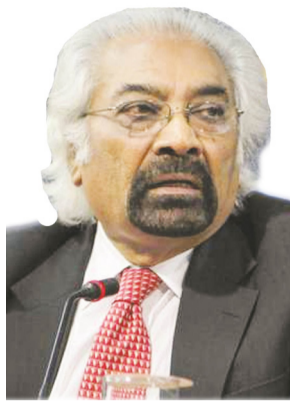


# TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, THURSDAY, DECEMBER 28, 2023

Daily Evening Newspaper



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## BRIEFLY

### Magisterial Probe Ordered into Custodial Death of Man in Jammu

JAMMU, Dec 28 (Agencies): A magisterial probe has been ordered into the death of a man in custody of Jaurian Police in Jammu, media reports said.

Jaurian Police on December 21 arrested the accused Sunil Kumar alias Sonu of Garhi-Bishnan area of Jaurian Jammu in a 2014 money dispute case. The arrest warrant was issued by 2nd Additional District Judge Jammu.

The accused was supposed to appear in court the next day, but developed some complications. He was sent to CHC Jaurian early on December 22 where he did not respond to the treatment and was declared dead, the reports suggest.

Meanwhile, Deputy Commissioner Jammu has also ordered a magisterial probe into custodial death of the man. The probe is to be conducted by SDM Khour.

### Woman electrocuted to death in South Kashmir

SRINAGAR, Dec 28 (Agencies): A woman was electrocuted to death in Puchal area of South Kashmir's Pulwama district on Thursday.

Quoting official sources, news agency Kashmir Scroll reported that a lady namely Tahira Akhter wife of Mohd Shfi Dar resident of Puchal accidentally got an electric shock and as such got burnt (injury) on her head.

They said that the said lady was rushed to District Hospital Pulwama for treatment, where doctors on duty declared her brought dead.

Meanwhile police have taken cognizance and started investigation.

### Youth arrested in UP's Saharanpur over post threatening 'Pulwama-like' attack

LUCKNOW, Dec 28 (Agencies): The Uttar Pradesh Police arrested a youth over a social media post threatening a repeat of the 2019 Pulwama terror attack, police informed on Thursday.

The accused was identified as Mohammed Talha, a resident of Jamshehpur in Jharkhand's Seraikela. He was arrested by Deoband Police over his post on X.

A case was also registered against the

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## J&K Panchayati Raj Act amended to incorporate OBC reservation



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: The Jammu and Kashmir administration has amended the Union Territory's Panchayati Raj Act to incorporate reservation for Other Back-

ward Classes (OBC), an official spokesperson said on Thursday.

The amendments to the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act proposed by the administration led by Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha

aim at making the statute more effective by ensuring transparency in the functioning of the panchayati raj institutions (PRIs), constitutional alignment and consistency with the practices in other states where

reservation has been provided to the OBC, apart from the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs), the spokesperson said.

He said the administrative council, which met here under the chairmanship of the LG, approved amending the Act to incorporate the definition of the OBC in it to ensure their reservation in these grassroots democratic institutions.

Earlier, the draft Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj (Amendment) Bill, 2023 was

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## India records six Covid-19 deaths, 702 new cases in 24 hrs; total active caseload at 4,097

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): India saw a single day rise of 702 cases of COVID-19, with the number of active cases of the infection rising to 4,097, the health ministry said on Thursday. Six new fatalities — two from Maharashtra and one each from Karnataka, Kerala, West Bengal, and Delhi — were reported in a span of 24 hours, according to the ministry's data updated at 8 am. The country had recorded 752 new cases on December 22.



The number of daily cases had dropped to double-digits by December 5, but the cases have again gone up after emergence of a new variant and cold weather conditions. The daily numbers were in lakhs

at the peak of the pandemic, which began in early 2020 and has seen more than 4.5 crore people getting infected and over 5.3 lakh deaths in about four years since then across

Turn to page 9

## 6 chargesheeted for Rs 60 Lakh investment fraud in Jammu

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: The crime branch of Jammu and Kashmir Police on Thursday filed a chargesheet in a local court here against six persons for duping investors of over Rs 60 lakh after inducing them to invest in a Haryana-based private company

in 2017, an official said. The 1266-page chargesheet was filed by the economic offences wing of Crime Branch, Jammu against six affiliates of Swarn Bhavya Gold Pvt Ltd, including its Managing Director Balwinder Kumar of Haryana, under various sections of the Indian

Penal Code, a spokesperson of the agency said. A case on the matter was registered in 2020.

The official said the accused hatched a criminal conspiracy to induce the complainants and other people to invest their money in the company by

Turn to page 9

## LeT terrorist associate arrested in Baramulla: Police

SRINAGAR, Dec 28 (Agencies): Jammu and Kashmir Police along with security forces arrested terrorist associate linked with proscribed terror outfit LeT and recovered incriminating materials, arms and ammunition from his possession in North Kashmir's Baramulla district.

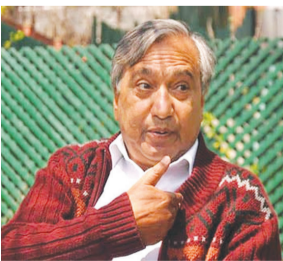
A Police spokesperson said, "On a specific input of terrorist

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## Misleading narratives being propagated to justify Article 370 abrogation: Tarigami

SRINAGAR, Dec 28 (Agencies): Senior CPI(M) leader and former MLA Kulgam Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami Thursday said that misleading narratives were persistently being propagated to justify the abrogation of Article 370.

Referring to the statement of Lieutenant Governor Manoj Sinha that implementation of Anand Marriage Act to J&K became possible only because of the abrogation of Article 370, Tarigami said that



there has been a long list of amendments made to Article 370, allowing the application of Central laws to Jammu and Kashmir.

He said the passage of GST in 2017 by the J&K Assembly was one of such instances in recent times.

## Shergari Police Station, among three best police stations in India

SRINAGAR, Dec 28 (Agencies): The Ministry of Home Affairs, Government of India, has selected Shergari Police Station in Srinagar as one of the three 'best' police stations in the country.

The Joint Director & Conference Secretary Intelligence Bureau, MHA Gol, through a communiqué by the Administrative Officer to the Director General of Police, JK said that Shergari Police Station of District Srinagar has been selected as one of the best three Police Stations in the country for the year, 2023.

To acknowledge the feat, Union Home Minister Amit Shah will hand over the Trophy to the SHO of the Police Station concerned on January 5, 2024, at an event at Rajasthan International Centre, Jaipur.

The Station House Officer (SHO) has been directed to attend the event to personally receive the award at the hands of Home Minister Amit Shah.

## 134 flights delayed, 22 trains running late as dense fog grips Delhi



NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): A dense layer of fog engulfed the national capital as cold wave gripped the city, leading to train and flight delays in Delhi, causing inconvenience to passengers on Thursday.

Visuals from the Indira Gandhi International Airport showed passengers queuing up at the gates of the airport amid intense fog.

The Delhi airport reported delays in flight operations affecting approximately 134 flights, both arrivals and departures (domestic and international), due to fog. While 35 international flight departures got delayed from Delhi,

28 international arrivals got delayed as well. On the other hand, 43 domestic departures and 28 domestic arrivals got delayed.

As many as 22 trains were delayed at the New Delhi Railway Station as well, amid low visibility. Trains like the Howrah New Delhi Rajdhani and Jammu Tawi Rajdhani were running late for more than an hour. Visuals from the station showed several passengers waiting amid intense cold.

The IMD had forecast that the temperature on Thursday would hit a low of 7.8 degrees Celsius, with the maximum at 22 degrees Celsius.

Earlier on Wednesday, the IMD issued a dense fog alert for the national capital. "It is to inform to all that Dense fog has already set in over some pockets of Delhi including at IGI Airport Palam since 0830pm today of 27th Dec 2023," the IMD said in a post on 'X'.

"Dense fog warning for Haryana-Chandigarh-Delhi: Very dense fog in night & morning hours till 30th Dec. morning and Dense fog on 31st Dec. 2023," it said in another post.

The weather office also stated that the visibility at Delhi-Palam Airport dropped from 100 meter at 2130 IST to 50 meter at 2200 IST on Wednesday.

The cold weather condition however did not deter a group of bikers from venturing out on Kartavya Path early morning on Thursday.

"It is foggy and cold. Yet cycling is most fun in this season... It is important to get out. Whatever dreams we see in our

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## Severe cold tightens grip in Kashmir, Srinagar shivers at -3.3°C

SRINAGAR, Dec 28 (Agencies): Severe cold tightens grip in Kashmir valley amid further fall in night temperature as Srinagar recorded a low of -3.3°C and Pahalgam -5.2°C on Thursday.

Pulwama in south Kashmir remained the coldest place with a low of 6.4°C, followed by Konibal (-6.2°C), Baniptora in north Kashmir (-5.9°C), Shopian (-5.6°C), and the central Kashmir district of Ganderbal (-5.5°C).

Dense fog continues to engulf Srinagar and other parts of the Kashmir valley, affecting normal life.



The Meteorological Centre Srinagar said that the minimum temperature dipped in Srinagar on Thursday and recorded a low of -3.3°C against the -2.6°C recorded the previous night. It was 1.2°C below normal for the summer

capital of Jammu and Kashmir during this period of the season.

The maximum temperature recorded was 0.3°C above the normal of 7.9°C, against 8.2°C in Srinagar the previous day.

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## Panun Kashmir commemorates 32nd Homeland Day

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: On the occasion of the Homeland Day, Panun Kashmir organised a convention in Jammu.

The main speaker on the occasion was Dr. Ajay Churungoo, Chairman, Panun Kashmir who asserted that the events in Kashmir, at regular intervals, prove again and again the imperative necessity of creation of a Homeland for the Hindus of Kashmir, East and North of Jhelum by further politically reorganising the valley, is the only way to defeat the Jihadi war in Jammu and Kashmir.

He said that defeating the genocidal war against the Hindus in J&K is critical for the survival of the Indian State as the Jihad has spread its tentacles across India.

He reiterated that the Indian State and the political class in India has become a frontline instrument of the Denial of the Hindu Genocide; and that even after the Supreme Court's clear verdict on Article 370 and it's pronouncement that the Kashmiri Pandits have subjected to genocidal violence and forced to leave, the



Indian State is still reluctant to recognize genocide and provide justice to the victim community.

Dr. Churungoo affirmed that the Margdarshan Resolution is a matter of faith and divine will and the only solution for the permanent reversal of the Genocide wrought upon the Hindus of Kashmir.

He also stated that creation of the Homeland is the only viable option of the permanent return of the displaced and revival of the Sanatan Sanskrit Civilization in Kashmir.

Shailendra Aima, Sr. Vice Chairman of Panun Kashmir, in his opening address stated that the Margdarshan Resolution contains the seed

of the demographic dividend, imperative for nation building and geo-strategic security and defence of the Himalayas.

He also said that in the absence of the creation of Panun Kashmir Homeland and the half-way fulfilment of the Margdarshan Resolution in August 2019 by Indian Parliament, the terrorist violence and selective genocidal killings in Jammu & Kashmir have not stopped.

Aima asserted that the Margdarshan is a clear political document, which is the ideological and civilizational paradigm for the redemption of a million plus Hindus who are suffering in exile.

It is the only sure recipe for the consolidation of the Sanskrit Himalayas and Civilizational India; and Panun Kashmir shall not let anyone to tinker with it and distort it.

Senior Panun Kashmir leader, Pyare Lal Koul Budgami in his address stated that the time has arrived and a befitting tribute to the Margdarshan would be the ushering of the demand of Homeland into a reality.

He called upon the Indian State to seriously mull upon the 'Genocide and Atrocities Prevention Bill' drafted by Panun Kashmir and bring in the requisite legislation to punish the genocide perpetrated upon the Hindus

in Jammu & Kashmir. Budgami also stated that the communal elements in the valley can't be trusted and there is no possibility of any reconciliation unless trials are initiated and those responsible for the massacre and exodus of Pandits given punishment.

He criticised the government of India for its confused approach and vacuous policy about the rehabilitation of the community.

Pyare Lal Raina a prominent socio political activist asserted that the only viable solution for permanent rehabilitation of Kashmiri Hindus in Kashmir Valley is the creation of Panun Kashmir as a union territory to be carved out to the east and North of river Vitasta.

He emphatically stated that the politics which is emanated by Margdarshan resolution doesn't represent only geographical rehabilitation of Kashmiri Hindus but it also ensures the total Indian resurgence in Kashmir therefore the government of India must take necessarily the cognisance of this politics.

The programme was conducted by Behari Lal Koul, organising secretary of Panun Kashmir.

## CCI hails LG for granting amnesty for settlement of tax arrears pertaining to Pre GST regime

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: Arun Gupta, President CCI on Thursday expressed gratitude to Manoj Sinha, LG UT of J&K, Rajeev Rai Bhatnagar, Advisor to LG, Atal Dulloo, Chief Secretary UT of J&K for accepting long pending demand regarding granting amnesty for settlement of tax arrears pertaining to Pre GST regime for the dealers who could not take the benefit of earlier amnesty scheme issued vide order no. 39-F-D of 2018 due to various reasons especially Covid-19 pandemic.

Arun Gupta said that this amnesty scheme will provide relief to the dealers on 100% waiver of penalty and interest under general sales tax act 1962, central sales tax 1956 And VAT act

2005. He further said that this decision of the government will result in minimizing the tax dispute cases.

Arun Gupta requested the business community to avail tax benefit of this amnesty scheme by depositing the tax arrears within the prescribed time limit.

Arun Gupta further said that during the initial stage of implementing the GST scheme there were some technical / other minor mistakes on the part of the dealers/ assesses due

to unawareness about GST scheme.

Chamber requested the government that those dealers / assesses should be given one time opportunity to settle their cases especially for the period 2017-2018, 2018-2019 and 2019-2020.

Arun Gupta also requested the government/NHAI to reconsider the decision of enhancing the toll tax by 100% at Nashri Toll Plaza as it will effect the business community/ general public badly.



## Jammu Kashmir Black Auto Union holds protest



### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: The Jammu Kashmir Black Auto Union on Thursday held strong protest involving 500 auto drivers and owners at Parade Ground in Jammu demanding that the J&K government takes measures to control the operation of e-rickshaws.

They emphasized that e-rickshaws should only operate in specific zones allotted to them.

Sunil Dimple, the patron/ chairman of the Jammu Kashmir Black Auto Union, demanded action from various authorities, including the LG Manoj Sinha, J&K government, RTO, and the transport commissioner.

Specifically, they seek a halt in the sale of more autos and e-rickshaws in Jammu city due to the alleged collapse of the auto industry.

Dimple has given a one-week ultimatum to the J&K government to control the operation of e-rickshaws.

The threat includes the possibility of protest

marches, rallies, and agitation involving thousands of autos, drivers, and owners in Jammu city.

Dimple expressed concerns about the 50-year-old black auto industry facing starvation due to various challenges.

He alleged that e-rickshaws not following orders, operating without licenses, and lacking proper documents.

The introduction of battery buses, Ola, and small battery autos has raised concerns among the auto union leaders, he said and alleged that these initiatives are endangering traditional auto and matador transport, leading to financial struggles for drivers and owners.

Prominent leaders involved in the protest include Sanjay Sethi, Haneeff, Ajiet Singh, Amar Jeet Singh, Pawan Kumar, Vikram Singh, RanJiet Singh, Taran Singh, Ramesh Kumar, Madan Lal, Rameshwar Kumar and Ashok Kumar.

## IIT Jammu, ESF Unite for J&K's Largest Climate Clock Assembly and Display Event

### Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: In a significant collaborative effort, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Jammu, in partnership with Energy Swaraj Foundation (ESF), has achieved a remarkable milestone by successfully assembling 40 Climate Clocks. This event marks the largest Climate Clock Assembly and Display in the region, held at the Open Air Theatre at IIT Jammu.

A gathering of approximately 200 students from 28 institutions, including local schools and colleges, participated in the assembly of the DIY Climate Clock.

Functioning as a real-time reminder of the pressing need to address climate change, the clocks were meticulously assembled by students in teams and will find their place at respective institutions. The aim is to encourage individuals to adopt behaviours that actively reduce their carbon footprint.

The event witnessed the esteemed presence of Roshan Jaggi, IFS, who graced the occasion as the chief



guest, accompanied by Prof Manoj Singh Gaur, Director IIT Jammu, Prof Chetan Singh Solanki, Founder ESF, and Prof Anurag Misra, Dean IPM IIT Jammu.

Jaggi, in his address, urged students to recognize the dual responsibility – individual and collective – in mitigating the climate crisis.

He emphasised the importance of each person's contribution towards environmental preservation.

Drawing from his experiences, Jaggi shared inspiring anecdotes to motivate students to translate principles into action.

During the welcome address, Prof Manoj Singh Gaur expressed his gratitude to all participants, emphasizing that events of this nature underscore the institution's commitment to a sustainable and environmentally conscious future.

He conveyed IIT Jammu's pride in contributing to such initiatives and affirmed a commitment to exploring innovative ways to positively impact our planet.

Prof Chetan Singh Solanki, a Professor at the Department of Energy Science and Engineering, IIT Bombay and the founder of ESF, commended the students for their efforts and provided a strategic action plan to fulfil the vision of Climate Responsiveness. Encouraging a sense of urgency, he stated, "The right time is right now!"

Associate Professor, Dr Arun Kumar Verma, from IIT Jammu, presented a sincere vote of thanks to all the participants, the staff and students from IIT Jammu for making the event a huge success.

As a tangible outcome of the event, each participating institute received the assembled Climate

Clock, which will be prominently displayed at their premises to raise awareness about the critical importance of preserving our climate.

This collaborative effort reflects a shared commitment towards fostering environmental consciousness and sustainable practices for a healthier planet.

## Principal PTTI Vijaypur inaugurates Pre-Promotion Course of SDRF

### Top News Report

VIJAYPUR, Dec 28: 90 days Pre-Promotion Course of SDRF personnel commenced at PTTI Vijaypur for police personnel of SDRF Battalions of Jammu and Kashmir Police.

The objective of the course is to enhance the capabilities and tactics of participants and expose them to the latest tools and techniques.

The course was formally inaugurated by Shiv Kumar, Principal, PTTI Vijaypur who during Inaugural func-



tion Inspected Parade of participating trainees and witnessed their March Past.

While addressing, the Principal briefed the participating trainees about the basic concepts of the course. He said that during training,

these trainees would be imparted Physical training, drill with and without Arms, weapon handling and other routine Indoor/ Outdoor activities as per prescribed syllabus.

He further told that SDRF is a force which has to remain pre-

pared 24x7 to respond immediately for launching rescue operations during Natural calamities and it is necessary for SDRF personnel to remain updated with sophisticated rescue machinery and equipments for which special

live demonstrations of experts will be organized during training so that they may perform their field duties more effectively.

Among others, Kuldeep Raj, DySP (Indoor/ Tech), Kushwant Singh, Dy.SP (Admn.), Surinder Singh Singh (CDI), Inspr. Ram Lal (CLI), Inspr. Mulh Raj, Inspr. Vivek Kalsotra, Inspr. Javed Hussain (RI), Inspr. Bhopinder Singh, Inspr. Himanshu Dutta, Inspr. Ashish Dharmat, Inspr. Kapil Raina were present during inaugural function.

**NORTHERN RAILWAY**  
**E-Tender Notice**  
Sr.DEN-IV/FZR acting for and on behalf of The President of India invites open tenders (E-Tenders) against below titled tenders and available on [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) with closing date-18.01.2024 up to 15:00 Hrs. Bidders will be able to submit their original/revised bids up to closing date and time only. Manual offers are not allowed against this tender, and any such manual offer received shall be ignored. Contractors are allowed to make payments against this tender towards tender document cost and earnest money only through only payment modes available on [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in) portal like net banking, debit card, credit card etc. Manual payments through Demand draft, Banker Cheque, Deposit receipts, FDR etc. are not allowed. For more information login to [www.irps.gov.in](http://www.irps.gov.in)

Tender Type	Tendering Section	Bidding System
Open	Works	Single Packet System
Date of Uploading Tenders	Bid Starting Date	Bid Closing Date/Time
26.12.2023	04.01.2024	18.01.2024/ 15:00 Hrs.
27.12.2023	04.01.2024	18.01.2024/ 15:00 Hrs.

S.N.	Tender No.	Details of Tender			
	357-2023-24-UHP-DRM-FZR	TRR (P) 4.56 km from km 15 to 15.560, km 19 to 23 on JAT-SVDK section under ADEN/UHP.			
1.	67,42,648.56/-	1,34,900/-	60 Days	08 Months	
	<b>Similar Nature of work:-</b> *CTR/TRR/TFR/ITR including Raising of track, screening, distressing of track, pre & post works for track maintenance machine like tamping machine/ballast screening/regulating machines & TTR by T-28*..				
	358-2023-24-UHP-DRM-FZR	TRR (P) 4.00 km from km 41 to 43 & km 49 to 51 on JAT-SVDK section under ADEN/UHP.			
2.	66,97,612.02/-	1,34,000.00/-	60 Days	06 Months	
	<b>Similar Nature of work:-</b> *CTR/TRR/TFR/ITR including Raising of track, screening, distressing of track, pre & post works for track maintenance machine like tamping machine/ballast screening/regulating machines & TTR by T-28*..				

Note 1. Before bidding, bidders to check for any corrigendum issued against tender.  
No.: 357 & 358-2023-24-UHP-DRM-FZR Date: 27.12.2023 4062/2023  
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**SHORT NOTICE INVITING TENDER**

Short e-NIT No. 44 of 2023-24/Jammu East Dated 23-12-2023

**Expression of interest (EOI) for Consultancy service (Through e-procurement mode)**

**(TWO COVER SYSTEM)**

For and on behalf of the Lieutenant Governor, Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East invite Expression of Interest (EOI) for selection of consultant for Architectural and allied Engineering Consultancy Services from Registered firms /Consultants/Agencies under Indian Partnership Act / Societies Registration Act or registered companies under companies act empanelled with Chief Engineer PW (R&B) Department, Jammu's office Memorandum No. CEJ/TS/14102-28 Dt. 17-11-2022 under Category "C" for the following purpose.

S.NO	Particular	Tender fee	Earnest Money
1	Expression of interest (EOI) for Consultancy service for executions of the various building, Bridge, Roads works costing upto 0 – 1.00 Cr. Under R&B Division Jammu East for the works AA shall be got Accorded upto 31 <sup>st</sup> March 2024.	Rs. 600/-	Rs. 20,000/-

The bidding document consisting of qualifying information, eligibility criteria, bill of Quantities set of terms and conditions of contract and other details can be viewed/ downloaded from the website [www.jktenders.in](http://www.jktenders.in) as per the schedule given below

1	Date of Issue of Tender Notice	23-12-2023
2	Period of downloading of bidding documents	From 23-12-2023 to 29-12-2023 upto 1800 Hrs
3	Date, Time and place of pre-bid meeting	28-12-2023 at 1300 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East.
4	Bid submission Start Date	23-12-2023
5	Bid Submission End Date	29-12-2023 upto 1800 Hrs
6	Date & time of opening of Technical (Online)	30-12-2023 on or after 1400 Hrs in the Office of Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East
7	Date & time of opening of Financial Bids (Online).	To be notified after technical bid evaluation

Bid documents can be seen at and downloaded from the website <http://jktenders.gov.in> Bid documents contain qualifying criteria for bidder, specifications, bill of quantities, Conditions and other details.

Bids must be accompanied with cost of Tender document in shape of e-challan through Treasury indicating Treasury Voucher No. & date, e-NIT No. and name of work duly crediting to 0059 (Revenue) favoring Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East and upload the same i.e treasury challan/receipt, Earnest money/Bid security in shape of CDR/FDR/BG pledged to Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East. The CDR/FDR/BG shall be valid for 45 Days beyond the bid validity period. The original instruments in respect of cost of documents, EMD and relevant documents of L1 be submitted to the Executive Engineer PWD (R&B) Const. Divn. No. I Jammu at the time of award of contract.

Technical/Financial Bids will be opened online in the office of Executive Engineer, PWD (R&B) Division Jammu East of the technically responsive bidders. If the office happens to be closed on the date of opening of bids as specified, the bids will be opened on the next working day at the same time and venue.

No :- 4297-4316  
Dated :- 23-12-2023 DIP/J-13100/23

Sd/-  
Executive Engineer  
PWD (R&B) Division  
Jammu East

## EDITORIAL

## HUMAN RIGHTS

Human rights are called universal rights to which every person is entitled regardless of his gender, caste, creed, religion, culture, social/economic status or location. These are norms that describe certain standards of human behavior and are protected by law.

Human rights are divided into two broad categories. These are civil and political rights. These also include social rights which include economic and cultural rights.

Every human being living on earth has the right to survive. Every person has the right not to be killed by anyone and this right is protected by law. However, it does not include issues like death penalty, self-defense, abortion, euthanasia and war.

Every person has the right to speak freely and voice his opinion in public, although this right also has some limitations such as inciting obscenity, disturbance and riot.

Every country grants its citizens the right to think freely and form honest beliefs. Every person has the right to practice any religion of his choice and is free to change it as per his free will at any time from time to time.

Under right to fair trial constitution, every person has the right to a fair trial by an impartial court, to be heard within a reasonable time, the right to counsel, the right to a public hearing and the right to interpretation.

According to international law every person has the right to freedom from torture. It has been banned since the mid-20th century.

Every person has the right to travel, live, work or study in any part of their country.

Slavery and slavery traders are prohibited in every form. Unfortunately, however, these abuses still operate illegally.

While every person is entitled to human rights, these rights are still often violated. These rights are violated when actions taken by the state ignore, deny or abuse these rights.

A United Nations committee has been established to investigate human rights abuses. Many national institutions, non-governmental organizations and the government also keep an eye on these to ensure that a person's fundamental rights are not being violated.

These organizations work towards spreading awareness about human rights so that people can get good information about their rights. They have also protested against inhumane practices. Due to these protests, action has been seen many times which has improved the situation.

Human rights are the basic rights given to every person. These rights, being universal, are protected by law however, unfortunately at times they are violated by states, individuals or groups. It is inhuman to deprive a person of these fundamental rights. This is why many organizations have been established to protect these rights.

## What lies ahead: India to grow, inequality will rise

By: Sanjeev Ahluwalia

New beginnings are better in theory than in practice, at least for the average, Risk-averse individual. First, there is the uncertainty associated with change and the potential risk of disaster. Far better to extend a humdrum today rather than reach for the stars and suffer a potential implosion on the way. Second, only time can make change comfortable — like with a new pair of leather shoes.

Of course, technology can make it painless by aligning it perfectly with individual expectations of comfort — like moulded running shoes 3D printed at your doorstep to fit your errant toe, memory pillows and mattresses, ordered-in food, or gifts, anaesthetised, hands-off killings by robots or a variety of other entertainment or curated travel, available for money or cryptocurrency with a few clicks.

But before you surrender to the click and live syndrome, consider that if living becomes easier, it also becomes lonelier since efficient, at-your-command robots, and artificial intelligence applications replace loquacious, meddling, humans of variable quality. Also, how to kill the surplus time from easier living?

Much like Don Quixote, having a quest helps to justify the greenhouse gas they emit. Leaving a legacy is one such — a balance sheet of the good done, which, as Shakespeare remarked, lives after humans, and the bad, which is best interred with their carcass.

The end of a calendar year and the beginning of a new one is particularly difficult, as we review the balance sheet of deeds and the state of our quest. By the law of averages, most will find themselves want-

ing. But even those who excelled in fulfilling their quest are only marginally better off. They must find a new quest creating a never ending, upward inclined, escalator of deeds, each one bigger, better, higher than the last.

Others, more sanguine in their achievement deficit, view the high adrenaline life of the front-runners with horror. For them, time is valued by the quality of the process and the uniqueness of the outcomes, rather than by tick-the-box achievements — think creative types, philosophers and those replete with inherited wealth and prestige — a very restricted list of people. For the rest of us, New Year is usually spent in silent rebuke for the things not done.

Nevertheless, the show must go on, so a cheery Merry Christmas and Happy New Year — trips off the tongue easily at this time of the year. Somehow the alternative, woke greeting of “Happy Holidays” is too anodyne, much like not saying anything at all beyond including all and excluding none — a painfully correct but dull, and unremarkable outcome like resolutions of the United Nations. In India, every region celebrates the New Year at a different time. Such diversity is to be revered. But one does miss a feeling of national bonding, around a single, major cultural event, like smaller, less heterogenous countries enjoy.

Possibly, it was the need to impart a common national purpose, at no additional cost, that persuaded the newly minted and thrifty, administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2014, to celebrate Christmas Day — a near universal holiday since the days of the Raj, even though less than three per cent of Indians (2011 census) are Christians, as Good Governance Day.

It helped that this was also the birth date of India's much loved and admired Prime Minister, the late Atal Behari Vajpayee, who was associated with great strides in governance and reform. There is a deeper association between Christmas Day and Good Governance. Nine of the top ten best governed countries globally, over 1996-2021, are predominantly Christian — a fact which could point to the beneficial links between governance and Christianity, were it not for the fact that, 31 of the bottom 50 countries are also Christian — a statistical scatter, which somewhat detracts from reading too much into the religious underpinnings of good governance. More recently, the global governance metrics designed by the World Bank have been criticised by the government as being subjective and biased in favour of developed economies.

India's rank is 66, China's 43 out of 191 countries. Oddly, New Year's Day (NYD) is not a national holiday in India, even though we, like the rest of the world, suffer through it from the excesses of the NY Eve preceding it. Domestic value addition must surely nose-dive globally on NYD. Greater attention to the virtues of yoga, which is adept at regulating and subsuming bodily excesses, if practised daily, is recommended for a happy start to every day.

What lies beyond the unturned page? One thing is certain. India will continue to enjoy the benefits, and suffer the downsides, of political stability. Success, sadly, breeds hubris over time, so this cannot be a long-term fix. Unlike the uncertain global economic outlook, the “New Hindu” growth rate of 6.5 per cent plus will shine like a lodestar. But it is unlikely that it will diminish inequality.

Two reasons explain why. First, the government is overextended — a fiscal deficit of 5.9 per cent of GDP, well above the norm of four per cent, constrains the fiscal space to reimagine basic income support as inequality busting programmes. Good jobs are growing, but slower than aspirants. Second, freebies — poorly targeted subsidies — are proliferating. The Production-Linked Incentive scheme is extended now to privately managed computational capability centres — basic infrastructure for startups to develop large language models and Artificial Intelligence applications like ChatGPT.

The idea of “compute as a service” is just-in-time. But why fiscal support is necessary for what should be a highly profitable private venture remains unclear, except that freebies are the new interface between the government and industry. This is antithetical to the fierce independence of startups which birthed the commercial model of “We Work” providing for hire, shared, super-smart, workplaces. Tech stocks are booming globally. Given India's rosy growth trajectory, close alignment with Western economies, and the focus on tech, space and defence manufacturing, foreign private capital should be beating down the doors to get in. Legacy industry segments do need government handholding. But not start-ups, aspiring to be amongst the targeted 10,000 Indian unicorns.

It is a good time to be Indian, especially in cities, and in the formal industry space. Rapid growth in both will keep pay and profits high, feeding into higher GDP. Others, on the downward sloping K growth, will await trickle-down benefits. Meanwhile, jostling for more freebies is a good game plan, as you turn the page.

## UNESCO has Recommended Banning the use of Mobile Phones in Schools

By: Vijay Garg

Recently, international organization UNESCO has issued a report regarding the ban on the use of mobile phones in schools due to the negative impact on children's eyes due to the use of smart phones. With this report, attention has been drawn to the heart-wrenching statistics of the adverse effects on children's eyes due to the use of mobile phones. Excessive use of smart phones by various ophthalmologists and psychiatrists. Before looking at the shocking statistics, let's read the report of the international organization UNESCO. UNESCO has said in its report that it is recommended to ban the use of smart phones in schools at the international level in order to reduce the obstacle in the education of children in classes and to achieve better education performance. The main reason behind UNESCO's decision to ban smartphones in schools internationally is to reduce dependence on digital technology and improve learning. The results are said to be encouraging. The organization has also said that excessive use of digital technology or smart phones in the field of education is likely to reduce performance, thereby adversely affecting the emotional capacity of children. Excessive use of smart phones, tablets or laptops by children

in both classrooms and at home can interfere with learning and potentially have negative effects. According to a recent study by UNESCO, children are highly capable of digital technology. The negativity in performance is correlated. Let's take a look at the bad effects on children's eyes due to excessive use of smart phones. Due to the excessive use of mobile phones, 80 percent of children have developed the disease of drainage in the eyes. Due to the radiation emitted in the ear by constantly looking at the smart phone, the blink rate of their eyes has decreased from 16 to 6-7. Normally eye blink speed is 15-16 but with continuous looking at smart phone this speed is 4 seconds. It has reached 6-7 earlier. Vision problems are also arising due to blurring of the eyes. Looking at the phone in the dark at night affects the power of the eyes. There is a risk of ear damage due to the radiation emitted from the mobile phone. Ophthalmologist Dr. Chintamani says that smart phones, laptops and other LEDs. The problem of children's eyes drying up due to constant looking at the screen is increasing day by day. Decreased eye blink speed in every child due to addiction to smart phone viewing. It is becoming a cause for concern. Young people who work a lot on computers in different departments also face this problem. Decreased eye

blink rate can also affect the ears and brain. The rays of radiation emitted in the smart phone are causing the problem of blindness of the eyes as well as deafness of the ears. Because these rays weaken the eardrums. Dr. Umar Farooq, a specialist in psychiatric diseases of Sadar Hospital, says that mobile is the big thing of the present time. Despite this achievement, it is proving to be a big challenge for children and their parents. If children are prevented from using mobile phones, they skip meals. They give death threats, which adversely affects their school life. Parents of children are mentally disturbed. Due to excessive use of mobile phones, children get neck, brain, stomach and many other diseases. Parents hand over phones to children to silence them. One-and-a-half-year-old children four to five hours on the phone are watching. Parents of children feel so proud of their children's mobile knowledge, they never think about the bitter truth that their children are becoming slaves to mobiles. People who work on computers, laptops, mobiles and tablets for a long time, due to pressure on their eyes, their eyes become red and water starts coming from them. Health experts say that at the age of 4-5 years old people get used to electronic devices like mobile phones, televisions and computers. The symptoms of virtual autism begin

to appear. Such children find it difficult to speak and talk in front of others. UNESCO experts say that despite the problem of serious eye diseases and virtual autism arising in children due to excessive use of smart phones, governments are making great efforts to pay attention to this important aspect of society. UNESCO has recommended that the focus be on improving education around the world with minimal use of digital technology. Governments should prioritize the interests of children in education reforms. UNESCO officials have warned against indiscriminate use of digital technology and said that education policy makers should pay special attention to regulating the use of digital technology. The face-to-face learning-teaching process of the teacher and the children is very effective. Experts associated with education governments say that laws such as right to compulsory education fuel the roots of education. They immediately implement but why the governments have not paid attention to the recommendations of UNESCO, with which the interests and future of society, education, children and their parents are connected.

(Vijay Garg Retired  
Principal Educational  
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Malot Punjab)

# PM Modi to Address Ram Temple Event From 'Singh Dwar'

Meanwhile, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, the trust entrusted with the construction and management of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, is scheduled to hold a meeting today.

AYODHYA, Dec 28 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address attendees at the grand consecration event of the Ram Temple in Ayodhya from the front of the 'Singh Dwar', the main entrance to the temple, agency reported quoting its sources said on Thursday.

PM Modi will inaugurate the grand temple open for visitors at the consecration event on January 22, next year.

According to sources, lakhs of devotees are likely to pour into the temple town for the January 22 consecration.

Meanwhile, Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, the trust entrusted with the construction and management of the grand Ram Temple in Ayodhya, is scheduled to hold a meeting today.

According to sources, the discussions will centre on the idol of Lord Ram, which will be installed inside the sanctum sanctorum of the grand temple at the grand opening or consecration of the shrine on January



22.

Preparations for the consecration ceremony of the temple on January 22 will also be discussed in detail during the meeting, the sources added. There will be another meeting of the trust to select the idol of Ram Lalla.

Earlier in the day, Uttar Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya participated in the cleanliness campaign drive in the temple city ahead of the grand event.

While speaking to reporters, he said, "With the resolve, Swachh Rahe Shri Ram Ka

Dham' (Lord Ram's place should be cleaned) the cleanliness campaign is going on in Ayodhya and today we have launched the cleanliness campaign. Everyone together will keep Ayodhya clean."

Earlier, on Wednesday, trust secretary Champat Rai said that a 51-inch tall idol of Lord Ram reflecting a five-year-old Ram Lalla -- would be selected among three designs.

"The one which has the best divineness and has a child-like look about it will be selected," he said.

Rai, describing the map of Shri

Ram Janmabhoomi temple, said a total of 21-22 lakh cubic feet of stone has been used in the construction of the entire structure. "Such a big stone structure has never been built in North or South India even in the last 100-200 years," he said.

"A foundation of 56-layered artificial rock, created by engineers, has been laid below the structure. Second, a plinth comprising 17000 granite blocks from Karnataka and Telangana has been laid across 21 feet above the ground. Around five lakh cubic feet of pink-coloured sandstone sourced from Bharatpur, Rajasthan have been used to construct the temple structure. The sanctum sanctorum of the temple is made up of pure white Makrana marble, which is ready," he told reporters.

Meanwhile, Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to arrive at the temple city on Saturday to inaugurate the Ayodhya airport and the railway station, which is being revamped especially on the temple model.

# 'Void hard to fill...': PM Modi condoles death of DMDK chief Vijayakanth



NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday expressed anguish at the death of Tamil actor and DMDK chief Vijayakanth, who died at a private hospital in Chennai today.

DMDK chief Vijayakanth (71) was on ventilator support after testing positive for Covid-19, as per his party. However, the hospital's statement mentioned he had pneumonia.

A statement by the

hospital read, "Captain Vijayakanth was on ventilatory support following his admission for pneumonia. Despite the best efforts of medical staff, he passed away in the morning on 28th December 2023."

"Extremely saddened by the passing away of Thiru Vijayakanth Ji. A legend of the Tamil film world, his charismatic performances captured the hearts of millions. As a political leader, he was deeply committed

to public service, leaving a lasting impact on Tamil Nadu's political landscape. His passing leaves a void that will be hard to fill. He was a close friend and I fondly recall my interactions with him over the years. In this sad hour, my thoughts are with his family, fans and numerous followers. Om Shanti," PM Modi wrote on X.

Vijaynath was admitted to the hospital on Tuesday for a regular health check-up. At the time, the party said Vijayakanth was "healthy" and would return home after the tests.

The DMDK chief had earlier been admitted to a hospital on November 20. He was undergoing treatment for a respiratory illness at the hospital.

# Bus-dumper collision in MP: Toll rises to 13

GUNA, Dec 28 (Agencies): The death toll in the accident involving a private bus which caught fire after a collision with a dumper in Madhya Pradesh's Guna district rose to 13 on Thursday, an official said.

One more body was recovered from the accident site. It is probably of the driver of the dumper that collided with the bus, subdivisional magistrate Dinesh Sanvle told agency.

The bus overturned and caught fire after colliding head-on with the dumper on Guna-Aaron road at around 9 pm on Wednesday following which a senior police official said 12 bus passengers were killed and

14 others received injuries.

After the accident, the bus turned into a fireball, Sanvle said, adding that 13 people were charred to death.

The injured persons were taken to a hospital for treatment.

The ill-fated bus was on its way to Aaron while the dumper was headed towards Guna when the accident occurred, police said.

Superintendent of Police Vijay Khatri said there were around 30 passengers in the bus at the time of the incident and four of them somehow managed to come out of the vehicle and went home.

Guna Collector Tarun Rathi said the administration was conducting

a probe into the incident.

Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav was on way to Guna on Thursday morning to meet those injured in the accident, an official said.

He announced an assistance of Rs 4 lakh each to the kin of the deceased and Rs 50,000 each for the injured. The chief minister also ordered a probe into the accident.

In a message on X late Wednesday night, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia termed the incident as painful and said, "Soon after getting information about the incident, I spoke to the collector and SP and directed them to start a relief and rescue operation."

# If issues related to EVMs are not 'fixed' before 2024 general election, BJP can win over 400 seats: Sam Pitroda

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Raising concerns over electronic voting machines, Congress leader Sam Pitroda on Thursday said the BJP can win more than 400 seats in the 2024 general election if issues associated with EVMs are not "fixed".

The election will be about deciding the destiny of India, he told agency in an interview.

While the Election Commission has always dismissed apprehensions over EVMs and also held hackathons to clear any doubts, some opposition leaders, including from the Congress, have been repeatedly raising the issue of EVMs allegedly being open to manipulation.

The Congress and other opposition parties have been demanding 100 per cent Voter Verifiable Paper Audit Trail (VVPAT) and that the slips should be given to voters rather than falling into boxes.

Pitroda said his recent comments on the Ram temple in Ayodhya were "twisted" and asserted that religion is a personal matter and should not be mixed with politics.

He was quoted in reports as saying that it bothers him that the entire nation is hung up on the Ram temple.

On Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's upcoming Manipur-to-Mumbai Bharat Nyay Yatra ahead of the polls, Pitroda said, "The next election is about the future of India. What kind of nation we want to build."

"Do you want to build a nation articulated in our Constitution which respects all religions, autonomy of our institutions, which allows our civil society to function, or you want to build the nation based on one religion dominating?" he asked.

Expressing concern over electronic voting machines (EVMs), Pitroda cited a report by NGO 'The Citizens' Commission on Elec-

tions', chaired by former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur, and said that the main recommendations of the report were to modify the current design of the VVPAT system to make it truly "voter-verified".

"I waited for the Election Commission to respond but when it didn't happen I decided to speak. It has nothing to do with the fact that elections in five states are over and the 2024 election is coming," Pitroda said.

"I feel there is a trust deficit based on this report. And, the Election Commission must respond to rebuild the trust," he said.

The Congress leader said he believes that democracy is derailed and "we are becoming too authoritarian". "It's all about one-man show," he said.

Asked about the BJP's claim that it would win more than 400 seats in the general election, he said, "More power to them if they think they



can do it. Great. That is for the country to decide. EVM needs to be fixed before the next election. If EVM is not fixed, 400 may be true. If EVM is fixed 400 may not be true."

On his comments about the Ram temple, Pitroda said, "My comments on the Ram mandir got twisted. I am basically protecting the Constitution. I am saying that religion is a very personal matter, leave it to the people. Of course you celebrate, people should celebrate what they want to. But don't complicate with politics."

Asked about opposition INDIA bloc, of which the Congress is also a

part, not picking Rahul Gandhi as its prime ministerial face, Pitroda said, "The INDIA alliance is not projecting anybody for the PM post."

The alliance has collectively decided that "we get to that after the election because right now the priority is to mobilise 60 per cent of the people who don't vote for the BJP", he said, and added that the members of the bloc would decide as a group who should be the prime ministerial candidate.

Collectively, the group decided that it would not project anybody as its PM candidate, he said.

# From Mumbai Streets to Ayodhya's Ram Temple: A Unique Pilgrimage

Shabnam firmly believes that Ram's worship is not confined to any particular religion or region.

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): In a tale that challenges stereotypes and exemplifies the universal nature of faith, Shabnam, a young Muslim woman from Mumbai, has embarked on a journey from Mumbai to Ayodhya. Accompanied by her companions, Raman Raj Sharma and Vineet Pandey, Shabnam set out to cover a distance of 1,425 kilometres on foot.

What makes Shabnam's journey unique is her unwavering devotion to Lord Ram despite her Muslim identity. Shabnam proudly asserts that one does not need to be a Hindu to worship Ram; what matters is being a good human being. Currently, Shabnam has reached Sindhuva in Madhya Pradesh, covering 25-30 kilometres daily.

Despite the fatigue that comes with a long pilgrimage, the three youngsters say that their devotion for Ram keeps them going. The three have already become a social media sensation with several people who meet them



sharing their story and photos. Shabnam firmly believes that Ram's worship is not confined to any particular religion or region—it transcends borders and encompasses the entire world.

"Lord Ram belongs to everyone, irrespective of their caste or religion," Shabnam says when asked about the motivation behind the trip.

She also aims to challenge the misconception that only boys

can undertake such arduous journeys.

Shabnam's pilgrimage has not been without challenges. The police have been instrumental not only in ensuring her security but also in arranging for her meals and accommodations.

While passing through sensitive areas in Maharashtra, the police ensured her safety and helped them out of some troublesome situations.

Despite some hateful com-

ments on social media, Shabnam remains undeterred and enthusiastic about her journey. She acknowledges that there have been negative comments, but the overwhelming response has been positive and encouraging. As she marches forward, holding the saffron flag, Shabnam says she has experienced heartening moments of solidarity, with several people, including Muslims, greeting her with a 'Jai Shri Ram.'

Shabnam clarifies that there is no fixed date for her arrival in Ayodhya, debunking rumors about a planned gathering on January 22. She emphasises that her journey is a personal quest for spiritual fulfillment and a testament to the inclusive nature of devotion that transcends religious boundaries.

In a world often divided by religious lines, Shabnam's journey stands as a symbol of unity, breaking barriers, and proving that love and devotion know no bounds.

# UP woman stabs husband in eye with scissors after he asks for tea, flees

A woman allegedly stabbed her husband in the eye with scissors after he asked for a cup of tea in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district.

BAGHPAT, Dec 28 (Agencies): A woman allegedly stabbed her husband in the eye with scissors after he asked for a cup of tea in Uttar Pradesh's Baghpat district.

The woman then fled the scene to evade police, leaving her husband bleeding.

Ankit had married the woman three years ago. However, only after some time, the couple started to have frequent fights over domestic issues. Ankit's wife had even filed a complaint of assault against him and his family just three



days prior to the incident, police said.

Ankit had asked for a cup of tea, which allegedly angered his wife, and she stabbed him in the eye with scissors. Upon hearing the chaos, Ankit's sister-in-law and children came out and later informed police.

Before the police could



arrive, Ankit's wife fled the scene, leaving him bleeding. Police, however, took him to a community health centre, and he was later referred to Meerut.

Teams have been formed to catch the woman and further investigation is underway.

## YEAR BOOK 2023: With several debuts, real life stories and suspense thrillers ruling the roost on OTT, here is a look at some of the series that stood out in the web space

Going by the number of releases in 2023, Indian OTT industry seems to have become as big as Bollywood! From thrillers, period dramas, survival stories, India's first cli-fi series to shows based on true incidents, OTT platforms offered a sea of entertainment options. We take a look at the best among the lot.

**Ace up the sleeve**

Trust Zoya Akhtar to bring her best even if she made a late entry into the digital domain. The creator duo, Reema Kagti and Zoya, brought Dahaad, which fetched not only views but appreciation from critics. Inspired from the real-life criminal, Mohan Kumar, also known as Cyanide Mohan, it is the first ever Indian web series to premiere at the Berlin International Film Festival. Dahaad also stars Vijay Varma, Gulshan Devaiah, Sonakshi Sinha and Sohum Shah in pivotal roles.

Kagti-Zoya again tasted success with the second season of Made In Heaven. It also propagated LGBTQIA+ representation as one of the transgender woman's role was played by a trans-woman, Trinetra Halder, herself.

Fans of directors Raj & DK didn't miss much, even though their claim to fame web series The Family Man's upcoming season gave 2023 a miss! It's because the creators were busy working on two other web series, Netflix's Farzi and Prime Video's Guns & Gulaabs, which showcased the story of two completely different worlds. Shahid Kapoor made his digital debut with Farzi, whereas



Guns & Gulaabs stars Rajkumar Rao, Gulshan Devaiah and Adarsh Gourav. In March, Farzi made headlines for becoming the most-watched Indian web series of all time! Guns & Gulaabs was also one of the last works of late actor Satish Kaushik.

**Rewind and replay**

The series Trial By Fire, based on the tragic fire incident in Uphaar cinema, Delhi, impressed the audience too. It was adapted from the book Trial by Fire: The Tragic Tale of the Uphaar Fire Tragedy, authored by Neelam Krishnamoorthy and Shekhar Krishnamoorthy, the grieving parents who lost their two children in the incident. Actors Rajshri Deshpande and Abhay Deol played their roles, respectively.

Soon after, Hansal Mehta's series Scoop catapulted actress Karsihma Tanna to limelight, as she played the formal journalist, Jigna Vora, on screen. Adapted from her biographical memoir, Behind Bars in Byculla: My Days in Prison,

the series gives a visual memory to her unfortunate story. Vora was accused of the murder of mid-day reporter Jyotirmoy Dey in June 2011, but acquitted later.

Netflix and Yash Raj Films collaborated successfully for the series The Railway Men, based around the 1984 Bhopal Gas Leak. Starring Kay Kay Menon as station master Ifttekaar Siddiqui, it has a talented star cast, including R Madhavan, Babil Khan, Divyendu, Dibyendu Bhattacharya, Juhi Chawla and others.

Rocket Boys Season 2, released in March, remained true to history, as Jim Sarbh and Ishwak Singh breathed life into the characters of late Indian scientists Homi J. Bhabha and Vikram Sarabhai, respectively. Sarbh even earned an Emmy nomination for Best Actor.

Vikramaditya Motwane brought back the golden era of Bollywood in the fictionalised tale, Jubilee, starring Wamiqa Gabbi and Aparashakti Khurana.

On the grey side

The surprise packages of the year were web series Kohrra and Kaala Paani. If Kohrra, directed by Randeep Jha, shifted the focus to Punjab, its murky police procedurals and deadly winter, Sameer Saxena and Amit Golani' Kaala Paani transported one to the unexplored jungles of Andaman & Nicobar. A survival drama, it revealed the true nature of humans in the face of adversity.

The season two of Asur, titled Asur: Welcome to Your Dark Side, also impressed, while The Jengaburu Curse, India's first series on climate change, also known as climate-fiction (cli-fi), also registered its presence. Directed by Nila Madhab Panda, it uncovered the dark international conspiracy endangering many lives.

**Streaming debuts**

Shahid Kapoor stole the limelight in the list of OTT debut of 2023 with two projects, web series Farzi and an OTT film Bloody Daddy. Actor Vijay Sethupathi also made his OTT debut with much-loved series Farzi. Talking of actresses, Sonakshi Sinha's cop avatar in Dahaad and Dimple Kapadia as the drug lord in Saas Bahu Aur Flamingo impressed.

The Night Manager was lauded for the deadly chemistry of Aditya Roy Kapoor and Sobhita Dhulipala, and Anil Kapoor's stint as a villain. Successful web series, Rana Naidu and Taaza Khabar, also added two more names, Rana Daggubati and Bhuvan Bam, into the OTT space.

## Shefali Jariwala immerses herself into the role of Kapalika in Shaitani Rasmlein



Shefali Jariwala, known for her versatility, dives deep into her character as Kapalika in Star Bharat's upcoming show Shaitani Rasmlein. Sharing her experience, the actress says, "I was living the character of Kapalika in real life too."

Embracing the challenge of portraying Kapalika, Shefali underwent intensive workshops to embody the essence of the character. She says, "I wanted to give the best to my character, so I started living like Kapalika. My walks, my talks, even my reactions to people — I changed everything to align with Kapalika's persona. I even locked myself in the bedroom to thoroughly transform into the character."

With Shaitani Rasmlein marking her television debut in a role as intense as Kapalika, Shefali talks about her commitment to making the portrayal seamless. "My character is a bit dark, and I want to ensure that people cannot recognise the difference between Shefali and Kapalika on screen. That's what I'm rooting for," she adds.

The upcoming show also stars Vibhav Roy and Naqiyah Haji in lead roles.

## Pratik Gandhi, who plays a host in Crimes Aaj Kal, talks about the show

Actor Pratik Gandhi talked about being part of the recently released anthology series Crimes Aaj Kal 2 and how he found it different from his previous works.

He said, "I have been an actor but this is the first time I am part of a story as a host so it's a new thing for me. I am an experimental actor and thus just thought of doing it."

The series focuses on the youth, their lives and the crimes happening in the society. Pratik added, "The show revolves around the youth and their lives, complexities and mindset, which makes it fascinating. Today's youth face various challenges every day being in this digital world. This is something I resonate with and this is a subject that needs to be discussed."

As the web series brings out different stories, he shares which among them touched him most as a host, "All the stories are interesting, and it is difficult to talk about anyone. However, one subject that I found relevant is that today's youth lack patience and it needs to be addressed because this led to anger and frustration in them."



Pratik, who was seen in Hansal Mehta's Scam 1992, is excited about working with him in his next series on Mahatma Gandhi. "We are working together in a series on Gandhi that shows the initial years of his life."

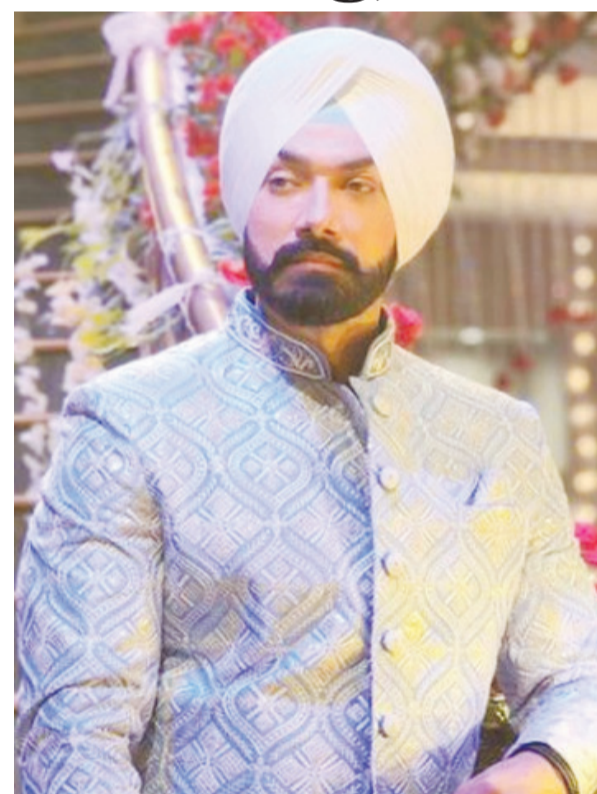
The series explores gripping criminal cases through the lens of youngsters, with detailed sequences of events woven together to shed light on the crimes happening in society.

## Avinesh Rekhi's fitness routine involves strength training, cardio

Actor Avinesh Rekhi has opened up on his diet and fitness regime, and shared that he follows a strict workout routine that involves a mix of strength training, cardio, muscle training, and much more.

Avinesh is currently seen playing the lead in the show 'Ikk Kudi Punjab Di'. As he is donning the look of a proper Punjabi munda, maintaining the right physique for himself and his character is Avinesh's top priority amongst others.

Talking about his fitness routine, Avinesh said, "I have always been very particular about what I consume on a daily basis, working out and keeping



myself healthy. I believe in eating four meals a day and making sure to balance out the calories I intake along exercise."

The 'Choti Sarrdaarni' fame actor has called himself a foodie, and said that he makes sure to control his portion sizes and not overeat, which is one of the most important things to do to stay fit.

"I always take time from my busy shoot schedule to hit the gym, and on my off days, I take proper rest. I follow a strict workout regime that involves a mix of strength training, cardio, muscle training, and much more. These different forms of exercises keep me motivated and entertained

enough to work out daily, even on the days when I don't feel like it," added Avinesh.

While Avinesh is setting some major body goals as Ranjha, it will be interesting for the viewers to witness the upcoming track where Heer finds out about the truth behind her friend's death.

Based in Punjab, the show is a gripping narrative of strength and resilience. Not just the storyline, but the friendship and bond that Heer (played by Tanisha Mehta) and Ranjha share has already been winning the hearts of the audience since its inception.

It airs on Zee TV.

## The Legend of Hanuman creator shares his inspiration behind the series

The creator of The Legend of Hanuman 3, Sharad Devranjan has opened up about his inspiration behind the series, and shared how he integrated aspects of both Western and Eastern storytelling into his life by reading both Amar Chitra Katha and Marvel comics.

Sharad opened up about his thoughts behind telling the global audience the story of Hanuman.

Sharad, who is the co-founder and CEO of Graph India and the creator and executive producer of the show, said, "Lord Hanuman's story is deeply personal to me.

I grew up reading the stories of Hanuman. His journey and adven-



tures profoundly shaped me as a child and through my life. Among the lessons I learnt was that the true measure of a hero is not defined by physical power, but by inner faith, fortitude, courage, hope and compassion."

Talking about his inspiration, he shared, "Reading both Amar Chitra Katha and Marvel comics while growing up, I found myself seamlessly integrating aspects of both western and eastern storytelling into my life. To me, Lord

Hanuman's lessons went far beyond any 'superhero' and I wanted to create a series that really showcased that to the world."

The Legend of Hanuman 3 will be streaming on Disney+ Hotstar from January 12.

## Inside Edge fame Tanuj Virwani ties knot with Taniya Jacob

Web series Inside Edge fame actor Tanuj Virwani has tied the knot with Taniya Jacob.

Tanuj is the son of actor Rati Agnihotri and the nephew of Salman Khan's brother-in-law, Atul Agnihotri. Taking to Instagram, Atul Agnihotri shared a happy fam-jam picture and extended heartfelt wishes to the newly married couple.

He captioned the post, "Dear nephew @tanujvirwani @taniyajacob1 Congratulations on your wedding.

Wishing you both love, joy, and beautiful moments. May your journey together be as wonderful as the celebrations yesterday. You hosted a picture perfect wedding @ratiagnihotri10 lots of love and respect always #AgnihotriFamily." Taking to his Instagram story, Tanuj also shared several glimpses from his wedding with Tanya. These include videos of the bride and groom and their friends dancing, to the couple finally tying the knot.

Tanuj is best known for his role as Vayu Raghavan in the sports-



thriller web series Inside Edge, which premiered on the OTT platform Amazon Prime Video.

The series also starred Richa Chadha, Siddhant Chaturvedi and

Vivek Oberoi in pivotal roles.

Apart from this, he was also seen in Illegal Season 2 and Cartel. He will be next seen in the web shows Ved and Parchaaiyaan.

## After “Nuclear Attack” Warning, N Korea’s Kim Wants To Speed Up War Prep

He also stressed that the “military situation” on the Korean peninsula had become “extreme” due to “unprecedented” anti-North confrontations with Washington.

SEOUL, Dec 28 (Agencies): North Korean leader Kim Jong Un urged his party to “accelerate” war preparations including its nuclear programme, state media said Thursday.

The comments came just a week after Kim warned Pyongyang would not hesitate to launch a nuclear attack if “provoked” with nukes.

Kim made the comments at the North’s ongoing year-end party meeting, where he is expected to unveil key policy decisions for 2024.

Kim asked the party to “further accelerate the war preparations” across sectors, including nuclear weapons and civil defense, Pyongyang’s official Korean Central News Agency reported.

He also stressed that the “military situation” on the Korean peninsula had become “extreme” due to “unprecedented” anti-North confrontations with Washington.

Seoul, Tokyo and Washington have ramped up defence cooperation in the face of a record-breaking series of weapons tests by Pyongyang this year and recently activated a system to share real-time data on North Korean missile launches.

Earlier this month, a US nuclear-powered submarine arrived



in the South Korean port city of Busan, and Washington flew its long-range bombers in drills with Seoul and Tokyo.

The North has previously described the participation of US strategic assets — such as B-52 bombers — in joint drills on the Korean peninsula as the “intentional nuclear war provocative moves of the US”.

Pyongyang this year successfully launched a reconnaissance satellite, enshrined its status as a nuclear power in its constitution, and test-fired the most advanced intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) in its arsenal.

Kim earlier this week defined 2023 as a “year of great turn and great change” in which Pyongyang saw “eye-opening victories”.

Last week, the United Nations atomic agency said a second reactor at North Korea’s Yongbyon nuclear facility appeared to be operational, calling it “deeply regrettable.”

North Korea is likely to “deploy tactical nuclear weapons in areas near the inter-Korean border” and further advance its nuclear program in the new year, Ahn Chan-il, a defector-turned-researcher who runs the World Institute for North Korea Studies, told agency.

Pyongyang would make such moves to exert “great pressure” on South Korea and the United States, while maintaining close ties with traditional allies Russia and China, he added.

‘Nuclear confrontation’  
At last year’s year-end party

meeting, Kim called “for an exponential increase of the country’s nuclear arsenal”.

The United States and South Korea earlier this month held the second meeting of their Nuclear Consultative Group in Washington, where they discussed nuclear deterrence options in the event of conflict with the North.

They warned that any nuclear attack from Pyongyang on the United States or South Korea would result in the end of the Kim regime.

A spokesperson for North Korea’s defence ministry then slammed the allies’ plans to expand annual joint military exercises next year to include a nuclear operation drill, calling it “an open declaration on nuclear confrontation”.

Pyongyang declared itself an “irreversible” nuclear power last year and has repeatedly said it will never give up its nukes programme, which the regime views as essential for its survival.

The United Nations Security Council has adopted many resolutions calling on North Korea to halt its nuclear and ballistic missile programmes since it first conducted a nuclear test in 2006.

## Israeli embassy pulls video of imaginary Hamas attack in Seoul

SEOUL, Dec 28 (Agencies): The Israeli embassy in South Korea has removed a video showing an imaginary scenario in which Koreans are attacked by masked assailants in Seoul, a reference to Hamas, Seoul’s foreign ministry said Thursday.

The ministry said in a statement sent to AFP that the video was deemed “inappropriate” and that it had asked the Israeli embassy to take it down.

The video, which is no longer available on the embassy’s social media, depicted a distressing scenario in which a South Korean woman in the capital is abducted by an armed assailant on Christmas Day, and forcibly separated from her young daughter, a clip published by South Korean broadcaster YTN showed.

The Israeli embassy wrote, alongside the now-removed video posted on its Facebook account on Tuesday:

“On October 7th, Israel was attacked by Hamas terrorists. 1,200 men, women, and children were killed, and over 240 people were taken hostage in Gaza.”

“Imagine if it happened to you. What would you do?” it added.

South Korea remains technically at war with nuclear-armed North Korea, as their 1950-53 military conflict ended in an armistice, not a peace treaty.

YTN reported that Israel ambassador’s in Seoul Akiva Tor said in a social media post that has since been deleted: “We have reconstructed the horrifying terrorist incident that took place on October 7th to help South Koreans in East Asia, far away from Israel, understand the current war situation.”

Israel has repeatedly vowed to keep up its campaign to destroy Palestinian militant group Hamas in retaliation for its bloody October 7 attack, which left about 1,140 people

dead, most of them civilians, according to an AFP tally based on Israeli figures.

Palestinian militants also took around 250 hostages, 129 of whom remain in captivity, Israel says.

Israel’s relentless bombardment and ground invasion of the Gaza Strip have killed at least 21,110 people, mostly women and children, according to the latest toll from Gaza’s Hamas-run health ministry.

“The killing and kidnapping of Israeli civilians by Hamas cannot be justified, but the Israeli Embassy’s production and distribution of a video drawing parallels to the security situation in another country was deemed inappropriate,” South Korea’s foreign ministry said in the statement.

“We have conveyed our position to the Israeli Embassy in South Korea, and the Israeli side has taken measures to delete the video in question.”

## Chain-reaction collision in dense fog on Turkish motorway leaves at least 10 people dead, 57 injured

At least three intercity buses were involved in the crash.

ANKARA, Dec 28 (Agencies): A chain-reaction crash Thursday involving seven vehicles on a motorway in northwest Turkey killed at least 10 people and injured 57 others, officials said.

The pileup occurred in dense fog and low visibility on the Northern Marmara Highway in Sakarya province, some 150 kilometers (93 miles) from Istanbul.

An investigation has been launched into the accident but Gov. Yasar Karadeniz of Sakarya said it likely occurred when a vehicle hit a



truck in poor visibility, triggering other crashes at the rear.

At least three intercity buses were involved in the crash.

Authorities believe some passengers died when they left their vehicles and were struck by

another vehicle, Karadeniz told reporters at the scene.

Seven of the injured were in serious condition, the governor said.

Police and emergency personnel were seen clearing the wreckage at the scene.

## Taiwan’s “Reunification With Motherland Is Inevitable”: Xi Jinping

BEIJING, Dec 28 (Agencies): Chinese leader Xi Jinping has claimed that the “reunification” of Taiwan with China is “inevitable,” emphasising Beijing’s longstanding stance ahead of a crucial election in Taiwan next month, agency reported.

Xi made these remarks during an address marking the 130th anniversary of the birth of Mao Zedong, the founder of the People’s Republic of China.

“The realisation of the complete reunification with the motherland is an inevitable course of development, is righteous and what the people want. The motherland must and will be reunified,” said Xi.

Xi’s statements reiterate China’s claim over Taiwan, a self-ruled island democracy, and align with his broader goal to enhance China’s global power and stature. The timing is significant as Taiwan approaches a critical presidential vote, where political parties’ positions on relations with China often serve as a gauge of public sentiment on Beijing, as reported by agency.

Taiwan President Tsai Ing-wen, who has



faced increased pressure from Beijing during her tenure, is widely perceived as strengthening Taiwan’s unofficial ties with the United States. The leading candidate for the Democratic Progressive Party, Vice President Lai Ching-te, is currently ahead in the polls but is not favoured by Chinese officials.

China’s Communist Party considers Taiwan its own territory, despite never having controlled it. While emphasising a preference

for peaceful “reunification,” Chinese officials have not ruled out the use of force. Xi’s speech included a veiled warning, urging the promotion of peaceful cross-strait ties and preventing any attempts to separate Taiwan from China.

Taiwan remains a sensitive issue in US-China relations. During a recent summit with US President Joe Biden, Xi asserted that China’s “reunification” with Taiwan is “unstoppable.” The United States maintains an unofficial relationship with Taiwan, recognizing China’s position that Taiwan is part of its territory. However, the US is obligated by law to provide Taiwan with the means to defend itself.

The historical roots of the Taiwan-China relationship trace back to 1949 when General Chiang Kai-shek fled with his nationalist forces to Taiwan after Mao’s Red Army gained control in the Chinese Civil War.

Xi’s speech also called on Chinese citizens to “never forget” Mao and the Communist Party’s “original aspiration and founding mission” as they advance the cause of Chinese modernisation, agency reported.

## Mexican officials clear border tent camp as US pressure mounts to stem migrant influx

Mexico already has over 32,000 soldiers and National Guard troopers — about 11% of its total forces — assigned to enforcing immigration laws.

MATAMOROS, Dec 28 (Agencies): A ragged migrant tent camp next to the Rio Grande in Matamoros, Mexico, is a long way from the country’s National Palace, where a top-level U.S. delegation met with Mexico’s president seeking more action to curb the surge of migrants reaching the U.S. border.

But as Mexican officials in Matamoros worked with bulldozers Wednesday to clear out what they claimed were abandoned tents, it was probably a sign of things to come.

The United States has given clear signs — by temporarily closing key border rail crossings into Texas — that it needs Mexico to do more to stop migrants hopping freight cars, buses, and trucks to the border.

Mexico, desperate to get those crossings reopened to its manufactured goods, is starting to give signs it will crack down a bit.

That was on display in Matamoros as U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken held talks with President Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico City.

Migrants set up the encampment in Matamoros, across from Brownsville, Texas in late 2022. It once held as many as 1,500 migrants, but many tents were vacated in recent months as migrants waded across the river to reach the United States.

Segismundo Doguín, the head of the local office of Mexico’s immigration agency, said, “What we are doing is removing any tents that we see are empty.”

But one Honduran migrant who would give only his first name, José, claimed some of the 200 remaining migrants had been practically forced to leave the camp when the clearance operation began late Tuesday.

“They ran us out,” he said, saying migrants were given short notice to move their tents and belongings out of the way and felt intimidated by the bulldozers moving through the tents. “You had to run for your life to avoid an accident.”

Some migrants moved into a fenced-in area of the encampment where immigration officers said they could relocate, but fear per-



vaded.

About 70 migrants flung themselves into the river Tuesday night and crossed into the U.S. They remained trapped for hours along the riverbank beneath the layers of concertina wire set up by orders of the Texas governor.

Few options exist for the migrants asked to leave the encampment, said Gladys Cañas, founder of a Matamoros-based nongovernmental group, Ayudandoles a Triunfar, or Helping Them Win. “The truth is that the shelters are saturated,” Cañas said.

She was working at the encampment Wednesday afternoon, walking through the tents and encouraging

migrants to avoid crossing illegally into the U.S., especially after several people drowned in the last few days attempting to swim the river.

This month, as many as 10,000 migrants were arrested daily on the southwest U.S. border. The U.S. has struggled to process thousands of migrants at the border and house them once they reach northern cities.

Mexican industries were stung last week when the U.S. briefly closed two vital Texas railway crossings, arguing that border patrol agents had to be reassigned to deal with the surge. A non-rail crossing remained closed at Lukeville, Arizona, and border operations were

partially suspended at San Diego and Nogales, Arizona.

Foreign Relations Secretary Alicia Bárcena said following the talks in Mexico City that the Mexican government’s priority is getting the United States to reopen border crossings because of the migrant surge.

“We spoke about the importance of the border, and about the economic relationship ... the importance of reopening the border crossings, that is a priority for us,” Bárcena said following the meeting, which was also attended by U.S. Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas and homeland security adviser Liz Sherwood-Randall.

Mexico already has over 32,000 soldiers and National Guard troopers — about 11% of its total forces — assigned to enforcing immigration laws.

But the shortcomings of Mexico’s effort were on display Tuesday when National Guard members did not attempt to stop about 6,000 migrants, many from Central America and Venezuela, from walking through Mexico’s main inland immigration inspection point in southern Chiapas state near the Guatemala border.

In the past, Mexico has let such migrant caravans go through, trusting they would tire themselves out walking along the highway.

By Wednesday, Lazara Padrón Molina, 46, from Cuba was sick and exhausted. The caravan set out from the city of Tapachula on Sunday and walked about 45 miles (75 kilometers) through the heat to Escuintla in southern Chiapas state.

“The route is too long to continue walking. Why don’t they just give us documents so that we could get a bus or a taxi?” Padrón Molina said. “Look at my feet,” she said,

showing blisters. “I can’t go on anymore.”

But wearing the migrants out — by obliging Venezuelans and others to hike through the jungle of the Darien Gap between Colombia and Panama or corralling migrants off passenger buses in Mexico — no longer appears to work.

So many migrants have been hopping freight trains through Mexico that one of the country’s two major railroads suspended trains in September because of safety concerns. Police raids to pull migrants off rail cars — the kind of action Mexico took a decade ago — might be one thing the American delegation would like to see.

The Texas railway closures put a chokehold on freight moving from Mexico to the U.S. as well as grain needed to feed Mexican livestock moving south.

López Obrador says he is willing to help but wants the United States to send more development aid to migrants’ home countries, reduce or eliminate sanctions on Cuba and Venezuela, and start a U.S.-Cuba dialogue.

## Sensex, Nifty open at record highs tracking positive global cues

The S&P BSE Sensex reached a record high of 72,360.51, while the NSE Nifty50 also achieved an all-time high of 21,745 in early trade

MUMBAI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Benchmark stock market indices continued their stellar run on Thursday, hitting fresh record highs for the second consecutive session.

The S&P BSE Sensex reached a record high of 72,360.51, while the NSE Nifty50 also achieved an all-time high of 21,745 in early trade. At around 9:42 am, the Sensex was up 259.14 points at 72,297.57 and the Nifty rose 77.20 points to 21,731.95.

The broader market indices also opened on a positive note, but volatility remained on the higher side.

Most of the major sectoral indices gained, with Nifty Bank and Nifty Financial Services leading from the front. Nifty Media was the only sectoral index that was trading in negative territory.

The top five gainers on the Nifty50 were Hero MotoCorp, Bajaj



Finserv, SBI Life, NTPC and M&M. On the other hand, the top losers were Dr Reddy's, Asian Paints, L&T, Ultratech Cement and Tata Steel.

Ahead of today's market opening, Deven Mehata, research analyst at Choice Broking, said, "The benchmark Sensex and Nifty are likely to open marginally higher on December 28 as trends in the GIFT Nifty indicate a positive start."

"After a gap up opening at a fresh all-time high level, Nifty can find

support at 21,600 followed by 21,500 and 21,450. On the higher side, 21,750 can be an immediate resistance, followed by 21,800 and 21,900," he noted.

"In yesterday's session, all the major indices made a fresh all-time high on closing basis indicating strength in the markets. Strong buying by FII's will help the market move higher. Traders should keep trailing stop loss on their long position at 21450 on a closing basis, Mehata added.

## Bank NPAs at decadal low: RBI report

The share of large borrowal accounts (with total exposure of Rs 5 crore and above) in total advances declined to 46.4% at end-March 2023 from 47.8% a year ago.

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Banks' asset quality has improved to a decadal high by the end of September 2023 quarter.

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) in its banking trend report for 2022-23 says that the gross non-performing asset (GNPAs) of scheduled commercial banks fell to the decadal low of 3.2% at end of September 2023. As per the report, the amount of NPAs decreased for all bank groups, except small finance banks.

The share of large borrowal accounts (with total exposure of Rs 5 crore and above) in total advances declined to 46.4% at



end-March 2023 from 47.8% a year ago. Their contribution to total NPAs also fell during the year to 53.9% from 64.0%. The SMA-1 and SMA-2 ratios, which indicate potential stress, declined across bank groups for

overall as well as large borrowal accounts.

Special Mention Account-1 or SMA-1 is a loan account where the outstanding amount, either fully or partially, has not been repaid for 31-60 days. SMA-2

are accounts where the amount due is for 61-90 days. Once the amount is due for 91 days, it is classified as NPA.

The slippage ratio, which measures new accretions to NPAs as a share of standard advances at the beginning of the year, moderated during 2022-23 and further in first half of 2023-24. A mix of write-offs, upgradations and recoveries contributed to reduction in NPAs.

The RBI report says that during 2022-23, around 45% of reduction in GNPA of SCBs was contributed by recoveries and upgradations.

## Bata India gets Rs 60 cr sales tax notice



KOLKATA, Dec 28 (Agencies): Footwear

major Bata India has received a notice from

the State Tax Officer, Anna Salai Assessment Circle, Chennai, amounting to Rs 60.56 crore, the company said in a filing to the bourses on Thursday.

The notice dated December 27, 2023, pertains to several issues raised in a final audit report on December 25, for the 2018-19 financial year, according to the filing.

The issues raised include differences in

turnover on outward supplies in the monthly GST returns, differences in tax on outward supplies in the GSTR-9 & GSTR-9C returns, excess Input Tax Credit (ITC) availed, and ITC Reversal on credit notes.

The company said it initially received an audit notice on April 27, 2023, and submitted relevant documents in response. Bata India was given a personal hearing on

January 10, 2024, to present its case and provide further information on the disputed issues, as per the filing.

The company expressed confidence in its ability to defend the case before the authorities concerned.

"It is believed that the company has a good case to defend the matters without any material financial impact," Bata India said

## 'Not liable': Zomato responds to Rs 401 crore GST notice on delivery charges

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Online food delivery giant Zomato said on Thursday that it is not liable to pay any tax on delivery charges after the company received a show cause notice from the Directorate General of GST Intelligence (DGGI).

The notice, issued under Section 74(1) of the Central Goods and Services Tax Act, 2017, demanded an explanation from Zomato regarding an alleged tax liability amounting to Rs 401.70 crore. This includes interest and penalties for the duration spanning from October 29, 2019, to March 31, 2022.

The show cause notice specifically targets the delivery charges collected by Zomato from customers on behalf of their delivery partners during the aforementioned period.

In response to this development, Zomato issued a statement to the stock exchanges, stating its strong belief that it is



not liable to pay any tax in this regard.

According to the company, the delivery charge is collected on behalf of the delivery partners who, as per contractual terms and conditions, provide services directly to the customers. Zomato emphasized that this position is reinforced by opinions from its external legal and tax advisors.

"The company strongly

believes that it is not liable to pay any tax since the delivery charge is collected by the Company on behalf of the delivery partners. Further, in view of the contractual terms and conditions mutually agreed upon, the delivery partners have provided the delivery services to the customers and not the company," Zomato said.

"This is also supported by opinions from our external legal

and tax advisors. The Company will be filing an appropriate response to the SCN," the statement added.

In its filing with the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE), Zomato clarified that it would be preparing and submitting a comprehensive response to the show cause notice.

The company also expressed confidence in the merit of its case, stating that it does not believe it should be subject to the alleged tax demand.

Furthermore, Zomato highlighted that no order of any kind had been passed at this stage, and the disclosure was made voluntarily and with caution due to the substantial nature of the tax demand in question.

Shares of Zomato fell over 3 per cent following the disclosure, but it is a marginal blip in comparison to the strong rally it has witnessed this year as its shares have rallied over 100 per cent in 2023 so far.

## Wipro files suit against ex-CFO Dalal

BENGALURU, Dec 28 (Agencies): Information technology company Wipro has filed a lawsuit against its former chief financial officer Jatin Dalal who joined rival Cognizant this month.

Earlier in September, Cognizant had announced Dalal will succeed Jan Siegmund, and will report to the company's chief executive officer Ravi Kumar S. Wipro has initiated legal proceedings in civil court in Bengaluru.

Though Wipro and Cognizant didn't respond to queries, it is said Dalal has requested the court to move the matter to arbitration and that a hearing is scheduled on January 3. Dalal joined Wipro in 2002 and became chief financial officer in April 2015 and also assumed additional responsibilities as President beginning in December 2019.



Previously, he was CFO of Wipro's Global IT Business from 2011 to 2015, and prior to that, he served as Wipro's UK head of finance for the Europe region and as the global finance head of energy & utilities, health care, and manufacturing business units.

The reason for the legal action is unclear. This comes days after the IT company filed a complaint against Mohd Haque, a former senior vice-president and head of healthcare and medical devices- Americas, alleging a violation of the non-compete clause in his employment contract. He moved from the company before expira-

tion of the non-compete clause that was set until August 1, 2023.

He joined Cognizant recently. Wipro has seen many senior-level exits this year including operations head Sanjeev Singh, India business head Satya Easwaran, Americas Two CFO Nithin V Jagannathan, IDEAS business head Rajan Kohli, and Americas One CFO Kamini Shah. Senior VP Ashish Saxena also exited the firm recently.

Meanwhile, reports claim Infosys sent a written communication to Cognizant as a few senior employees quit to join the firm. Queries sent to Infosys and Cognizant didn't elicit any response. Cognizant CEO Ravi Kumar, an Infosys veteran, took over as CEO in January, and hired many senior executives from Wipro and Infosys.

## Quality, not only quantity, of nutrients in low-carbohydrate diets matter for weight loss: Study

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Scientists have discovered links between source and quality of macronutrients in low-carbohydrate diets (LCDs) and the resulting long-term weight changes in a new research.

They found that LCDs stressing on high-quality proteins, whole grain-derived fats and carbohydrates, and healthy plant-based foods were significantly linked with slower weight gain in the long term.

In contrast, the research from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health and Brigham and Women's Hospital, Boston, US, found that LCDs emphasising animal-sourced proteins and fats or refined carbohydrates were associated with faster weight gain.

The findings are published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Network Open.

LCDs are known to hold promise for promoting weight loss and improving metabolic health. Ketogenic diets are a type of LCDs widely resorted to for achieving weight loss and have been studied to derive only 5-10 per cent energy from carbohydrates.

However, few studies had considered the role of food group quality in the associations between LCDs and weight outcomes, the researchers said in their study.

In this study, the research team included more than 1, 23,000 initially healthy individuals from across three prospective cohort studies, with an average age of 45 years. About 84 per cent of the group was women.

The researchers then prospectively examined the associations between various LCDs - plant-based, animal-

based, total, healthy and unhealthy - and weight change over 20 years of follow-up.

They found that a greater adherence to animal-based, total (emphasising overall lower carbohydrate intake) and unhealthy LCDs was associated with more weight gain. An unhealthy LCD was one that, according to the researchers, emphasised fewer carbohydrates from healthful sources, such as whole grains, more animal protein, and unhealthy fat.

Further, a stricter adherence to healthy LCDs, defined by the researchers as an LCD emphasising less refined carbohydrates, more plant protein, and healthy fat, was found to be linked with less weight gain.

The researchers also observed that factors, such as baseline BMI, were important at the individual level in

weight loss outcomes. For example, they found that obese individuals with a high adherence to a healthy LCD experienced 1.63 kilograms (kg) less weight gain, but participants with BMI less than 25 experienced only 0.39 kg less weight gain.

The researchers said that the findings underscored the importance of diet quality, and not only quantity, within LCD patterns for weight management.

"A high-quality LCD, rich in plant-based proteins and healthy fats, was associated with slower weight gain, while a lower-quality LCD was associated with the opposite result," they wrote in their study.

They also called for future research to validate these findings across more diverse populations and to elucidate the mechanisms underlying these associations.

## Significant links between early-life diseases and childlessness revealed in a new study

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Researchers have found significant associations between early-life diseases, including mental-behavioural disorders, and the chances of being childless lifelong in a new study.

The international study, led by the University of Oxford, UK, examined the link between 414 early-life diseases and lifetime involuntary childlessness in over 2.5 million individuals born in Finland and Sweden. It is published in the journal Nature Human Behaviour.

The researchers found that of the 74 early-life diseases significantly associated with childlessness in at least one sex, 33 were shared between men and women and more than half of these were mental-behavioural disorders. Their analysis also revealed new links between autoimmune and inflammatory diseases and childless-

ness. The findings paved the way for better understanding how disease contributes to involuntary childlessness and the need for improved public health interventions, the researchers said.

Further, some of these diseases linked to childlessness were found to be gender-specific. For example, in men, schizophrenia and acute alcohol intoxication were more strongly linked with childlessness.

However, in women, diabetes-related diseases and congenital irregularities such as malformations in the digestive and musculoskeletal system were found to display stronger links with being childless.

"Various factors are driving an increase in childlessness worldwide, with postponed parenthood being a significant contributor that potentially heightens the risk of involuntary child-

lessness," said Aoxing Liu, lead author of the study and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Helsinki's Institute for Molecular Medicine in Finland.

The research team used the nationwide registers to analyse information on 414 early-life disease diagnoses for 1.4 million women born between 1956-1973 and 1.1 million men born between 1956-1968. They said that all were alive at 16 years of age, did not emigrate and had mostly finished their reproductive years by the end of 2018 (defined as age 45 for women, 50 for men).

About 25 per cent of these men were found to be childless compared to 16.6 per cent of the women, with individuals having lower education levels more likely to be childless compared to the general population.

The researchers also found gender-specific differences between the age of one receiving their initial diagno-

ses and their likelihood of being childless. For instance, they found that women initially diagnosed with obesity between the ages of 16-20 were more likely to remain childless than those initially diagnosed at later ages.

"As well as reinforcing demographic research on assortative mating and other socioeconomic factors linked to childlessness, this paper underscores the necessity for interdisciplinary research and enhanced public health emphasis on addressing early-life diseases among both men and women in relation to childlessness," said senior author Melinda Mills from the University of Oxford.

The researchers acknowledged the need for further research to be able to generalise the results beyond Nordic countries and to more recent cohorts with evolving treatments, reproductive and partnering practices.



## Dharmendra Pradhan's visionary discourse at IIM Jammu ignites young minds for Viksit Bharat @ 2047

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: The Indian Institute of Management Jammu (IIM) Jammu hosted Dharmendra Pradhan, Minister of Education and Skill Development & Entrepreneurship, Govt. of India, for a momentous visit that included a comprehensive review of ongoing construction activities.

This visit not only underscored the institute's steadfast commitment to academic excellence and innovation but also aligned seamlessly with the broader goals of national progress under the visionary initiative, "Viksit Bharat".

The event was presided by Padmashri Dr. Milind P. Kamble, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Jammu, Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu, Prof. Jabir Ali, Dean Academics, Cmrdr Kesavan Baskaran, Chief Administrative Officer, IIM Jammu along with officials from the Ministry, faculty, officers, staff and students of the Institute.

On the occasion, Dharmendra Pradhan planted a Rudraksha sapling, symbolizing growth and prosperity, in the permanent campus during the visit, commencing the event with a traditional lamp lighting ceremony.

Pradhan gave a detailed overview into the Ideas for the vision Viksit Bharat @2047 initiative. He mentioned about Prime Minister's Narendra Modi's governance philosophy, approach of uplifting those at the bottom of pyramid, Sabka Saath—Sabka Vikas model, and the need for promoting education in mother tongue and drawing pride, inspiration, and confidence from



Bharatiyata.

He reiterated, "We are in an era of game-changing reforms under the leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi. India has witnessed rapid transformation post 2014 and is on its way to become the third largest economy in the world. PM's welfare model is a case study. On this occasion, I would like to encourage IIM Jammu family to examine it minutely and come up with long-term case studies on the unique propositions and possibilities for the U.T of Jammu & Kashmir. I would like to commend the active involvement of the Institute in Viksit Bharat Initiative and its commitment to nurturing future leaders, dedication in academics and skill development aligning seamlessly with our vision for a Viksit Bharat @2047."

Dr. Milind P. Kamble, Chairman, Board of Governors, IIM Jammu, warmly welcomed the Union Education Minister.

Dr. Milind P. Kamble highlighted several key initiatives under-

taken by IIM Jammu in a short span of time, further reinforcing its commitment to fostering a conducive and inclusive learning environment at the Institute.

He mentioned, "We have established "Anandam," ACenter for Happiness, which is aimed at addressing academic stress among students. Furthermore, the establishment of the Centre for Diversity and Inclusion is a testament to our commitment to providing an inclusive and diverse learning environment. These initiatives align seamlessly with our vision for a developed India by 2047 as part of the Viksit Bharat initiative. The institute remains steadfast in its commitment to transformative initiatives and looks forward to further collaboration with the Hon'ble Minister towards achieving the shared vision of Viksit Bharat 2047."

During his address, Prof. B.S. Sahay, Director, IIM Jammu underscored IIM Jammu's unwavering dedication to academic excellence and active participation in transformative initiatives like Viksit Bharat @ 2047. He emphasized the institute's commitment to shaping the educational landscape in

alignment with the vision for a developed and thriving India by 2047.

Minister reviewed the progress of IIM Jammu's Jagti campus construction activities, acknowledging the institute's commitment to academic excellence, research, and fostering future leaders. He also visited and lauded the state-of-the-art library at the institute and its hi-tech facilities available there to provide a comprehensive learning ecosystem to the students.

One of the key highlights of the visit was the involvement of the student community with the Minister for in-depth discussion on the ViksitBharat@2047 initiative, a visionary program aimed at shaping the educational and skill development landscape in India by the year 2047.

The discussion with students revolved around this long-term vision of the government and its several initiatives, aligning the educational landscape with the overall broad goals of the nation where he emphasized on the bottom of the pyramid approach of the government to prosper inclusive economic growth and the importance of imparting knowledge in the local language.

While answering questions of the students, Minister mentioned about the quality education initiatives that the Government is planning and implementing to ensure equal access to education as a part of New Education Policy (NEP) 2020.

Further, during the interaction, Pradhan emphasized the importance of artificial intelligence in holistic development of the mankind.

## Amateur Karate Do Association of J&K conducts Referee Judge, coach exam

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: Amateur Karate Do Association of Jammu and Kashmir conducted Referee Judge and coach exam here on Thursday.

Karateka's from all over J&K successfully completed the seminar, practical and qualify for KIO (NF) and J&K UT level Referee Judge and coach license.

Seminar was conducted by Ritika Rawat Judge B AKF from Delhi.

Priya Sharma, Rajan Jamwal, (Jammu) Raja Shabhat (Pulwama), Anil Kumar (Reasi) Tajamu Khan (Budgam) Ajaz Ahmed Bhat (Kupwara) Rohit Ramotra, Vansh Samyal, Meenakshi Raina, Indu Devi, Munish



Saini (Udhampur) Qualified for (NF) KIO Karate India Organization where they get the eligibility to be referee / judge at all kind of national level championships.

Shivarpit, Neeraj Manhas, Vijender Jamwal, Asif Ameen Bhat, Aeeba Shafi, Abid Hassan, Madiha Sabzar qualified for J&K UT level where they get the eligibility to be referee /judge at all kind of UT level championships.

Shihan Ambedkar Gupta, EC member KIO Chairman OC KIO congratulated to all. Sanjay Kumar Tutoo paid thanks to Karate NF KIO for their support and expressed his happiness that in future we can see our J&K people officiating at National level competitions.

## McDonald introduces special kebab rolls

Top News Report

JAMMU / CHANDIGARH, Dec 28: In its unwavering commitment to delight its customers, McDonald's India - North & East introduces an irresistible addition to its menu with the launch of its all-new kebab rolls. Starting at just INR 139, the fulfilling desi kebab rolls come in two variants – Paneer Kebab roll and Chicken Kebab roll.

Rajeev Ranjan, MD McDonald's India – North and East, said, "Whether you are on the move, having office get together, or dining-in celebrating with friends and family, our menu promis-

es to be favourite companion of your palate in every consumption occasion".

The Kebab rolls are meticulously prepared by grilling marinated protein of choice (Paneer or Chicken) and blending it with finely chopped onions, all wrapped in a delicate Malabar Paratha for a perfectly balanced taste and convenience. To elevate the indulgence, they are served with flavourful mint and makhani mayo by ensuring each bite is a burst of unparalleled flavour.

The kebab rolls are available in Al-a carte as well in meal options at select McDonald's outlets in the North and East regions.

## Batwal community members visit Suchetgarh

Top News Report

R S PURA, Dec 28: The Batwal community members led by Jammu and Kashmir Batwal Sabha General Secretary R.L.Kaith visited Suchetgarh here on Thursday.

The Suchetgarh is 28 kms from main Jammu. The road to Nai Basti-Gulabgarh from Jammu follows the train route as



it existed prior to 1947 and a number of old buildings can be seen on the way.

Suchetgarh served as the route to Sialkot during the pre-partition

era, which is just 11 kms from it and earlier there was an Octroi post at this point.

On the other side of the Suchetgarh border lies a spectacular

Banyan Tree, which is as old as 100 years.

In close vicinity are the 'Gharana and Abdullah wet lands where migratory birds of a number of varieties flock during winter season, said the locals adding that since lots of people visit this tourism spot and highly recommend it to others, we are sure this is a place that worth a visit.

## Vi signs strategic partnership with Gameloft to bring world class hyper casual games for subscribers

Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: Leading telecom operator Vi, has partnered with globally renowned mobile video game developer, Gameloft, to offer a wide range of hyper casual games across genres such as action, adventure, sports, racing, and many others to Vi users via Vi Games on Vi App.

Through this partnership, Vi customers can access Gameloft originals and other popular game

titles such as Danger Dash, Block Breaker Unlimited, Ludi Bubbles, Asphalt Retro, and more at no additional cost. Vi customers can easily explore this gaming bonanza by navigating through Vi Games section on the Vi App and diving into the Fun Games section. The Gameloft options on Vi Games have a fresh and easy to use look and feel and come with state-of-the-art anti-fraud detection and security solution. Vi's partnership with Gameloft

underscores its dedication to deliver immersive games, reaffirming its commitment to provide the best in category gaming options and experience to mobile gamers. The collaboration is one more significant step towards delivering an unparalleled gaming experience for Vi customers.

The current offering to subscribers is at no cost. Vi plans to launch a subscription based service of Gameloft's tournament led service called Arena in the near future.

## FROM PAGE 1

### J&K Panchayati Raj Act amended to incorporate OBC reservation

submitted to the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA). The observations of the MHA were examined and the necessary amendments incorporated in the revised bill.

The amendment bill proposes the incorporation of the definition of the OBC for providing reservation to them, explaining the method of disqualification from the membership of a Halqa Panchayat and suspension and removal of a sarpanch, naib-sarpanch and panch by the government, the spokesperson said.

He added that the bill also defines the process for removal and conditions of service of the state election commissioner (SEC) here.

### 134 flights delayed, 22 trains running late as dense fog grips Delhi

beds will come true only when we get out," one of the bikers said.

Stressing the importance of using fog light in this season, the fitness enthusiast said, "It is important to use fog light whether you are on a bicycle or a car. I think it will keep you 50 per cent safe."

The biker also said that, though one should not exert themselves in the winter months, some light exercise is essential.

"You should engage in light exercises in winter and not exert yourself. But some activity is essential," he added.

Meanwhile, rehearsals are underway for the Republic Day parade at Delhi's Kartavya Path amid intense fog.

In Ghaziabad, parents have demanded schools timings to be revised keeping in view the cold weather conditions.

"Due to excessive cold, children are facing problems. They are suffering from

cough and cold. It is difficult to wake up in the morning. We demand the administration to change the school timings. If the temperature dips further in the coming days, school timings should be changed keeping that in mind," one of the parents said.

### India records six Covid-19 deaths, 702 new cases in 24 hrs; total active caseload at 4,097

the country. The number of people who recuperated from the infection stands at over 4.4 crore with a national recovery rate of 98.81 per cent, according to the ministry's website. According to the website, 220.67 crore doses of Covid vaccines have so far been administered in the country.

### Severe cold tightens grip in Kashmir, Srinagar shivers at -3.3°C

The minimum temperature at Qazigund on the Srinagar-Jammu national highway fell to a low of -3.8°C against -3.2°C recorded the previous night, while Kokernag had a low of -2.0°C against -2.2°C recorded a day ago.

The mercury at Pahalgam plunged to -5.4°C on Thursday against the -4.6°C recorded the previous night. It was 0.2°C below normal for the tourist hot spot in south Kashmir.

Gulmarg recorded an improvement by a couple of notches and recorded at -2.6°C against -2.8°C recorded the previous day. It was 3.6°C above normal for the famous ski resort of North Kashmir.

Kupwara dipped to -4.3°C against the -4.2°C recorded the previous night. It was 1.8°C below normal for the north Kashmir district, the MeT office said.

The weather will generally remain dry with

moderate to dense fog over Central Kashmir, the Plains of Baramulla, Ganderbal, and Pulwama districts till the end of the month, the MeT office said.

It said there is a possibility of light snow over higher reaches during the evening or night on the new year's eve over Jammu and Kashmir.

The weather will remain generally dry during January 1-2, 2024, while there could be light rain or snow in scattered places on January 3-4, the MeT office said.

### 6 chargesheeted for Rs 60 Lakh investment fraud in Jammu

promising to provide bonus income on their deposits after every 15 days and additional bonus income on creating a network of depositors.

Others chargesheeted in the case are Sushil Kumar, Sandeep Kumar, Deepak Singh – all residents of Haryana, Saphali Singh of New Delhi and Manveer Singh of Punjab, the spokesperson said.

A written complaint lodged in Crime Branch, Jammu by Mohd Younis of Pulwama, Asrar Ahmed of Srinagar, Ayaz Ahmed of Poonch and Mushtaq Dar of Rajouri has alleged that the accused came to J&K in October 2017 and conducted seminars at different hotels to get people to invest money in the company, the official said.

People were assured that the company is genuine and registered with the Reserve Bank of India, the spokesperson said, adding the company collected huge amounts from local residents within three months.

After police received the complaint, a preliminary verification was conducted and allegations of cheating and fraud were prima facie substantiated, leading to the registration of a formal case under relevant sections of law for in-depth probe, the official said.

### Misleading narratives being propagated to justify Article 370 abrogation: Tarigami

empowered the Parliament to legislate on matters in the state list based on a resolution from the Rajya Sabha.

Pertinently, it received approval from the centrally-appointed Governor, Jagmohan. Such overriding of the state list is unique to Jammu and Kashmir and isn't applicable to other states, he added.

### LeT terrorist associate arrested in Baramulla: Police

movement in Kreeri area, a joint Naka was established at Shrakwara Kreeri near Bus Stand by Baramulla Police & Army 52 RR. During naka checking suspicious movement of one person coming towards naka point by foot was observed. While seeing police party and security forces, the suspect person tried to flee from the spot but alert naka party apprehended him tactfully. During preliminary questioning, he was identified as Imran Ahmad Ganie son of Abdul Qayoom Ganie resident of Nowpora Wagoora Kreeri."

"During his search 1 Chinese Pistol, 1 Pistol Magazine, 9 Pistol Rounds & 1 Mobile Phone (Samsung) was recovered from his possession", he said.

He said that in this regard, case under sections UA (P) & Arms Act has been registered in PS Kreeri and investigation has been taken up.

### Youth arrested in UP's Saharanpur over post threatening 'Pulwama-like' attack

accused under stringent sections, the police said.

Senior Superintendent of Police of Saharanpur, Vipin Tada told ANI, "Police received information at Deoband police station that a youth posted some objectionable comments on Twitter (now X), in which he threatened a repeat of the Pulwama terror attack."

"Taking note of the post, the local police have registered a case and the young man has been questioned. He confessed to putting out the post out of anger," Tada added.

He said that the intelligence department and police have initiated a thorough probe to understand the motive behind the post.

"The police informed other agencies and a forensic investigation has been initiated on his seized mobile phone," the SSP informed further.

Further investigation into the matter is underway, the SSP added.

The incident comes nearly a week after a terror attack on army vehicles at Jammu and Kashmir's Poonch in which four Jawans were killed.

According to official sources, the Army is planning to increase the number of troops in the Poonch-Rajouri sector to curb the activities of the Pakistan-based terrorists there.

Earlier, on Wednesday, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh chaired a high-level meeting to take stock of the situation in the wake of the terror attack.

"I want to assure you that, as far as the government is concerned, the government stands by you and we give equal priority to your welfare and your convenience. We try to take steps based on whatever information is given to us," the Raksha Mantri said. Singh said the army is more well-equipped than before to deal with such threats.

On February 14, 2019, forty personnel of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) were killed when their convoy was attacked by a vehicle-borne suicide bomber at Lethapora in the Pulwama district on the Jammu-Srinagar National Highway.

The attack is believed to have been carried out by Pakistani terror group Jaish-e-Mohammed.

## China to brace for year of extreme weather events in 2024, experts warn

*According to senior climate experts, the nation should prepare for a significant increase in both temperatures and extreme weather events in 2024, a direct consequence of the El Niño phenomenon.*

BEIJING, Dec 28 (Agencies): After enduring a December that marked one of the coldest in its recorded history, China is now facing the prospect of another extreme shift in weather patterns.

According to senior climate experts, the nation should prepare for a significant increase in both temperatures and extreme weather events in 2024, a direct consequence of the El Niño phenomenon.

Zhou Bing, the chief expert at China's National Climate Center, has indicated that the upcoming year could surpass previous heat records, with extreme weather becoming more frequent and intense. "2024 may be hotter and it could also be a year when extreme weather may become more



frequent and powerful," Zhou stated in a report broadcasted by CCTV.

The past summer was a testament to the changing climate, with Beijing experiencing unprecedented heatwaves, while a township in China's northwest recorded a scorching 52 degrees Celsius (126 Fahr-

heit), the highest temperature ever documented in the country.

Additionally, typhoons have led to record-breaking rainfall in northern regions, resulting in severe flooding and widespread damage.

El Niño, a climate cycle occurring every two to seven years, is characterized by the warming of

ocean waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific.

This warming can lead to drastic weather changes, including heavy rainfall, storms, and droughts across various parts of the globe.

The current El Niño cycle began in June and has been responsible for setting new temperature highs worldwide.

While predictions suggest that El Niño may subside between April and June of the following year, its effects are expected to linger, potentially leading to further temperature records being shattered in 2024.

As China grapples with these climatic challenges, the focus on enhancing climate resilience and preparing for more frequent and severe weather events has never been more critical.

## Bird flu likely to spread in Antarctica, continent's wildlife under threat



NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): The Antarctic region, home to a diverse array of wildlife, is facing an imminent threat as experts warn that the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also known as bird flu, is poised to spread further, potentially wreaking havoc on species unexposed to the virus.

The H5 strain, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions of birds globally, was first detected in a brown skua on Bird Island, signaling the virus's arrival in the southernmost reaches of the planet.

This alarming development was reported by OFFLU, an expert group from the World Organisation of Animal Health and the U.N. Food and Agriculture

Organisation. The same strain was concurrently found in fulmars and albatrosses in the Falkland Islands, raising the alarm for the 48 bird species and 26 marine mammals residing in Antarctica.

The dense colonies of these animals, including thousands of pinnipeds and hundreds of thousands of birds, create an environment ripe for rapid virus transmission and potentially high mortality rates.

The situation is particularly dire for elephant seals in South Georgia, which may have contracted the virus from their counterparts in South America, where significant die-offs have occurred. These infected seals could act as vectors, spreading the virus to neighboring

islands and down to the Antarctic Peninsula. Experts fear that if the HPAI H5 virus continues its suggested path of spread, it could infiltrate other Antarctic islands and even reach Oceania, the only region yet untouched by this H5N1 clade. The emperor penguin, already on the brink of extinction, faces a severe threat; an outbreak within a colony could spell disaster for the entire population.

In response to this looming crisis, OFFLU has called for heightened monitoring and surveillance of wildlife populations, along with stringent biosafety measures to curb the human-mediated spread of the virus to new areas and minimize the risk of human infection.

The definition of the Antarctic region used by OFFLU encompasses a broader area than the Antarctic Treaty region, including all ice shelves, underscoring the potential scale of the impact.

The race is on to protect one of Earth's last frontiers from a disease that has already left an indelible mark on global bird populations.

## Mexico emitted 'extreme' amounts of methane from gas pipeline, scientists find

MEXICO CITY, Dec 28 (Agencies): Mexico emitted "extreme" amounts of methane from a natural gas pipeline running through its northern border state Durango in 2019, a research paper showed, citing data collected from satellites.

Methane, a potent greenhouse gas that traps heat in the atmosphere and warms the planet much faster than carbon dioxide in the short term, is considered a top threat to the climate.

Scientists from Harvard University, led by Marc Watine and Daniel Varon, identified a hot spot in Durango that released thousands of metric tons of methane over two months.

Watine said the team was able to trace the methane leaks to the El

Encino-La Laguna pipeline that passes through the states of Chihuahua and Durango, transporting natural gas from the United States to Mexico.

"Our analysis shows that there were emissions from several different parts of the pipeline between April and May that year," Watine said in an interview. "Not all of it came from one location."

On May 12, 2019, between 260 and 550 tons of methane were released per hour from one location, totaling 1,130 to 1,380 tons over three hours, the scientists found.

It was not clear what caused the emissions or which company was responsible for them.

Government documents showed the pipeline, owned by state-owned power util-



ity CFE, is operated by Fermaca Pipeline El Encino.

CFE did not immediately respond to a request for comment and no contact details are listed in public documents for Fermaca Pipeline El Encino.

Scientists have said Mexican companies, including state energy

company Pemex, lag behind their obligations to identify, report and mitigate emissions from their infrastructure.

In September 2022, another group detected two methane leaks from Pemex infrastructure in the Ku-Malooob-Zaap oil field cluster in the Gulf of Mexico.

Methane, the main

component of natural gas, is invisible and odorless.

However, in recent years satellite technology has evolved to make detection possible and more accurate.

The latest research was published in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, a peer reviewed journal.

## Drifting icebergs pictured from space shows climate change impact on planet

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): European Space Agency astronaut Andreas Mogensen has shared stunning images of icebergs in the South Atlantic, visible to the naked eye from the International Space Station (ISS).

The commander of Expedition 70, Mogensen, initially doubted the visibility of such phenomena from space but was proven wrong during his mission.

The astronaut's photographs show giant icebergs with distinct shapes and sharp edges, contrasting starkly against the deep blue ocean. These images, captured from an orbital vantage point, not only provide a visual spectacle but also highlight the ongoing impacts of climate



change on our planet.

Mogensen expressed his astonishment and concern via social media, stating, "I have to admit that if you had asked me before this mission if you could see icebergs with your naked eye from space, I would have said, 'No way'. Turns out that you can! We have been seeing

lots of icebergs lately in the South Atlantic."

His observations are backed by satellite data confirming an acceleration in global ice mass loss, particularly from glaciers in Greenland and Antarctica, contributing significantly to rising sea levels.

The astronaut's posts points to

the urgency of the situation, as he reflects on the future of low-lying island nations like the Maldives, which are at risk of being submerged within 70 years due to rising oceans.

These images from space highlight the pressing issue of climate change, with melting glaciers and ice caps leading to the formation of more icebergs that are calving at an unprecedented rate.

The icebergs, captured from the unique perspective of space, is being seen as a powerful visual message of the vulnerability of our environment and the immediate need for global awareness and response to climate change.

## World's smallest frog discovered and it does not lay eggs in water

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Researchers have identified the world's smallest frog species in Sulawesi, Indonesia.

The newly found species, belonging to the Limnodynastes genus, showcases a distinctive reproductive behaviour, laying eggs on land, a characteristic previously only observed in one other species on the island.

The research team, led by biologists exploring the rich biodiversity of Sulawesi, stumbled upon the diminutive Limnodynastes during their fieldwork. This newly found frog is not only incredibly small, with a maximum length of about 30 millimeters, but it also has a unique way of laying eggs.

While some other frogs in Sulawesi are known to lay eggs on land, this tiny Limnodynastes species has a special method. The male frogs take care of clutches of eggs attached to leaves or mossy rocks about one to two meters above small streams or puddles. This behavior is different from other frogs in the area.

The discovery is particularly significant



because it's hard to tell if the differences we see are because they are different species or just variations within the same species.

This new frog shares its home with another frog species called L. arathooni, which is also known to lay eggs on land. These two species look quite similar in size and appearance, making it challenging to tell them apart.

However, the researchers successfully differentiated the two species based on several factors, including body size, advertisement call, egg-laying behaviour, and genetic distance.

Unlike its counterpart, which deposits eggs in streamside leaf litter or holes in stream banks, the new species opts for "leaf nests" positioned

high above the ground, hanging over forest streams and seeps.

Moreover, the findings shed light on the unique parental care exhibited by male frogs of the new species. These males attentively watch over one or two nests until tadpoles emerge and drop into the water below, exemplifying a fascinating aspect of the frog's reproductive behaviour.

This finding tells us a lot about the unique and surprising behaviours of these tiny frogs in Sulawesi. Even though there are still many frogs in this area that scientists haven't officially named, this discovery helps us understand more about the fascinating world of these small creatures in one of the most biodiverse regions on Earth.

## Arctic warming broke all records in 2023. It's bad sign for the planet

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): In a stark revelation, the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's (NOAA) 2023 Arctic Report Card has documented the highest summer surface air temperatures in the Arctic since records began in 1900.

This alarming trend underscores the region's rapid warming, which is occurring at twice the global average rate due to anthropogenic climate change.

The report said that paints a grim picture of the cascading effects of

the Arctic's transformation. Not only did this year witness extraordinary wildfires and melting glaciers, but it also signaled potential global catastrophes, including rising sea levels that could devastate coastal communities worldwide.

The Canadian Arctic Archipelago and parts of northern Canada experienced unprecedented warmth coupled with lower-than-average precipitation, fueling an extreme wildfire season. Meanwhile, Greenland's ice sheet continued its relentless decline, shedding approximately 350

trillion pounds (158.7 billion metric tons) of mass, a trend unbroken since 1998.

Although this year's loss was mitigated by significant snowfall, the enduring heat inflicted notable damage. Summit Station, perched atop Greenland's ice sheet, recorded melting for only the fifth time in over three decades. The cumulative melt-day area nearly reached record highs, indicating extensive and persistent thawing.

The NOAA report warns of "irreversible climate harms" as the



overheating Arctic's repercussions ripple through North America and Eurasia. Brenda Ekwurzel, the director of climate science at the Union of Concerned Scientists, emphasizes

that these impacts will have long-term consequences beyond the Arctic Circle.

Adding to the complexity of the situation is the "unequivocal evidence of Arctic greening."

Warmer temperatures, increased precipitation, and thawing permafrost are causing a shift in vegetation patterns, with shrubs and trees encroaching upon grasslands and tundra.

This year, the North American tundra exhibited significant greening, while the Eurasian Arctic saw less.

The phenomenon of "peak tundra greenness" reached its third-highest level in 24 years, raising concerns about the release of vast amounts of carbon dioxide previously locked within the permafrost.

The Arctic's plight serves as a clarion call for immediate action against climate change. As the region's role as a global air conditioner diminishes due to the loss of reflective sea

ice, the darker ocean surface absorbs more sunlight, exacerbating the warming effect.

With summer Arctic sea ice extent shrinking by 12.2% per decade, the implications for global weather patterns, ecosystems, and human societies are profound and far-reaching.

As the world grapples with these findings, the message is clear: the Arctic's distress is a harbinger of global environmental upheaval, demanding urgent attention and concerted efforts to mitigate the climate crisis.

## Hilarious incident involving third umpire leads to hold-up in Melbourne Test between Australia and Pakistan

*The second Test between the World Test Championship winners and the Asian side is taking place at the MCG*

MELBOURNE, Dec 28 (Agencies): In a bizarre and hilarious incident, the second session of the day three of the second Test between Australia and Pakistan was delayed as the third umpire, Richard Illingworth, got stuck in a lift.

The second Test between the World Test Championship winners and the Asian side is



taking place at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG).

"The game is delayed because the third umpire...is stuck in the lift #AUSvPAK," tweeted cricket.com.au.

Minutes later, Richard was able to make his way into his sitting area and the game resumed.

## AUS vs PAK, 2nd Test: David Warner bids farewell to MCG, crowd gives batter stellar standing ovation

MELBOURNE, Dec 28 (Agencies): Australia opener David Warner bid farewell to the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground after his final Test innings on Thursday, 28 December. Warner, who has been a pillar in the Australian batting line-up, scored 6 runs in his final Test innings at the venue.

The Australia opener took his time while walking out of the ground and received a standing ovation from the crowd. Cricket Australia put up a video of the moment where the crowd can be seen clapping for the

opener.

David Warner did not do well in the Test match in Melbourne. The batter had scored 38 in the first innings and 6 in the second. Warner, however, came into the Test match after a sensational century at the Optus Stadium in Perth, where he scored 164 runs.

The opener had requested for a farewell Test match at the Sydney Cricket Ground. Australia will play their final Test match series against Pakistan in Sydney right after the New Year break. Warner has been a prolific player

for Australia in Test cricket and is nearing 9000 Test runs. While he is unlikely to reach the feat in Sydney, Warner will always be remembered as one of the most influential openers of all time.

The batter has close to 7000 runs in ODI cricket and close to 3000 runs in Test cricket. Warner has 26 hundreds in Test cricket, the most by an opener in the history of all time.

At the time of writing, Australia had taken a lead of 191 runs in the Test match. Steve Smith and Mitchell Marsh had



stitched a 121-run partnership already and

Australia were 137/4 in 40.5 overs.

## Elgar's SA on how to bat



CENTURION, Dec 28 (Agencies): An unbeaten century from veteran Dean Elgar and fifty on debut from David Bedingham allowed South Africa to take an 11-run lead with five wickets in hand over India when bad light ended play on the second day of the first Test.

The 36-year-old Elgar is retiring from international cricket after the two-Test series but played one of the best innings of his long career as he scored an emotive 140 not out to help the hosts to 256/5 in reply to India's first innings total of 245.

He will resume today with Marco Jansen, with South Africa seeking to build a substantive lead.

Elgar, who took over the captaincy after Temba Bavuma pulled his hamstring fielding yesterday, played some unusually flamboyant

front-foot strokes in a chanceless innings against a fearsome attack on a track set up for the seamers.

He scored a 14th Test century but his first at Centurion, which is his home ground.

"It just clicked for me today. I didn't have a lot to lose. I wanted to play with a bit of freedom," Elgar said at stumps. He brought up his ton in 140 balls and featured in two important partnerships — 93 runs for the second wicket with Tony de Zorzi, which set a good foundation, and 131 with Bedingham for the fourth wicket.

The 29-year-old Bedingham looked assured and confident on debut as he scored 56 before being bowled by Mohammed Siraj, who finished the day with figures of 2/63.

Jasprit Bumrah also took two wickets, squar-

ing up de Zorzi (28) and forcing a thick edge to third slip and then bowling Keegan Petersen for two. Siraj had taken the first wicket of the innings when Aiden Markram went cheaply for five in the fourth over of South Africa's knock.

Late start

Earlier, KL Rahul completed his century before India were dismissed for 245 in their first innings, moving on from 208/8 overnight with play commencing 25 minutes late because of light drizzle.

Rahul, who was 70 not out at the start, went to an eighth Test ton in spectacular fashion, hammering a six into the crowd as the tourists added 37 runs to their first day score before being bowled out.

He had provided stout resistance on the opening day as South Africa threatened to dismiss India cheaply but were let down by spilt catches and inconsistent bowling.

Rahul came out again today with the same aggressive intent and put away the bad balls to reach his century before being the last man dismissed as Nandre Burger bowled him for 101 off 137 balls.

Burger finished with 3/50 on his debut with Kagiso Rabada the pick of the home bowlers with 5/59.

## Pakistan's Fielding "Worst In International Cricket": Gautam Gambhir's Clear Take, Drops India's 'World Cup Finals' Comparison

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): After the 2023 ODI Cricket World Cup, the next marquee ICC event is less than six months away. The 2024 T20 Cricket World Cup will take place in June in the West Indies and the USA. India's wait for a first ICC Trophy since 2013 got extended by a year when they lost to Australia in the ODI World Cup final at home. The 2024 T20 World Cup is another chance for India to end that drought. In an engaging discussion Yuvraj Singh and Gautam Gambhir, both members of India's 2007 T20 World Cup and 2011 ODI World Cup-winning teams, deliberated on India's chances at the T20 World Cup.

On the question, "Biggest threat to India in T20 World Cup?", Yuvraj Singh and Gautam Gambhir gave interesting replies.

"Afghanistan, in those conditions can be very dangerous. Australia, because they have got impact players, and

England because they play T20 cricket the way it should be played," Gautam Gambhir said.

"I have different angle. I think South Africa should win. They have not won a white-ball tournament. The way I saw their progress in the 50-over World Cup and obviously Pakistan who are very dangerous," Yuvraj Singh said. "See Pakistan, their fielding is, I saw in the 50-over World Cup, probably the worst in international cricket. They will have to literally pull their socks up if they really want to compete in the T20 format," Gautam Gambhir added.

"The amount of finals that India have reached...I don't think Pakistan have reached anywhere close to the amount of finals that India have reached in the last five or six years. And you are just one step away from the trophy, hopefully in the T20 World Cup could be one."

Meanwhile, Gautam Gambhir is eager to see

if Samson is even persisted with in the Indian team after his century in Paarl.

Samson has an average of over 50 in ODIs yet he wasn't picked in India's squad for the Cricket World Cup 2023. His run in the Indian team has been quite sporadic and it's fair to say that Samson hasn't truly managed to capitalise on the chances given to him. But, Gambhir is hopeful of things changing from here on.

"We all know how much talent he has. Not just us, everyone has talked about it given the kind of innings he has played in the IPL. But today through this knock, somewhere he has kickstarted his international career. Before this, he always received sporadic chances - sometimes he would get a game, something he would be left out. But when you score a 100, you not only impress the selectors but even put pressure on them to pick you," Gambhir said in a chat with Star Sports.

## Finish Line: Doom and gloom on the mat

*Wrestling, in 2023, was marred by controversies. A look at all that happened, how the country's young grapplers were affected the most and more...*

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): Around eight years ago, Sweetie Malik, who was 12 at the time, joined the Asian Public Sports School in Umra, Hisar (Haryana). Like her father, Omprakash Malik, she also wanted to be a wrestler. While her father could not go beyond state-level competitions, Sweetie started leaving her mark internationally within three years of joining the sports school. She bagged 40kg bronze in the 2018 Cadets World Championship and then went on to clinch 42kg gold at the U-15 Asian Championship in the same year.

Representing the country in the U-20 Asian Championship last year, Sweetie finished second to take home the 50kg silver medal. She pocketed 53kg gold at the Khelo India University Games and 50kg bronze at the National Games this year. Unfortunately, these two events, apart from junior selection trials held months ago, remained only a few competitions wherein she took part in 2023.

Sweetie is among hundreds of wrestlers in the country, who have been devoid of competitions in 2023. The unprecedented protest by top wrestlers against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, former president of the Wrestling Federation of India (WFI), began in January bringing the activities to a standstill in the country. As the sport plunged into darkness with protesting wrestlers levelling allegations of sexual harassment against the former WFI president and a BJP MP, the sports started to suffer. The deadlock between the WFI and

the wrestlers continued and that led to only a couple of competitions in the year affecting all wrestlers but the up and coming young grapplers bore the brunt.

"It cost us dear. What affected us the most was the lack of competition. The tournaments are the best way to analyse one's progress. The training has been going on unabatedly but I am not aware where I stand at the moment," Sweetie told this daily. The wrestler participated in at least 10 tournaments last year including junior national championships, U-23 nationals, Federation Cup and Grand Prix events. Given the situation of wrestling in the country, the National Games in Goa turned out to be one of the few competitions she got this year.

Wrestling has been earning India at least an Olympic medal since the 2008 Games. Wrestlers won two medals (Ravi Dahiya, 57kg silver and Bajrang Punia, 65kg bronze) at the Tokyo Games and the discipline is one of the few high-priority sports in the country as far as the 2024 Paris Olympics is concerned. Even as Sakshi Malik, the face of the protest, remains the only woman wrestler to win an Olympic medal to date, fresh talents like Anshu Malik, Antim Panghal are rated highly and expected to win laurels in Paris. The ongoing crisis, however, has taken a toll on women's wrestling with a few parents even withdrawing their daughters from the sport.

"It's difficult to give the exact figures but yes a few of my women trainees left the sport forever," Sanjay Malik, wrestling coach at the Asian

Public Sports School, told this daily. The exit is not only limited to girls as the strength of boys has also decreased but the percentage is quite high among the girls. "If I talk in percentage, the new joining of girls decreased by at least 25 per cent this year. Apart from this, those already enrolled have decided to quit the sport as there were no competitions. Parents also grew apprehensive after the allegations of sexual harassment," said Malik.

Financial constraints is one of the reasons as surviving without assistance is an uphill task for most wrestlers. "Wrestling is an expensive sport. Being a combat sport, most of the wrestlers hail from modest backgrounds. Prize money from the competitions supports them financially and also provides a pathway for a better future. The participation certificates help them land jobs in government sectors. With hardly any events this year, wrestlers and their parents found it extremely difficult to survive," said the coach. Sweetie also admitted that she lost a few colleagues in the last few months. "Around 5-6 girls from my academy quit the sport. I don't know the exact reasons but somewhere the ongoing mess is responsible," she said. The wrestler, who has been competing at the international circuit for the past five years, however, said never had any such unpleasant experience nor her colleagues.

Wrestling coach Sanjay Sihag of Altius Sports Academy, Sisai, Hisar, also echoed the sentiments and informed around half a dozen women trainees

from his academy left this year. "Those who compete in the age-group competitions are the worst affected. Most of them have lost a year. Who will compensate them? My academy used to have 20 new trainees every year but that declined drastically. Besides, around 7-8 girls left the academy as their parents got wary," Sihag said.

It all started in January when prominent wrestlers including Bajrang, Sakshi and Vinesh Phogat accused Brij Bhushan of sexual harassment. They also got FIRs registered against the Uttar Pradesh strongman. The case is pending in the court at the moment. The allegations meant the government formed an ad-hoc panel to run the sport in the country. After months of uncertainty, the elections to the executive committee of the WFI were held on December 21 with Brij Bhushan's loyalist Sanjay Kumar Singh becoming the president. Out of 15 posts, 13 were won by his faction with two - secretary general and senior vice-president - going to the opposite camp. However, only three days later, the sports ministry instructed the newly-elected body to abstain from functioning and also asked the Indian Olympic Association to form an ad-hoc committee once again.

The absence of the NSF though had little impact on wrestlers' participation in international tournaments including the Asian Games but it certainly has thrown the national calendar in disarray. A source closely associated with the WFI said the federation increased the

number of tournaments considerably in the last few years but it cannot conduct events because of the ongoing issue.

"Till 2017, the WFI used to organise only three nationals (senior, junior and cadet). Between 2017 to 2021, the federation increased the number of tournaments to seven or eight by including events like U-23 nationals and traditional wrestling. Last year, more than 20 tournaments were organised by the WFI. Five nationals (U-15, 17, 20, 23 and senior) were organised. Apart from them, 4 ranking tournaments and as many federation cups (all age groups except U-23) were held. Two Grands Prix were held. Three tournaments of beach wrestling, one traditional wrestling competition and other events were held," the source said.

Asian and Worlds medallists train at Sihag's Academy. Sihag, himself, had competed at the national level before donning the coach's hat. "I am not in favour or against anyone. I only want my wards to get competitions. How long will this continue? Already a year has been wasted. If the government cannot find a solution, it should take control and make sure upcoming wrestlers get the competitions they deserve," the coach said.

Already a year lost, the wrestlers and coaches now want normalcy to return so that they not only get tournaments but also national camps, where they can hone their skills. Having survived the tumultuous period, they, however, fear most of them will have to give up the sport if status quo continues.

## Ad hoc committee for wrestling, again

NEW DELHI, Dec 28 (Agencies): The Indian Olympic Association (IOA) has formed an ad hoc committee to run the daily affairs of the suspended Wrestling Federation of India (WFI). The decision comes days after the Sports Ministry summarily suspended the federation for violations of the WFI constitution as well as the Sports Code.

IOA president PT Usha has appointed a three-member committee headed by Bhupinder Singh Bajwa, who is an executive member of the IOA. The committee also includes hockey Olympian MM Somaya and former badminton player Manjusha Kanwar.

Interestingly, Bajwa was also the chairman of the last ad hoc body that was installed by the IOA in January when the Ministry suspended the federation

amidst sexual harassment allegation laid out against the then president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh.

"The IOA has recently become aware that the recently appointed President and officials of WFI have made arbitrary decisions in violation of their own constitutional provisions and against the principles of good governance espoused by IOC and further without following due process overturned the rulings of the IOA-appointed Ad hoc Committee," Usha said in a letter.

After taking over, Bajwa said the committee will start working on holding the camps and national championships. "Since this is an Olympics year, we must start preparing. We will conduct all the age group championships soon," Bajwa said.

# MP Khatana thanks PM Modi for rescuing J&K from dynasts' clutches

## Top News Report

REASI, Dec 28: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Rajya Sabha, Er. Gulam Ali Khatana accused Congress and National Conference, of being responsible for the prolonged issues in Jammu and Kashmir.

He commended the relentless efforts of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah for undertaking bold steps to extricate the region from its longstanding challenges.

Addressing a public meeting at Deval in Tehsil Mahore of district Reasi, Er. Gulam Ali Khatana said that the Congress, in its pursuit of facilitating dynastic rule by the National Conference, ceded parts of Jammu and Kashmir to Pakistan and China.

This, he said, resulted in a quagmire that persists, adverse-



ly affecting the residents of the erstwhile state.

"Under the Congress and National Conference's rule, certain segments of Jammu and Kashmir were sacrificed to uphold dynastic governance. It was a move that not only undermined the democratic principles but also perpetuated inequal-

ity and exploitation," said MP Khatana.

Highlighting the transformative measures taken by the BJP government, MP Khatana praised the abrogation of Article 370 and 35A. This historic move, he argues, was instrumental in ending dynastic rule and ensuring equal rights for all, including

marginalized communities such as Gujjars, Valmikis, Gurkhas, West Pakistan refugees, POJK refugees, and Kashmiri migrants.

"By revoking Article 370 and 35A, the BJP government aimed to dismantle the structures that perpetuated inequality and discrimination. The objective was to establish a more inclusive and equitable system that empowers every citizen of Jammu and Kashmir," he said.

MP Khatana also accused the Congress and National Conference of not only exploiting the state exchequer but also mismanaging the human resources of the erstwhile state. He asserted that the BJP government's actions were aimed at rectifying these past wrongs and fostering a future of prosperity and development for the people of Jammu and Kashmir.

# VBSY Van reaches GDC Chatroo, spreads awareness on Government Schemes



## Top News Report

KISHTWAR, Dec 28: Under the guidance of Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar, Principal of GDC Chatroo, in the collaboration with Indian Army, the institution proudly marked the "Viksit Bharat" initiative, a comprehensive development program initiated by the Indian government.

The event saw active participation from Principal Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar, faculty members, and enthusiastic students. The event started with a lamp-lighting ceremony by Principal GDC Chatroo Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar followed by the National Anthem.

The event also featured informative videos displayed on the LED screen of the Viksit Bharat Van, showcasing government policies aimed at transforming Bharat into a developed nation.

The "Viksit Bharat" initiative, aimed at transforming India by 2047, aligns with

the vision of comprehensive growth across sectors, fostering inclusivity, and positioning India as a global leader.

Commencing with a ceremonial lamp lighting by Principal Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar, the event was graced with a captivating extension lecture by Kalash Nath in which he discussed how Viksit Bharat can be achieved by 2047.

In another Extension lecture, Dr. Haqnawaz Ahmad, a Political Science lecturer at GDC Chatroo in his insightful discourse, shed light on the importance of Viksit Bharat and the pivotal role citizens play in achieving its ambitious goals by 2047.

Emphasizing India's path towards developed nation status, Dr. Haqnawaz highlighted key areas such as per capita income, education, infrastructure, health-care, and more, urging attendees to conscientiously contribute to the nation's advancement.

The initiative by GDC Chatroo exemplifies the institution's dedication to fostering social awareness and empowering its academic community beyond conventional academics. Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar reiterated the significance of Viksit Bharat, underscoring its multidimensional approach encompassing policy reforms and progressive policies for economic growth and social development.

Expressing satisfaction with the event's turnout and enthusiasm displayed by the speaker, Prof. (Dr.) Ved Kumar acknowledged the contribution of Dr. Haqnawaz, highlighting the importance of such awareness programs in nurturing responsible citizens.

The program's coordination was led by Dr. Haqnawaz Ahmad, with a vote of thanks & presidential address delivered by Prof.(Dr.) Ved Kumar.

# Breaking Taboos, empowering Lives to Transform J&K by J&K Bank

## Top News Report

PULWAMA, Dec 28: J&K Bank, is proud to announce a significant milestone in their joint initiative with Live for Others - Being Helpful Foundation (LFO-BHF), "Mission R-SAP (Remove Shyness Apply Pads)."

This is a Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project by J&K Bank which is implemented by Live for Others Being Helpful Foundation aims to provide access to menstrual hygiene by distributing 5,00,000 sanitary napkins and conducting 100 awareness seminars, benefiting 50,000 people across all 20 districts of Jammu & Kashmir and removed the taboo regarding menstruation from the society.

The 7th district to successfully complete this mission is Pulwama, where more than 25,000 sanitary napkins were distributed, complemented by 5 impactful awareness lectures targeted more than 2500 people. The resource person for these seminars was Ayesha Farhana.

These activities were

carried out in government as well as private schools located in peripheral areas, namely Abu Hanifa Memorial School, Syed Abdullah Basrie Model School, Govt. Girls Hr. Sec. School, Govt. Girls Hr. Sec. School, Naira ; Govt. Girls Hr. Sec. School, Pampore.

"We are thrilled with the progress of 'Mission R-SAP' and the positive impact it's having on women's health and hygiene and currently we are looking forward to others districts and our team is simultaneously working on it said, Shah Aamir, Joint Secretary (National Body) of LFO-BHF.

LFO-BHF extends their gratitude to the Director School Education Jammu, C.E.O Pulwama, Principals of all the schools of Pulwama and also thanking J&K Bank for organising this activity with their CSR fund said Ms. Urfee, Vice-President, Kashmir Province.

Members who were present in this activity were Shah Aamir, Urfee, Rizwana, Sheikh Shahid, Humaira, Tahir Ahmad, Haadi and many more.

# Congress Seva Dal celebrates its 100th Foundation Day

*Fight politics of hate, promote communal harmony in society: JK Seva Dal Chief*



## Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: Congress Seva Dal shall fight the politics of hate and divisiveness and promote harmony in the society.

This was stated by Congress Seva Dal Chief for J&K UT Vijay Sharma while speaking in a Century celebration function of Congress Seva Dal held at PCC HQ Shaheedi Chowk, here on Thursday.

Others present on the occasion include Treasurer Dara Singh, General Secretary Kuldeep Kumar Lucky, Manzoor Ahmed, Gopal Punia, O.P Bhagat, Tariq Hussain Zargar, Riaz Arfan, Suresh Kumar, Nazoor Ahmed, Koushal Parihar, Javez Ahmed Bhat,

Fiaz Ahmed Malik, Riaz Ahmed, Bashir Ahmed Magrey, Ghulam Mohi-ud-din Shah, Altaf Ahmed Dar, Shabir Ahmed Ganai, Harpal Singh, Azad Ahmed Wani, Maqsood Ahmed Bhat, Mohd. Shabir Ahangar, Gowhar Ahmed Dar, Afroz Ahmed Bhat, Tanveer Ahmed Dar, Sheikh Shabir Ahmed, Vilal Ahmed Dar, Fiaz Ahmed Sheikh, Mool Raj and others.

Vijay Sharma said that Congress stands for unity in diversity which is basic strength of our nation.

Those parties who create hatred and division for vote bank politics, are threat to the unity and integrity of the nation, he said adding that Congress Seva Dal

is disciplined wing of the party, which has to spread the ideology and programmes of the party aimed at bringing unity and brotherhood in our multi religious, multi lingual and multi-cultural society.

He said Seva Dal shall play an important role in the party and the society to defeat the communal and fundamentalist forces in Jammu and Kashmir elsewhere in the country.

He congratulated the Congress Seva Dal Workers and asked them to carry the message of Congress party and its leadership of Mallikarjun Kharge, Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi and AICC Seva Dal Chief Lalji Desai.

# Unscheduled power cuts a serious concern for Chenab Valley: Ajeet Bhagat

## Top News Report

KISHTWAR, Dec 28: In the midst of harsh weather condition, Jammu and Kashmir National Conference Senior Leader Ajeet Bhagat has raised a compelling demand for uninterrupted electricity supply in Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban Districts of Chenab Valley Zone.

Bhagat said that the

Chenab Valley Zone has been grappling with alarming and unscheduled power cuts, sparking a growing concern among residents.

The Jammu and Kashmir NC leader emphasized the critical need for round-the-clock electricity provision in the Kishtwar, Doda and Ramban Districts of Chenab Valley Zone.

The lack of consistent power supply has

not only disrupted daily life but has also posed serious challenges the adverse weather conditions prevailing in the area.

It is imperative to ensure uninterrupted electricity supply to mitigate the challenges faced by the community, particularly during the harsh climate.

Bhagat called upon the concerned authorities to address this pressing issue urgently.

# Vikshit Bharat Sankalp Program organised at Handwara

## Top News Report

HANDWARA, Dec 28: Meri Kahani-Meri Zubani under Vikshit Bharat Sankalp, today beneficiaries under PM Poshan Mission and

PMVY scheme from Poshan Project Rajwar Handwara, Kupwara.

Flagship programme under Poshan Abhiyan reached the grass root level by the dedication of Distt. Programme officer Kupwara and CDPO

Rajwar Handwara along with supervisors and AWWs/AWHs.

Beneficiaries themselves narrated the stories today during Vikshit Bharat Sankalp Yatra in Handwara.

# Congress celebrates 139th Foundation Day

# Bhalla cautions party workers about challenges of time

## Top News Report

JAMMU, Dec 28: An impressive function was held at PCC HQ, Shaheedi Chowk Jammu today to celebrate the 139th Foundation Day of the Congress party. Working President Raman Bhalla hoisted the party flag in the presence of Sr Vice President & former Minister Mula Ram and other Senior leaders.

The traditional salute and the National Anthem was sung by all Congress leaders and workers present on the occasion amidst raising of slogans of "INC Zinda Bad", Bharat Mata Ki Jai.

The function was organized by District Congress Committee Jammu Urban led by Th. Manmohan Singh in coordination with Congress Seva Dal led by its Chief Vijay Sharma, which was attended by functionaries of

PCC, DCC, Block, Frontal Wings and others.

Prominent among them include PCC Vice Presidents, Vinod Sharma I/C HQ, Hari Singh Chib, Rajnish Sharma (Treasurer), Pranav Shagotra, General Secretaries Pawan Raina, Shashi Sharma, Narinder Gupta, Anayatullah Rathar, Narinder Sharma, Suresh Dogra, Satish Sharma, Santosh Majotra, DCC President Ramban Pervez Ahmed Wani, Working President Samba Babal Gupta, President NSUI Ajay Lakhotra, PCC Secretaries Rajveer Singh, Ritu Choudhary, Sanjeev Sharma (Panda), Th. Hoshyar Singh, Michael Wazir, Vijay Shastri, Jatin K Raina, Dr. R.K. Khajuria, Rajinder Singh Jamwal, Satpal Sapolia, Ricky Dalotra, Atul Sharma, Kewal Krishan Jogi, Vijay Malhotra, Balbir Bali, Pawan



Sharma, Rakesh Sharma, Darshan Verma, H.S. Bagi, Som Nath Sharma, Chandan Shekhar, Nassar Masih, Latish Sharma, Balvinder Singh, Sanjeev Katal, Bushan Kumar Reedi, PYC leaders Anirudh Sawhney, Shoaib Magray, Imad, Tanveer Singh, Office, Rishab

Kohli, Anmol Kohli, Mehul Abrol and others.

Addressing the gathering, Raman Bhalla said that Congress has history of struggle and sacrifices of 138 years for the freedom of the country and for the unity, integrity and diversity.

"Today, once again the

circumstances are similar to those existing before independence. The rights of people are being crushed, there is dictatorship everywhere, democratic and constitutional institutions are being finished. Unemployment is at its peak, farms and fields are being attacked. In

such circumstances, it is our responsibility to save the country from such dictatorship and fight it. This is true patriotism," Bhalla said.

He marked the occasion by highlighting his party's pledge for "truth and equality" and said that "Congress has been committed from the beginning to raise the voice of the nation".

On Congress Foundation Day let us celebrate & acknowledge the selfless service & contributions of millions of Congress workers, men & women, who have helped build & sustain the Congress party over the ages. We owe these unsung heroes our gratitude & respect, observed Bhalla.

He said that the Congress Party shall continue its struggle for early restoration of statehood and democracy in Jammu and Kashmir and to safeguard the right to lands

and jobs for the youth. He appealed to the party workers to expose the false and malicious propaganda of the opposition parties and strengthen the Congress Party for the better future of youths.

Addressing the function, Mula Ram (Ex-Minister) said that The Congress party represents the idea of India which means unity in diversity. During 138 years of its history of service to the nation and the country, congress has always stood for the protection and preservation of this idea of India and continuously fought against the divisive and communal forces in the country which pose a threat to this very idea of India more than before now.

Manmohan Singh congratulated the congress workers and thanked them for their participation.