

Welcome 2024

Bidding adieu to the bygone year we heartily welcome the New Year with hope and aspirations. We, at *The Hills Times* would like to take this opportunity to wish our advertisers, readers, hawkers, well-wishers and contributors a wonderful New Year ahead. Your valuable insights and suggestions have always been our strength to deliver facts to you every morning. We have put in our best efforts to bring news from different regions of the globe to our readers in the past year and rectified our flaws by considering the suggestions of our valuable readers and well wishers. We continue to seek blessings from each one of you in the upcoming year. Your blessings will keep us motivated in our future endeavours.

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Curb on child marriage, law to end polygamy major highlights

Himanta pushes BJP's core political agenda emphatically

GUWAHATI, Dec 31: A crackdown on child marriage with most arrests made in minority-dominated districts, an initiative to enact a law in the assembly to end the practice of polygamy and a socio-economic survey of five indigenous Muslim communities dominated the headlines in Assam in 2023.

Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's initiatives kept him in the limelight, with him being the key campaigner for the BJP in the states that went to the polls, as he pushed the party's core political agenda emphatically while continuing to consolidate its base among the majority indigenous population in his state.

The Assam government's crackdown, in two phases, on child marriage in February and October led to nearly 5,500 arrests, mostly in districts dominated by the minority

community, with Sarma claiming that the social menace would be completely eliminated by 2026 and all gram panchayat secretaries would be designated as child marriage prevention officers.

Opposition parties, however, maintained that child marriage cannot be forcibly stopped by police intervention but would need a sustained campaign, involving all stakeholders.

Sarma asserted that maternal mortalities have decreased by over 33 per cent and child deaths by nearly 15 per cent in the state since the launch of the crackdown. The state government also planned to bring a law to ban the practice of polygamy among Muslims as during the crackdown, it was found that many elderly men had married multiple times and their wives were mostly young women (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Peace accord 'shameful', political settlement not possible when ideals given up: ULFA(I)

(We) will not betray people of Assam: Paresh Barua

GUWAHATI, Dec 31: Paresh Barua, leader of the anti-talks faction of the United Liberation Front of Asom or ULFA (Independent), has termed the tripartite peace agreement signed with the pro-talks faction of the outfit as "shameful", asserting that "political settlement is not possible when revolutionaries give up their goals and ideals".

"We are not surprised, concerned or angry but ashamed of the pact. We were aware of the outcome as when revolutionaries give up their goals, ideals and ideology, a political settlement is not possible," Barua told an Assamese television channel during a telephonic interview.

Asked about chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma's conversation with him on possible talks with his faction, the rebel leader said, "Yes,



he did speak to me. He is a catalyst for negotiations. We will not sit for talks just for the sake of it. We have demanded a political settlement and will not waver from this goal and betray the people of the state. "If political demands are not met and only a package is given, it is not acceptable. We have been say-

ing from the beginning that they (pro-talks faction) are proceeding on the wrong path of a so-called arrangement," he added.

The hardliner ULFA(I), led by Barua, was unwilling to come to the negotiating table unless the issue of 'Assam's sovereignty' was discussed, with the faction engag-

ing in sporadic incidents of violence as security forces intensified operations.

Asked whether he had discussed these issues with his former comrades-in-arms, the ULFA(I) leader said the outfit's general secretary Anup Chetia had spoken to him and he tried to convince Chetia about a political settlement but Chetia informed him that this demand was turned down by the negotiators stating "there was no such provision in the Indian Constitution".

"Did they go for talks without knowing what was in the Constitution? Talks will have to be held outside the ambit of the Constitution," he said. Barua claimed that Chetia had told him they had no other option. "If there was no other option, they should tell the people (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

B'deshi national held in Morigaon

HT Correspondent

JAGIROAD, Dec 31: In a significant development, the Morigaon Police apprehended a Bangladeshi national, living illegally in the state under deceptive circumstances in Morigaon district, said an official on Sunday. As per the official, the individual had allegedly been living in India using a counterfeit Indian voter ID card. Acting on a tip-off, the Morigaon Police conducted a raid in Dakhin Chenimari village under Lahorighat police station on Saturday night, leading to the arrest of a person along with a child carrying a Bangladeshi passport. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Three drug peddlers held in Dibrugarh

HT Correspondent

DIBRUGARH, Dec 31: Assam police on Sunday apprehended three drug peddlers with for allegedly carrying drugs with them here in Dibrugarh.

The drug peddlers have been identified as- Wasim Hussain, Nazir Ali and Sonu Ali.

Police have recovered 28.57 gm (with container) and 7.87 gm (without container), one blue colour empty plastic soap container, six empty plastic tobacco container, two small plastic vials, Rs 36000 cash and three mobiles phones from their possession.

Meanwhile, Dibrugarh police have launched a massive crackdown against drugs.

"We have arrested three drug peddlers and seized 36.44 grams of drugs from their possession. We have sent three of them in jail," said a police official while speaking on the matter.

India brimming with self-confidence, we should maintain momentum in 2024: Modi

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Asserting that India is brimming with self-confidence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country is imbued with the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat' and self-reliance, and urged people to maintain the momentum in 2024 as well.

In the 108th episode of Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, Prime Minister Modi also emphasised on physical and mental health and

highlighted several unique efforts for 'Fit India'.

During the broadcast, Isha Foundation head Sadhguru Jaggi Vasudev, Indian women's cricket team captain Harmanpreet Kaur, chess legend Vishwanathan Anand and actor Akshay Kumar shared their fitness tips.

In his remarks, Modi said, "Today, every corner of India is brimming with self-confidence,

imbued with the spirit of a developed India; the spirit of self-reliance. We have to maintain the same spirit and momentum in 2024 as well."

Noting that 2024 was just hours away, Modi said India's achievements are the achievements of every Indian and "we have to continuously work for the development of India keeping in mind the Panch Pran". (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Peace accord with ULFA will expedite development works in Assam: AGP

GUWAHATI, Dec 31: Asom Gana Parishad (AGP) president Atul Bora on Sunday said the peace pact with the pro-talk faction of ULFA will expedite the ongoing developmental works in the state.

Bora, who is also a minister in the BJP-led government in the state, said the attitude of the Centre towards Assam and the region as a whole has changed after Prime Minister Narendra Modi took charge.

"Developmental works have been going on in the Northeast since 2014. The earlier step-motherly treatment to this region is no longer there. Peace and development have taken centre stage now," he said at a

press conference here.

Thanking Union home minister Amit Shah, in whose presence the peace pact with ULFA was inked, Bora said the agreement will speed up the ongoing developmental works in the state.

The ULFA's pro-talks faction on December 29 signed a peace accord with the Centre and the Assam government, agreeing to shun violence, surrender all arms, disband the organisation and join the democratic process. Talking about the coming year, the AGP chief said that the party will work towards strengthening its base in all 35 districts of the state. (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)



অসম চৰকাৰ

নতুন বছৰ ওলগ

‘হে নতুন! নমস্কাৰ
যুগে যুগে আহ তই
দেশে দেশে হাঁহ তই
ভোঁহাৰি-বিদাৰি-ফালি পুৰণি সংস্কাৰ
হে নতুন! নমস্কাৰ।’

জ্যোতিপ্ৰসাদ আগৰৱালা

অসমবাসীলৈ হৈঁৰাজী নববৰ্ষৰ আন্তৰিক শুভেচ্ছা যাচিছোঁ।
নববৰ্ষই সকলোৰে বাবে কঢ়িয়াই আনক শান্তি, সমৃদ্ধি, সুখ আৰু আশাৰ বতৰা।
সকলোৰে জীৱন মংগলময় হওক।

ড° হিমন্ত বিশ্ব শৰ্মা
মুখ্যমন্ত্রী, অসম

১ জানুৱাৰী ২০২৪

তথ্য আৰু জনসংযোগ সঞ্চালকালয়, অসমৰ দ্বাৰা প্ৰচাৰিত

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DUA LIPA FEELS 'BEYOND LUCKY' TO END 2023 IN INDIA

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Pop singer Dua Lipa, who is on a vacation with her family in India, on Sunday penned a heartwarming note about ending 2023 in the country. The Grammy winner, known for songs such as "Levitating" and "Houdini", also thanked the Indian people for extending their love and hospitality to her and her dear ones.

Lipa wrote about her India journey on Instagram. "I feel so beyond lucky to end my year here in India. Thank you to all the wonderful people here who have shown us so much love, kindness, hospitality and generosity.

"This experience has been deeply meaningful. I feel lucky to be in and within the magic with my family where we have had the time to explore, re-group, recharge and restart. Ready for the year ahead. What a joy!!!" the 28-year-old said.

In the same post, the singer also shared a video montage of her enjoying the traditional Kalbelia dance in Rajasthan, posing in front of an elephant and zooming in on a tiger at a sanctuary.

She also shared a series of pictures visiting a temple with her family, going on a desert safari, and shaking a leg with folk dancers at a resort. Lipa ended her post with a video capturing her riding on a horseback on a street.

Earlier this week, the singer visited the Humayun's Tomb and Bangla Sahib Gurdwara in New Delhi along with her family.

She had also shared pictures from her stay in Jodhpur, Rajasthan. (PTI)



2023: Controversies that rocked Hindi entertainment industry

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Like every year, 2023 also had its fair share of controversies. It started with the colour politics of the song "Besharam Rang" from "Pathaan", featuring Shah Rukh Khan and Deepika Padukone, and ended with the Ranbir Kapoor-starrer "Animal" espousing the virtues of the alpha male, dominating both headlines and box office collections.

1. "Pathaan": The Hindi film industry stepped into the new year with a controversy at the ready. "Pathaan", the stylish spy thriller, faced boycott calls over its song "Besharam Rang" prior to its release on January 25, with right wing groups objecting to Deepika's orange bikini. Some politician also slammed the track for hurting religious sentiments.

Despite the brouhaha, the film went on to become one of the biggest Hindi blockbusters of 2023 with over Rs 1,000 crore at the worldwide box office. 2. "The Kerala Story": The film, directed by Sudipto Sen and produced by Vipul Shah, polarised the political discourse in the country, leading to bans

in some states and a tax-free status in others. Branded as "propaganda", the film depicts how women from Kerala were forced to convert and recruited by the terror group Islamic State (IS).

Mounted on a reported budget of around Rs 20 crore, "The Kerala Story" grossed Rs 300 crore at the global box office.

3. "Adipurush": With names such as pan-India star Prabhas and National Award-winning director Om Raut attached to it, this retelling of the Ramayana was high on promise but fizzled out upon its June 14 release as it courted trouble over its pedestrian language and poor quality of VFX. Many political parties also demanded a ban on the film. The film, reportedly mounted on a budget of Rs 500 crore, earned Rs 340 crore in the first three days but the box office collections went significantly down after the opening weekend.

4. "OMG 2": Starring Pankaj Tripathi and Akshay Kumar, the film was reportedly stuck with the Central Board of Film Certification for over two

weeks.

The board cleared the movie, which shone a light on the importance of sex education in India, for its scheduled release on August 11 with an 'A' (for its scheduled release on August 11 with an 'A' (for adults) certificate and a few modifications. "OMG 2", a spiritual sequel to the 2012 film "OMG: Oh My God!", earned over Rs 221 crore worldwide, emerging as one of the highest-grossing Hindi films of 2023.

5. "Bawaal": Ironically, this Nitesh Tiwari directorial stayed true to the meaning of its title ('bawaal' means 'uproar'). Starring Varun Dhawan and Janhvi Kapoor, the film stirred up a controversy for using the Holocaust as a reference to narrate a story of marital discord.

The Israeli embassy in India issued a statement, saying it was "disturbed by the trivialisation of the significance of the Holocaust" in the movie. A prominent Jewish group also called for the film's removal from streaming platform Prime Video, where it debuted on July 21. (PTI)

Faysal Quraishi calls for release of Indian films in Pakistan

KARACHI, Dec 31: Faysal Quraishi, one of Pakistan's top actors and producers, has advocated for the release of Indian films in the country to revive the local cinema exhibition sector. Quraishi, who has starred in several hit serials and also produced many blockbuster series, said Pakistan needed to lift the ban on screening of Indian films to survive and grow.

"Being a Pakistani, I'm very patriotic. But if you have to run Pakistani cinemas, it's important that you exhibit Indian films. I'm being very selfish. But I know the audience in Pakistan wants to watch Indian films. You can't enforce your will on them. Let us work to improve relations," he said in an interview with a local channel.

There has been a complete ban on screen-

ing of Indian films in cinema houses in Pakistan since late 2019 but movie buffs can easily watch these movies on different streaming platforms like 'Netflix' and 'Prime Video', which are legal and even others which are accessible through VPN services.

If there was no ban on Indian films in Pakistan, Quraishi said the Pakistan film drama industry would have been earning around ₹ 6,000 to 7,000 million annually from the entertainment business, including screening of Pakistani content on In-

dian streaming portals and some channels.

"Our movies and serials were being shown on their online portals and people went to the cinemas as well to watch Indian films and it brought in valuable revenue for our industry. It is funny we tend to shut down our avenues of revenue," he said.

Quraishi said he had come to the conclusion that until Indian films were allowed to be screened in Pakistani cinemas its industry could not grow. "People need new and exciting content to attract them to

the cinemas and for that, not only do we need to improve our content and business models but also have no ban on screening of Indian movies.

This would also reopen our content on streaming portals," he added. Quraishi said the Pakistan entertainment industry can be revived and it was necessary for Pakistani content to be shown on streaming portals. "It is time we started producing content of such a level that we can even hit the international streaming platforms," he said. (PTI)

In Memoriam: Hindi cinema personalities who passed away in 2023

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Junior Mehmood: The child star of films such as "Caravan", "Brahmachari" and "Mera Naam Joker" in the late 1960s and early 1970s died on December 8 following a battle with cancer. He was 68.

Born as Naeem Sayyed, the actor got his pen name from his idol Mehmood after they starred together in the 1968 film "Suhaag Raat".

2. Satish Kaushik: The actor-filmmaker, who was 66, died on March 9 after a heart attack. He passed away while he was on his way to a Gurugram hospital.

3. Pradeep Sarkar: The filmmaker, best known for directing movies such as "Parineeta" and "Maradani", died on March 24 at a Mumbai hospital where he was undergoing treatment for a viral fever. He was 67. Primarily an ad-filmmaker, Sarkar directed several advertisements for prominent brands and music videos, including Shubha Mudgal's "Ab Ke Saawan", Euphoria's "Dhoom Pichak Dhoom" and Sultan Khan's "Piya Basanti".

4. Gufi Paintal: The actor, most popular for playing

the conniving Shakuni mama in the epic TV serial "Mahabharat", died on June 5 at a hospital here due to age-related issues. He was 79.

5. Sulochana: The actor, known for her innumerable mother roles in Hindi and Marathi cinema, died on June 4 due to prolonged illness at a hospital in Mumbai. She was 94.

6. Sanjay Gadhvi: The director of the popular action thriller film series "Dhoom" died on November 19, just three days shy of his 57th birthday. According to Gadhvi's daughter, the director was "perfectly healthy".

7. Seema Deo: Best remembered for her roles in "Anand" and "Kora Kagaz", the actor died on August 24 due to age-related ailments at the age of 81. She had been suffering from Alzheimer's disease for over three years. Deo acted in over 80 Hindi and Marathi films.

8. Sameer Khakhar: Khakhar became a fan favourite through his portrayal of the lovable drunk Khopdi in the classic 1980s TV serial "Nukkad". He died at a Mumbai hospital on March 15 due to multiple organ failure. He was 71. (PTI)



Oscar wins for 'Naatu Naatu', 'The Elephant Whisperers' find mention in PM's Mann Ki Baat

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday highlighted India's twin wins at this year's Oscars for the song "Naatu Naatu" from "RRR" and documentary short "The Elephant Whisperers" in his last Mann Ki Baat address for 2023.

In the 108th episode of the radio broadcast, the prime minister said the world saw India's creativ-

ity and understood the country's connection with the environment through its entertainment industry.

"Friends, when 'Naatu Naatu' got the Oscar, the whole country rejoiced with joy. Who was not happy when they heard about the honour given to 'The Elephant Whisperers'? Through these, the world witnessed India's creativity and understood

our connection with the environment," Modi said.

At the 95th Academy Awards, the foot-tapping Telugu chartbuster "Naatu Naatu", composed by MM Keeravaani and penned by Chandrabose, won the best original song award and made SS Rajamouli's "RRR" the first Indian feature film production to bring home the Oscar.

Netflix's Tamil documentary "The Elephant Whisperers", directed by debutante Kartiki Gonsalves and produced by Guneet Monga, also became the maiden Indian production to win the Oscar in the documentary short film category.

During the Mann Ki Baat broadcast, actor Akshay Kumar also shared his fitness tips. (PTI)

Akshay Kumar bats for long-lasting fitness, accepting one's appearance in PM's Mann Ki Baat

NEW DELHI, Dec 31: One must focus on leading a fitter life and not a life with "filters" inspired by film stars, said actor Akshay Kumar on Sunday in Prime Minister Narendra Modi's monthly radio programme Mann Ki Baat.

The actor was one of the many personalities from different walks of life who shared their tips on fitness in the 108th episode of the broadcast, the last for the year 2023.

Akshay, 56, thanked the prime minister for giving him a platform in Mann Ki Baat to share his thoughts with the citizens.

"You all know I'm passionate about fitness, but I'm even more passionate about staying fit the natural way. What I like more than fancy gyms is swimming, playing badminton, climbing

stairs, exercising with 'mudgar', eating good healthy food..."

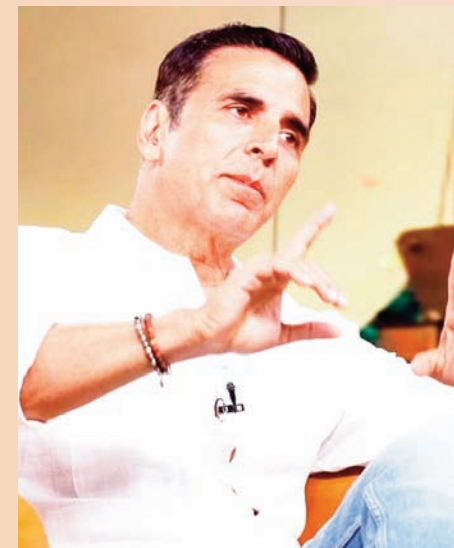
"Change your lifestyle on the advice of doctors and not by looking at some film star's body. Actors are often not what they appear on screen. Many types of filters and special effects are used and after seeing them, we start using shortcuts to change our body," the actor said.

Akshay also cautioned the listeners about taking shortcuts in their fitness journey. "Nowadays, many people take steroids and go for these six packs and eight packs. Friends, with such shortcuts the body swells from outside but remains hollow from inside. Remember that shortcuts can cut your life short. You need long-lasting fitness, not shortcuts..."

"Like, I believe pure ghee, if eaten in

the right quantity, is beneficial for us. But I see many boys and girls do not eat ghee because they fear they might become fat. It is very important for us to know what is good and what is bad for our fitness," he added.

The actor likened fitness to "devotion". "It shouldn't be like instant coffee or two-minutes noodles. In this new year, promise yourself no chemicals, no shortcut, exercise, yoga, good food, sleeping on time, some meditation and most importantly, happily accept how you look. After today, don't live a filter life, live a fitter life," Akshay said. During the broadcast of Mann Ki Baat, Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru, Indian Women's Cricket Team Captain Harmanpreet Kaur and chess legend Vishwanathan Anand also shared their fitness tips. (PTI)



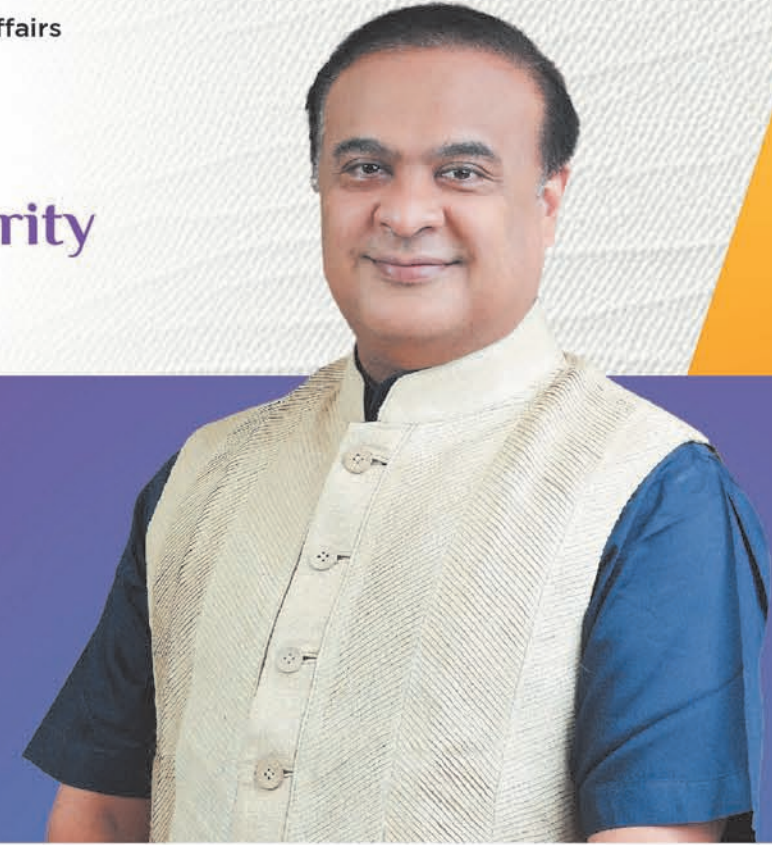


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New ration cards
10,73,489



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'To do' for Fair Price Shops



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Produce receipts of e-Pos machines against rice received by the beneficiaries



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