi said the "trishakti" of Vande Bharat, Namu Bharat and Amrit Bharat is going to rejuvenate the railways. Modi said December 30 holds special significance in the history of the country.

"On this day in 1943, Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose hoisted the flag in Andaman and declared independence. Today, on such an auspicious day, we are taking forward the resolve of the aazadi ka amrit kaal."

"Today, the campaign to speed up work for building a developed India is getting a new energy from the city of Ayodhya," he said.

During his visit, the prime minister made a sudden stopover at a woman's house who holds the distinction of being the 10th-crore beneficiary of the the Ujjwala Yojana.

"Today I got the opportunity to have tea at the house of the 10th-crore beneficiary of the Ujjwala Gas Connection."

Only 14 crore gas connections were given in five decades, but his government gave 18 crore, including 10 crore free of cost under the Ujjwala scheme, in a decade, he said. (PTI)

Jaishankar's visit to Russia

The rich contribution of cultural ties and people-to-people exchanges in enhancing the goodwill and friendship between India and Russia was reflected in EAM's interaction with the Indian Diaspora in Moscow, the statement said.

In Saint Petersburg, Jaishankar met the Governor, Alexander Beglov, and discussed possibilities of cooperation in the economic and cultural fields.

He had a discussion with a diverse cross-section of Indologists at Saint Petersburg University.

Views were exchanged on how to enhance a better direct understanding and appreciation of developments in the two countries.

He also interacted with teachers and students at School No 653 named after Gurudev Rabindranath Tagore, a premier Russian government school which teaches Hindi as part of its regular curriculum. (PTI)

Sumeet Raghavan, Mahesh Thakur, Nishant & Pariva share their New Year aspirations

MUMBAI, Dec 30: Actors Sumeet Raghavan, Nishant Malkani, Mahesh Thakur and Pariva Pranati have opened up about their year-end reflections and aspirations for what lies ahead.

As 2024 draws to a close, the excitement for a fresh chapter intensifies. From heartfelt resolutions to joyous celebrations, the artistes shared their plans on how they will ring in the New Year.

Sumeet, who plays Rajesh Wagle in 'Wagle Ki Duniya', said: "In the hustle and bustle of life, amid resolutions and plans, it's the love and warmth of our family that weave the most beautiful moments."

"Much like Rajesh, who values family above all else in 'Wagle Ki



Duniya', for me, what matters most is my family, especially around the New Year when everyone is finally free and has time to spend with each other. This New Year, I encourage everyone to embrace their dear ones and cherish moments with siblings and parents, as much as possible."

Nishant, who plays Raghav Kaul in 'Pashmina - Dhaage Mohabbat Ke', said: "This past year has truly been a blessing for me. Being part of a grand project like 'Pashmina' and then spending a good part of the year shooting in the most breathtaking locations in Kashmir -- as an actor, I couldn't have asked for anything better."

"Here's hoping the next year gets even bigger and better. As we enter the New Year, I want to extend my warmest wishes to all my fans. May the coming year bring you love, growth, and beautiful moments." Mahesh, who portrays Jaidev Sharma in 'Aangan Aapno Kaa', shared, "May this year be more than just ticking off



accomplishments from your to-do list; let it be a time when you savor each small victory. The New Year, for me, symbolises a fresh start, and that's exactly what it has been. "With our show 'Aangan' recently released, my aspirations for the coming year revolve around the show and how the characters shape up. I hope this New Year brings immense joy and love to all the wonderful viewers who have been a part of our journey in 'Aangan'."

Pariva, who plays Vandana Wagle in 'Wagle Ki Duniya', said: "This year on 'Wagle Ki

Duniya' we delved into serious and sensitive topics like cancer, which have significantly increased my appreciation for time and moments in my personal life. As we embrace the New Year, I wish everyone to experience moments filled with the warmth of loved ones and the joy of creating beautiful memories together."

"Whether it's a shared meal, a heartfelt conversation, or simply being together, every moment spent with family and friends is precious."

The shows air on Sony SAB. (AGENCIES)

JEREMY RENNER HINTS AT RESUMING WORK A YEAR AFTER SNOWPLOUGH ACCIDENT



LOS ANGELES, Dec 30: Hollywood star Jeremy Renner has hinted at starting shoot of 'Mayor of Kingstown' season three, a year after being critically injured in a snowplow accident. Renner had suffered an accident in January after a snowplow ran him over as he was trying to save his nephew from getting run over himself. The incident caused Renner to break over 30 bones,

which required major rehabilitation. The actor appeared to signal his return to the show's sets after he shared an Instagram Story from his "Mayor of Kingstown" co-star Emma Laird. In her post, Laird had shared a photo with Renner and wrote, "It's happening. Back with my favourite guy next week @jeremyrenner."

"Mayor of Kingstown" follows the McLusky family,

power brokers in Kingstown, Michigan, where the business of incarceration is the only thriving industry.

Renner plays the role of Mike McLusky, who acts as a liaison between criminals, prison guards, and police. The show's second season had debuted on American streamer Paramount+ on January 15, two weeks after Renner's accident. (PTI)

'Nothing left to pull or cut': Sharon Osbourne vows to stop cosmetic surgery



LOS ANGELES, Dec 30: Reality television star Sharon Osbourne has vowed to never undergo any more cosmetic surgery procedures, saying she has nothing left to stretch, pull or cut."

The 71-year-old, who has been open about her procedures, admitted a recent face-lift left her feeling 'frightened' as the surgeon 'messed up'.

The TV personality underwent the face-lift three-and-a-half years ago but was left 'looking like a cyclops' as she shared her regrets about having more work done, reports 'Mirror.co.uk'.

Sharon, who is married to

rock legend Ozzy Osbourne, revealed: "I had a face-lift three-and-a-half years ago and it was the worst because the guy messed up. I was left with one eye higher than the other. It took a year to put it all right. I frightened myself with what happened."

'Mirror.co.uk' quoted her as saying, "I won't do anymore -- there's nothing left to stretch, pull, cut. It's taken years for me to say it but this is me. It's time to leave well alone." During her chat with 'Best' magazine, she also admitted she went too far after using Ozempic - a drug used in people with type-2 diabetes - to lose weight. The

star lost a whopping 19 kg and has been trying to put the weight back on. "I need to put on 4.5 kg but I don't seem to be able to," she said.

Sharon noticed 'everyone was on (Ozempic) and wanted to try it for herself. "Be careful what you wish for," she said in a different interview. The 71-year-old rock matriarch underwent face-lift operations in 1987 and 2002, a lower face-lift in 2019, with another full lift in 2021. Reflecting on this most recent operation, she recently revealed she was horrified by the results, which she says left her looking like a mutant. (AGENCIES)

Nani, Mrunal's 'Hi Nanna' to make OTT debut on Netflix on Jan 4

MUMBAI, Dec 30: Actors Nani and Mrunal Thakur's romance drama "Hi Nanna" will make its streaming debut on Netflix on January 4, the streamer announced on Saturday.

Directed by Shouryuv, the Telugu movie was re-released in theatres on December 7 to positive reviews.

"Love is in the air, and so is our excitement. Join @NameisNani and #MrunalThakur in their journey of finding love in 'Hi Nanna', streaming from 4th January in Telugu, Tamil, Malayalam, Kannada and Hindi on Netflix. #HiNannaOnNetflix," read the post by Netflix India on microblogging site X.

"Hi Nanna" followed



the story of a doting father, Viraj (Nani), and his six-year-old daughter Mahi (Kiara Khanna). Their lives alter

when a mysterious woman, Yashna (Thakur) befriends them and empathises with their past.

The film also featured Nasser, Jayaram, Priyadarshi Pulikonda, Angad Bedi and Viraj Ashwin in pivotal roles. (PTI)

Major hits and misses from Bollywood in 2023

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: The year 2023 proved lucky for Bollywood and Shah Rukh Khan led the way with "Pathaan" and "Jawan". However, amidst high expectations, there were also some big titles that failed to capitalise on the great theatrical boom of Hindi movies post pandemic, ultimately falling flat at the box office.

Here is the list of some of the major hits and misses of 2023.

Hits
1. "Pathaan" and "Jawan": With the two action titles, Shah Rukh made a triumphant return to leading man roles after a gap of four years. "Pathaan", directed by Siddharth Anand, re-released in theatres in January and shattered many box office records in the opening weekend and ended its theatrical run with a towering gross box office collection of over ₹ 1,050 crore. It also starred Deepika Padukone and John Abraham, "Jawan", a high-octane action entertainer from Tamil director Atlee. The pan-India film, which also featured Nayanthara and

Vijay Sethupathi, turned out to be an even bigger hit, grossing ₹ 1,150 crore globally to become the biggest hit of SRK's career.

2. "Animal": It was one of the most memorable years of Ranbir's career with the actor delivering the third biggest but also the most divisive film of 2023 in "Animal", directed by Sandeep Reddy Vanga of "Kabir Singh" fame. The film drew criticism for its graphic content, extreme violence, and treatment of female characters but since its release on December 1, it has earned over ₹ 880 crores in worldwide gross.

3. "Gadar 2": A sequel to 2000 hit "Gadar: Ek Prem Katha", the Anil Sharma-directed film reintroduced Sunny Deol to mass audiences. The movie, which released in August, turned out to be a surprise hit of the year with over Rs 680 crore in worldwide collection, according to trade websites.

Sunny, 66, reprised his role of Tara Singh in "Gadar 2", set years after the events of the first movie.

4. "Tiger 3": Salman Khan returned as super spy Avinash Singh Rathore aka Tiger in the third part of his eponymous movie franchise.

Directed by Maneesh Sharma, the film was released in November. Despite coming in theatres around the time of Cricket World Cup, the movie grossed over ₹ 460 crore in worldwide collection. It also starred Katrina Kaif and Emraan Hashmi.

5. "Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani": Karan Johar's seventh full-fledged feature not only became one of the highest grossing films of the filmmaker's career, but is also his most talked-about and progressive movie till date. Released in July, the movie grossed over ₹ 355 crore.

"Rocky Aur Rani Kii Prem Kahaani" featured Ranveer Singh and Alia Bhatt with great supporting acts by the likes of cinema veterans Dharmendra, Jaya Bachchan and Shabana Azmi as well as actors Tota Roy Chowdhury, Churni Ganguly and Aamir Bashir.

Misses

1. "The Vaccine War": After the controversial-yet-highly-successful "The Kashmir Files", Vivek Agnihotri released "The Vaccine War" in theatres in September. The movie revolved around Indian scientists and their quests to develop an affordable vaccine for India and the world. It earned ₹ 14 crore at the box office, according to trade websites.

2. "Tejas": Kangana Ranaut had another forgettable year as "Tejas", which featured her as an Indian Air Force pilot, turned out to be a colossal disappointment at the box office. It was released in theatres in October and managed to earn around ₹ 8 crore, trade websites reported.

3. "Bholaa": Trade pundits were betting big on Ajay Devgn's "Bholaa", the Hindi remake of Tamil hit "Kaithi", but the audiences gave the film a cold shoulder. The film, which released in cinemas in March, earned over ₹ 120 crore, just enough to cover its making cost. It was directed by Devgn and also starred Tabu.

4. "Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan": Before

"Tiger 3", Salman had another big release in "Kisi Ka Bhai Kisi Ki Jaan", which made its debut in theatres in April, coinciding with the festival of Eid. Despite being headlined by a Bollywood superstar, the film underperformed at the box office, earning around ₹ 180 crore.

The movie, which was a remake of Tamil superstar Ajith's hit movie "Veeram", also starred Pooja Hegde and Venkatesh Daggubati.

5. "Adipurush": The Om Raut-directorial, headlined by "Baahubali" star Prabhas, was one of the most anticipated titles but was plagued by many controversies.

It was released amid much fanfare in June, registering a bombastic score of over ₹ 300 crores in the opening weekend. But poor reviews, coupled with a huge row over its poor dialogues and VFX, took a toll on the movie as it recorded a huge dip in numbers and footfalls in theatres. The film, also starring Saif Ali Khan and Kriti Sanon, eventually grossed around ₹ 390 crores, according to trade websites. (PTI)

Karbi Anglong district Khel Maharan concludes

HT Bureau

DIPHU, Dec 30: The Khel Maharan for Karbi Anglong district level competition concluded here at Karbi Anglong Sports Association (KASA) stadium on Saturday. The Khel Maharan is being organised under the initiative of Sports and Youth Welfare Department, Govt. of Assam, to identify sports talents in the state of Assam.

For Karbi Anglong district the event is organised by District Administration and conducted by

District Sports Office.

The competition started on December 27. The events of competition include football, athletics, volleyball, Kabadi and Khokho. The winning teams and individuals from three Legislative Assembly segments of Howraghat, Diphu and Bokajan participated in the competition.

Attending as the chief guest on the concluding day the guardian minister for hills area (HAD), Jogen Mohan said the district level competition of Khel Maha-

ran has concluded here today. It started from the Member of Autonomous Council (MAC) and LAC levels and to the district level. The teams and individuals winning in the district level will compete in the state and national levels. The Minister said Khel Maharan has been organised as a platform for identification of sports talents in grassroots levels across Assam. "I hope that many young talented sports individuals competing at various levels will bring names for the state and dis-

trict. From Karbi Anglong many athletes and talented sports individuals have been selected to represent Assam at national level," the guardian minister stated.

On the concluding day today the football final match of above -19 boys was played, where Bokajan LA defeated Howraghat LA by 4-1. Bokajan LA bags the championship.

The winning teams were handed over trophies and medals by HAD Minister Jogen Mohan alongwith the presence of MP



Horensing Bey; Rajya Sabha MP, Kamakhya Prasad Tasa; Deputy Speaker, Assam Legislative Assembly, Dr. Numal Momin; Executive Member (EMs) of Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, Member of Autonomous Council (MACs); District Commissioner, Madhumita Bhagawati and District Sports Officer, Rilip Ronghang.

Results: Volleyball

Under -19 girls category Diphu LA bagged the championship and Bokajan LA was runners up.

Above 19 boys category Diphu LA bagged the championship and Howraghat LA bagged the runners up.

Under -19 boys category Bokajan LA bagged the championship and Howraghat LA bagged the runners up.

Football Under -19 girls Diphu LA bagged the championship and Bokajan runners up.

Under -19 boys Howraghat LA won the championship and Bokajan runners up.

Rohit focuses on Mukesh during net session, Jadeja goes full tilt



CENTURION, Dec 30: It was an optional session at the Super-sport Park but for India skipper Rohit Sharma, skipping the nets wasn't an option. Outfoxed by South African pace spearhead Kagiso Rabada in both innings of the opening Test, Rohit was present as skipper and batter in equal measure during a two-hour session. The Indian captain was focused on facing Mukesh Kumar, who bowled only to Rohit for at least 45 minutes.

While the fit-again Ravindra Jadeja and Ravichandran Ashwin also bowled in the same nets, the Indian skipper's complete attention was on the one Test old Bengal seamer. Occasionally, Dayanand Garani, the throwdown specialist kept his deliveries fast and full on off stump channel.

He actually wanted Mukesh to bowl one that comes in with the angle from length. "Hawa mein andaar aa raha hai. Par koshish kar angle se andar laane ka," the skipper told his younger colleague.

Rohit specifically wanted Mukesh to pitch in between 4-6 metre length and the seamer seemed to have impressed the skipper. There were times when he beat Rohit's bat and earned appreciation from the senior pro.

When batting coach Vikram Rathour asked him, "Tu is net pe aayega" (would you like to use this one), pointing at the nets exclusively kept for throwdowns, the skipper replied: "Nahi yehin pe aur 10 minute bat karoonga" (No I will bat here for another 10 minutes). The skipper devoted extra time

for Mukesh and it seemed he was giving tips on wrist position and the length that he needs to hit on a regular basis. Mukesh has been consistently playing domestic cricket and is one of the biggest reasons for Bengal featuring in two Ranji Trophy finals in three years. On the day, he did ask a few probing questions of the Indian captain and certainly made a case for himself for the Newlands game. It will be a huge surprise if Prasadh Krishna, after his forgettable debut, gets a chance to play in the next Test. Far from being Test match ready, it was time for him to get back to the drawing board. Prasadh didn't bowl to any batters at the nets as the lanky man from Bengaluru sought to figure out what's the right length to hit in South African conditions.

Bowling coach Paras Mhambrey paid singular attention to Prasadh during the 75 odd minutes that he bowled at the nets.

Mhambrey kept three lengths for the pacer. First, two horizontal blue strips on 10 metre length (short), then two red chip type on 6-8 metre length (back of length) and two parallel yellow strips on good length (around 4 metre).

Prasadh was asked to hit each of those lengths on a regular basis.

He wasn't always successful and it was evident that he is not ready for the big test yet. Ravindra Jadeja looked completely fit as he bowled and batted comfortably for a considerable amount of time, allaying fears about whether he can take part in the must-win second Test. (PTI)

THE GRAND EVENT IS SCHEDULED TO COMMENCE IN THE UAE AND OMAN LATER THIS MONTH

Vinesh returns Khel Ratna and Arjuna Awards, leaves them at Kartavya Path

NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Multiple World Championship medallist Vinesh Phogat on Saturday returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award, keeping the two awards lying in the middle of national capital's Kartavya Path after Delhi Police stopped her from reaching the prime minister's office.

On Tuesday, the Asian Games gold medallist grappler had decided to return her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award to the government, saying such honours have become meaningless at a time when wrestlers are struggling to get justice.

Phogat had announced her decision in a letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

On Saturday, she attempted to reach the prime minister's office to return her awards but the police prevented her from reaching the PMO.

As a mark of protest, she left the awards at the Kartavya Path and they were later picked up by Delhi Police. Phogat, along with Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, had protested against the elec-

tion of Sanjay Singh, a close aide of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) President Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who had been accused of sexual harassment by the three well-known grapplers.

Sakshi had also announced her retirement from wrestling soon after Sanjay Singh's appointment as WFI Chief.

However, the Sports Ministry had later suspended the newly-elected panel for not following the provisions of its own constitution while taking decisions while asking the Indian Olympic Association (IOA) to constitute an ad-hoc panel to manage the affairs of the sports body.

In her letter posted on X (formerly Twitter), Phogat had said that their lives are not like those "fancy government advertisements" that talk about women's empowerment and upliftment.

Acting on the sports ministry directive, the IOA on Wednesday constituted a three-member ad hoc committee to run the day-to-day affairs of the WFI. (PTI)



Australia(W) post challenging 258 for 8 despite Deepti Sharma's fifer

MUMBAI, Dec 30: Off-spinner Deepti Sharma stymied Australia's surge with a stellar five-wicket haul but seven dropped catches by India allowed them to post a challenging 258 for eight in the second Women's ODI here on Saturday. Deepti exploited a dry and turning surface to a fine degree to return with figures off five for 38, but her hard work was undone by the hosts' horrendous fielding.

She accounted for Ellyse Perry (50), Beth Mooney (10), Tahlia McGrath (24), Georgia Wareham (22) and Annabel Sutherland (23) for her career's second five-for.

Alana King, who was dropped once each by Deepti and skipper Harmanpreet Kaur, hammered three sixes to make an unbeaten 28 (17 balls) in a late surge to take Australia past the 250-run mark, which at one stage looked beyond the visitors.

Australia looked in complete command until the 22nd over, powering to 117 for one through a 77-run stand for the second wicket between Perry and



Phoebe Litchfield (63, 98 balls, 6x4s).

But fortune swung in India's favour when Deepti was introduced, and the senior spinner made an immediate impact.

Perry (50, 47 balls, 4x4s, 1x6s) raced to her second fifty in a row and posed India a serious threat during a strong partnership with Litchfield, but Deepti got rid of the former to start her demolition job.

In an attempt to pull a short delivery from Deepti over mid-wicket, Perry could not clear debutant Shreyanka Patil who completed the catch on her sec-

ond attempt.

Deepti troubled Mooney consistently, using the roughness of the pitch to full effect by generating sharp away turn.

To counter the turn, Mooney swept from outside the line of the ball but was beaten by a straight one, getting trapped leg-before. Deepti later cleaned up the dangerous McGrath in the 40th over for her third wicket, and then added Wareham on the first ball of the 46th over. She took a return catch off to get rid of Sutherland to complete the five-wicket haul.

In between, Sneha Rana, who had to leave the field following a nasty collision with Pooja Vas-trakar, had Ashleigh Gardner (2) caught at long on for her only wicket. But Deepti's exploits notwithstanding, India were simply poor in the field. Litchfield was dropped when she was yet to open her account by Amanjot Kaur in the second over and then on 10 by Yastika Bhatia at first slip.

Rana dropped Perry in the 17th over when she was on 30 on her own bowling. (PTI)

CEM Pramod Boro inaugurates Khel Maharan in Kokrajhar

HT Correspondent

KOKRAJHAR, Dec 30: The two-day district-level Khel Maharan kicked off at the Kokrajhar District Sports Association (KDSA) playground here on Saturday. Pramod Boro, the Chief Executive Member of Bodoland Territorial Region (BTR), graced the occasion as the chief guest and inaugurated the event in the presence of Lawrence Is-lary, MLA of Kokrajhar East LAC, Jiron Basumatary, MLA of Gos-saigaon, and Pradeep Kumar Dwivedi, the District Commissioner, along with officials from the sports department.

Various sporting disciplines, including Kabaddi, football, volleyball, and athletics (for both men and women), were featured in the event. Notably, the Khel Maharan event commenced at the VCDC level on November 15 and has now progressed to the district level.

The final match of the event is scheduled for Sunday. CEM Boro extended warm congratulations to all participating team members, emphasizing that the event is fostering a sense of sporting enthusiasm among sports-loving individuals. He highlighted the commitment of the state government and BTR government to promote a sports-friendly environment across the region, leading to the successful integration of sports activities.

1st Ju-Jitsu Assam State Championship gets underway

HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Dec 30: The opening ceremony of the 1st Ju-Jitsu Assam State Championship was held at Cotton University Indoor stadium, here on Saturday. The championship has been organised



by Ju-Jitsu Association of Assam. Several dignitaries including Ju-Jitsu Association president Ritubaran Sarma; Assam Sepak Takraw Association, general secretary, Dr Bishnu Ram Nunisa; Veteran sports journalist Pulin Saha; sports journalist Chinmoy

Bora; vice president, secretary and other members of Ju-Jitsu Association were present on the occasion. Attending the opening ceremony, Dr. Nunisa extended his heartfelt congratulations to the Ju-Jitsu Association of Assam for organising the event, and conveyed his best wishes to the participating athletes.

Premier Club Cricket: Griffon beat Zangamin Sivasagar

HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Dec 30: Griffon Sivasagar secured an emphatic 80-run win over arch rival Zangam CC in the Premier Club Cricket in Sivasagar zone on Saturday. Shivam Ghosh once again scored 96 to take the team's total to 224/7 while batting first. Zangam could score only 144 in 37 overs.

We will consider Green for opening slot in Test: Aussies coach McDonald

MELBOURNE, Dec 30: David Warner might have endorsed Marcus Harris as his successor for opening slot in Tests, but Australia head coach Andrew McDonald said they are considering a lot more options and Cameron Green is also in contention.

Warner will retire from Test cricket after the third match against Pakistan at Sydney beginning on January 3.

There have been a lot of debates as to who should replace Warner at pole position with the names of Harris, Green, Matt Renshaw and Cameron Bancroft doing the rounds. "Davey's not a selector. I remember back to when Davey endorsed Matt Renshaw so I think the next one will probably be Cam Bancroft and then Cameron Green and he'll have all bases covered.

"But it's great when a fellow player endorses someone else internally. It means that they've probably excluded other players as well, but he was asked his opinion and we're happy with him expressing that," McDonald was quoted as saying by ESPNcricinfo. (PTI)

Raducanu's success gives tennis multi-million dollar boost in Britain

RIO DE JANEIRO, Dec 30: Brazilians paid several tributes to soccer legend Pelé on Friday, one year after the three-time World Cup winner's death at age 82 due to a colon cancer.

A ceremony held at Rio de Janeiro's Christ the Redeemer, one of the South American nation's most famous postcard locations, featured a projection of a Brazil shirt with Pelé's name and number 10 on the statue and a message from Pope Francis. Pelé was a devout Catholic throughout his life.

"Pelé, as Mr. Edson Arantes do Nascimento became globally known, was undoubtedly an athlete who showed in his life all positive traits of a sportsman. The memory of 'the King of Soccer' remains indelible in the minds of many, and it stimulates new generations to seek in sport a means to strengthen the bonds of unity among us," the pontiff said in a letter as a local orchestra played.

Other religious ceremonies were held at the Museu Pelé in



Santos, the port city he put on the map with his goals and success for Santos FC, and in the small city of Tres Corações, where do Nascimento was born in 1940.

Santos FC also held a tribute at its Vila Belmiro Stadium, where Edson Cholbi do Nascimento, one of Pelé's sons, released 10 white balloons from the center circle. Pelé's funeral was

held at the stadium.

Soccer's governing body FIFA also paid its respects with a video of highlights of the Brazilian great with a message: "Pelé's legacy will always live on."

Earlier this year, a Brazilian dictionary chose to pay a tribute to Pelé by adding his name as an adjective to use when describing someone who is "exceptional, incomparable, unique."

The announcement by the Michaelis dictionary on Wednesday is part of a campaign that gathered more than 125,000 signatures to honor the late soccer great's impact beyond his sport. Pelé spent nearly two decades enchanting fans and dazzling opponents as the game's most prolific scorer with Brazilian club Santos and the Brazil national team. In the conversation about soccer's greatest, only the late Diego Maradona, Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo are mentioned alongside. (AP)

India Open: Tricky draw awaits home shuttlers



NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Top Indian shuttlers, including HS Prannoy and Lakshya Sen, have been handed tricky draws at next month's India Open Super 750 badminton tournament as they gear up to exploit the home advantage with Paris Olympics qualification at stake.

With the race to Paris heading into its final stretch, Indian shuttlers will look to earn valuable points at the Yonex-Sunrise India Open to be held at the Indira Gandhi Stadium from January 16 to 21.

While Asian Games gold medalists Satwiksairaj Rankireddy and Chirag Shetty and bronze medalist Prannoy will aim to boost their position in the world ranking, the likes of Kidambi Srikanth, Sen and Priyanshu Rajawat will be gunning for the second Indian spot at the Games.

According to the Olympics qualification rules, two Indian men's singles players can participate in the Games only if both of them are ranked among the Top-16

at the end of the qualification process on April 30.

It will be an all Indian opening match between 2022 Commonwealth Games gold medalist Sen and Rajawat, while eighth seed Prannoy will be open against Chinese Taipei's Chou Tien Chen.

He will face the winner of the match between Sen and Rajawat if he clears the first-round hurdle.

Former champion Srikanth, currently in 24th position in the race to Paris rankings, will meet Hong Kong's Lee Cheuk Yiu in the opening round and has a potential second-round clash against defending champion Kunlavut Vitidsarn of Thailand.

In men's doubles, former champions and second seeds Satwik and Chirag will kick off their challenge against World No. 25 Fang-Jen Lee and Fang-Chih Lee of Taipei in the opening round and are expected to go deeper in the competition.

The women's doubles combinations of Treasa Jolly-Gayatri Gopichand and Ashwini Pon-

nappa-Tanisha Crasto are also locked into a see-saw battle for an Olympics spot.

All England semi-finalists Treasa and Gayatri have a tough opener against fourth seeds Nami Matsuyama and Chiharu Shida of Japan, while Ashwini and Crasto, who made three back-to-back finals to end 2023 on a high, will face World No. 10 Thai combination of Rawinda Prajongjai and Jongkolphan Kititharakul in the first round.

Two-time Olympic medalist PV Sindhu will miss the tournament as she is recovering from left knee injury which she sustained during the French Open in October. She might be out till February.

"All our Olympic hopefuls will have a good chance of using the home conditions to earn valuable points and even win the title," BAI General Secretary Sanjay Mishra said in a release.

"It will also be a great opportunity for fans to witness some breathtaking action as more top ranked players will be participat-

ing."

Among the other high profile first round clashes, defending women's singles champion An Se Young of South Korea will take on three-time champion Ratchanok Intanon of Thailand while Spain's Carolina Marin will face Nozomi Okuhara of Japan in a clash of former world champions.

In men's singles, former world champion Loh Kean Yew of Singapore will meet third seed and reigning All England champion Li Shi Feng of China while top seed Viktor Axelsen will open his campaign against Wang Tzu Wei of Chinese Taipei.

Organised by the Badminton Association of India (BAI), the event was upgraded to Super 750 category from Super 500 last year.

It has also meant that almost all the Top-10 players in current world ranking will be in action at the KD Jadhav Indoor Hall and badminton lovers can enjoy watching them in action on all six days for free as the BAI has decided to keep the entry free. (PTI)

Shardul Thakur gets hit on shoulder at nets

CENTURION, Dec 30: The Indian team on Saturday received an injury scare after seam bowler all-rounder Shardul Thakur suffered a blow on his shoulder at nets while batting.

There is the possibility of him missing the second Test in Cape Town beginning on January 3, but the extent of the hit could be ascertained through scanning if required.

At this moment, it couldn't be confirmed if his injury warrants scans.

But Thakur was in considerable discomfort and couldn't bowl during the net session.

Thakur, who was the first player to enter the throw-down nets, was hit on the left shoulder while facing throw-downs from fielding coach T. Dilip.

It happened around 15 minutes into the net session when Rathour delivered a throwdown that kicked up from length.

It had Thakur in a tangle like it happened in the second innings of the first Test when pacer Kagiso Rabada generated an edge for David Bedingham to complete a catch.

Here too, Thakur couldn't fend the short ball that hit his leading shoulder (left) and he immediately shrieked in pain.

But the Mumbai all-rounder continued batting in the nets.

Once he finished batting, the physio put an ice pack sling around his shoulder and he didn't take any further part in the nets.

This might be a simple bruise but it will be interesting to see how quickly the injury subsides.

Thakur was a big disappointment in the first Test having given away over 100 runs in just 19 overs and was below par with the bat as well. (PTI)

Bajrang Punia urges Sports Ministry to restart wrestling activities in view of Paris Olympics



NEW DELHI, Dec 30: Olympic medalist Bajrang Punia on Saturday urged the Sports Ministry to restart the wrestling activities in the country with just seven months remaining for next year's Paris Games, and said no one seemed to have taken the preparations for the quadrennial showpiece seriously.

Wrestling action has come to a standstill for the last several months owing to the turmoil within the fraternity following the grapplers' protests against former president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

Even the election of a new Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) committee could not restore normalcy as the Sports Ministry suspended the Sanjay Singh-led panel citing the violation of its own constitution in announcing the national U-15 and U-20 Championships.

"Wrestling activities have come to a standstill for the last several months. Neither has any nationals been held nor have any camps been organised to prepare the play-

ers (for Paris Olympics)," Punia wrote on his 'X' account.

Punia, who had decided to return his Padma Shri in protest over the election of Sanjay Singh, a Brij Bhushan loyalist, further said the preparation for the Olympics needed urgent attention.

"There is an Olympic Games after seven months but no one seems serious about it. Wrestling has given four consecutive medals in the last four Olympics," he said.

Punia, a 65kg freestyle bronze winner in Tokyo Olympics, said the officials should keep in mind the players' future.

"So, I request the Sports Ministry to start all wrestling activities as soon as possible so that the future of the players can be saved," he added.

In the recent days, a slew of protest measures from the grapplers took the centre stage as Sakshi Malik decided to retire from wrestling while Vinesh Phogat decided to return her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award in a letter addressed to PM Narendra Modi. (PTI)

Gerald Coetzee ruled out of 2nd Test versus India due to pelvic inflammation

CENTURION, Dec 30: South African pacer Gerald Coetzee has been ruled out of the second Test against India starting January 3 in Cape Town after suffering from pelvic inflammation.

The 23-year-old developed the inflammation during the opening Test here and the discomfort only worsened as he gradually bowled further in the match which ended within three days.

"Fast bowler Gerald Coetzee will miss the second Betway Test against India after developing pelvic inflammation during the first Test at SuperSport Park," Cricket South Africa wrote on 'X'.

Coetzee could bowl only five overs during the second innings, giving away 28 runs before his side dismantled India by an innings and 32 runs. He finished with figures of one for 74 during the first innings.

The pacer had gone for scans on Friday, which showed the extent of the injury.

Although no replacement has been announced yet by Cricket South Africa, head coach Shukri Conrad has deemed Coetzee's rest "as a precautionary measure".



Coetzee is the second South African cricketer to be ruled out of the series after skipper Temba Bavuma suffered the same fate, picking up a hamstring injury here.

Dean Elgar, who is playing his final international series, will be leading the side in Cape Town.

As for Coetzee's replacement, South Africa can go to fellow pacers Lungi Ngidi and Wiaan Mulder.

South Africa's win in the opening Test allows it to lead the World Test Championship 2023-25 table with a 100% record. (PTI)

PCB to take up Rizwan's dismissal during Melbourne Test with ICC



KARACHI, Dec 30: After the controversial dismissal of Mohammed Rizwan in the second Test against Australia, the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has decided to take up issues pertaining to umpiring and use of technology with the International Cricket Council (ICC).

On Friday, the on-field umpire refused to give Rizwan out after Australian captain and pacer Pat Cummins appealed for a caught behind, but the home side managed to overturn the decision through the DRS.

However, the Pakistan camp was less than happy about the reversal of the deci-

sion after the 'Snickometer' showed a spike on it when the ball was just above the wrist of Rizwan.

A reliable source within the PCB said its head Zaka Ashraf had a conversation with team director Mohammed Hafeez, who conveyed some points to him about the umpiring and the use of technology during the Melbourne Test which they lost by 79 runs.

Now, the PCB is all set to raise those points with the global governing body.

All rules and regulations governing cricket and the use of technology on the field is approved by the ICC Executive

Board after being vetted by the MCC Cricket Committee and ICC Cricket Committee.

Hafeez was visibly upset during the post-match press conference at the MCG on Friday, while stressing on the need to highlight inconsistent umpiring and the challenges of technology which had influenced the outcome of the Test.

"If you look at the entire game, there were very inconsistent decisions by the umpires. We play this beautiful game of cricket with natural instinct, and we all know the basics of the game.

However, at times, it feels like the focus is more on technology than on the actual cricket being played. I believe this is an area that needs to be addressed," he Hafeez had said.

The former also reiterated the need for clarity and certainty in the sport.

"I am not against technology in the game. But if it brings doubt and confusion, it is not acceptable. Some decisions were not understandable. The ball hitting the stumps is always out. I will never understand why there is an umpire's call," he detailed.

Hafeez said he had a talk with Rizwan and the wicketkeeper batter told him that the ball did not touch his gloves, and there should be conclusive evidence to overturn the decision of the on-field umpire. (PTI)



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