



2
FILE 25 MORE CASES, WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED:RAHUL GANDHI DARES HIMANTA IN ASSAM



11
PAKISTAN: IMRAN KHAN MOVES ISLAMABAD HC FOR BAIL IN TOSHAKHANA, AL-QADIR CASES



16
AUSTRALIAN OPEN: MEDVEDEV BATTLES TO REACH SEMIS, YASTREMSKA CRUISES

I.N.D.I.A BLOC LIES IN TATTERS

Mamata snubs Congress, to contest all Bengal LS seats

SUPROTIM MUKHERJEE
KOLKATA

Barely hours before Congress scion Rahul Gandhi was to enter West Bengal for the next leg of his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, his I.N.D.I.A. bloc colleague and Trinamool Congress supremo Mamata Banerjee publicly dismissed any chance of a seat-sharing deal between the two parties and declared that her party would contest all 42 Lok Sabha seats in the State.

"I have had no discussions with the Congress. I have always said that in Bengal, we will fight alone. I gave them (the Congress) many proposals... but they rejected them. I am not concerned about what will be done in the (rest of the) country... but we are a secular party and, in Bengal, we alone will defeat the BJP," Mamata Banerjee said, adding that she would only consider a pan-India alliance with the Congress after results are



declared.

Banerjee's words deliver what appears to be a final blow to hopes for the two parties – seen as important members of the I.N.D.I.A. Opposition bloc – will reach any agreement.

The Trinamool vs Congress squabble over seat-sharing, and the larger picture of how the Congress-led I.N.D.I.A. bloc might most effectively defeat Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his BJP, has rumbled on for weeks with no apparent resolution.

While Mamata Banerjee had been privately telling her party colleagues to get ready to contest all 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, today was the first day that she said so in public. **■P5**

WITHOUT MAMATA, NO ONE CAN IMAGINE I.N.D.I.A BLOC: CONG

The Congress on Wednesday said no one can imagine the existence of the opposition INDIA bloc without West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee. The Congress statement comes immediately after Banerjee announced that her party Trinamool Congress has decided to go alone in the state in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. **■P2**

Mann rules out alliance with Congress in Punjab

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann announced on Wednesday that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) will independently contest all 13 Lok Sabha seats in Punjab during the upcoming general elections. Asserting the party's commitment to creating history, Mann confirmed there would be no alliance with the Congress in the state.

The decision was reached following a crucial meeting of top leaders in Delhi on Saturday, where Mann conveyed to the party high command the potential political



repercussions of forming an alliance with Punjab's main opposition party, Congress.

Addressing queries about the AAP's alliance with Congress in Chandigarh for the mayoral polls, Mann emphatically stated that the AAP would contest all 13 Lok Sabha seats along with the Chandigarh seat independently. "Our voters will judge us based on our performance, and we aim to make history by securing all seats on our own," he affirmed.

Chief Minister Mann out-

lined the process of selecting three candidates per constituency, with the best candidate ultimately being fielded in the polls.

The state leadership of the AAP, including Mann, has consistently opposed aligning with the Congress, citing the latter's "corrupt" label by the ruling party in the past three years. The party believes that such an alliance could prove politically detrimental, potentially alienating voters and providing ammunition to other opposition parties.

CJI to Centre: 'How can you not accept an amendment by Parliament?'

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday expressed astonishment at the Centre's assertion that it does not accept the 1981 amendment to the Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) Act, which granted minority status to the institution. The court emphasised that the government must uphold what Parliament has enacted.

A seven-judge Constitution bench led by Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, along with Justices Sanjiv Khanna, Surya Kant, J B Pardiwala, Dipankar Datta, Manoj Misra, and Satish Chandra Sharma, is deliberating on the contentious issue of AMU's minority status. The bench remarked that Parliament is an "eternal, indestructible body" under the Indian Union.

"How can you not accept an amendment by Parliament?" questioned Chief Justice Chandrachud to Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, representing the Centre.

"Mr. Solicitor, Parliament is an eternal, indestructible body under the Indian Union, and irrespective of which government represents the cause of the Union of

'PARLIAMENT ETERNAL'

Mr. Solicitor, Parliament is an eternal, indestructible body under the Indian Union, and irrespective of which government represents the cause of the Union of India, Parliament's cause is eternal, indivisible and indestructible....

-CJI D Y Chandrachud

TOP OF THE DAY

'PRAN PRATISHTHA': CABINET ADOPTS RESOLUTION LAUDING PM MODI

New Delhi: The Union Cabinet on Wednesday adopted a resolution on Wednesday, lauding Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the successful conduct of the 'Pran Pratishtha' of Shri Ram Lalla at the grand temple in Ayodhya. The majestic Ram Temple opened for devotees across the world on January 22, Monday, with Prime Minister Modi performing the main rituals surrounding the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony under the watchful eyes of a select complement of priests. The Union cabinet also extended greetings to Prime Minister Modi for leading the ceremonial enthronement of Shri Ram Lalla at his birthplace--Ayodhya. The cabinet, in its resolution, affirmed that PM Modi fulfilled a centuries-old dream that is tied intrinsically to the Indian civilisation. Dubbing the resolution as 'historic', the cabinet noted further that the enthronement of Ram Lalla and the grand opening of his majestic abode, both of which were presided over PM Modi, was 'historic' as the moment arrived after centuries of wait. The resolution stated further that the country may have organically independence in 1947 but its soul was freed from centuries of colonial enslavement on January 22, 2024.

FRENCH PREZ IN JAIPUR TODAY, TO TOUR AMER FORT WITH PM MODI

TDG BUREAU
NEW DELHI

French President Emmanuel Macron, who is set to visit India as a Chief Guest for the 75th Republic Day, will arrive in Jaipur on January 25 and will begin his visit by touring Amber Fort. Later, he will be received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, and the two leaders will tour the pink city together.

Macron will be on a state visit as the chief guest of India's 75th Republic Day celebrations at the invitation of PM Modi.

On this occasion, a French armed forces contingent will participate in the Republic Day parade and flypast alongside India's troops and aviators.

Macron will "tour Amber Fort and interact with artists, stakeholders in Indo-French cultural projects, as well as students. Thereafter,



PM Narendra Modi meets with French President Emmanuel Macron. (File photo)

FRIENDSHIP

- President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit a few landmarks of the Pink City, including Jantar Mantar
- A French armed forces contingent will participate in the Republic Day parade and flypast alongside India's troops and aviators.

he will be received by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the two leaders will visit a few landmarks of the Pink City together, includ-

ing Jantar Mantar," according to an official statement. Following their tour, the two leaders will then hold in-depth bilateral talks.

HIGH SECURITY IN PLACE FOR VVIP VISIT

TDG NETWORK
JAIPUR

A high security shielded and protective corridor has been created from Jaipur International Airport to Amer to ensure fool-proof security for visiting French President Emmanuel Macron and Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Central and state intelligence agencies have been put on high alert and a four-tier security arrangements will be in place for the roadshow, among other tourist places.

Armed personnel deployed at every nook and corner on the designated route of Amer Mahal, City Palace, Jantar Mantar, and Hawa Mahal Show.

SPG took the boundary wall and airport under its security cover.

Six-year-old succumbs to cold wave in Punjab

TARUNI GANDHI
CHANDIGARH

The relentless cold wave has claimed its third young victim within a month in Punjab as six-year-old Kuldeep Singh succumbed to the illness on Wednesday.

The son of Aala Singh of Pakhho Kalan, Barnala, Kuldeep was a first-grade student at the government primary school. The tragedy triggered concerns about the impact of the cold wave on students across the state. Previously, two students from government schools in Amritsar had lost their lives due to the harsh weather conditions.

Kuldeep fell ill due to the intense cold. He was given initial treatment in the village. His condition, however, worsened, and he was transferred to the Civil Hospital in Barnala where doctors declared him dead.

The tragedy triggered concerns about the impact of the cold wave on students. Previously, two students from government schools in Amritsar had lost their lives due to the harsh weather.

Kuldeep leaves behind two brothers and two sisters. School principal Navdeep Sharma and staff express profound condolences.

As the Meteorological Department has issued a cold wave alert until January 28, there is a growing call from parents and teachers for declaring school holidays to protect children from the harsh weather conditions.

'OPTIMISTIC OF INDIA'S PERMANENT UNSC SEAT'

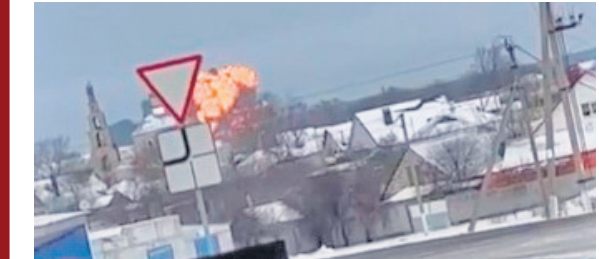
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

President of the 78th Session of the UN General Assembly, Dennis Francis, acknowledged India's significant role in the United Nations, describing it as a "mature, highly respected member" and a leader in various aspects.

He also expressed optimism about India's potential to secure a permanent seat on the Security Council, recognising the nation's credibility and influence within the General Assembly.

The UNGA President was addressing a press conference in the national capital on Wednesday when he was questioned on the world's largest democracy's absence from the Security Council. **■P5**

RUSSIAN PLANE WITH 76 ONBOARD CRASHES



AGENCIES
MOSCOW

A Russian military transport plane with 74 people on board, including 65 Ukrainian Prisoners of War (PoWs), crashed in Belgorod region of Russia

on Wednesday. The crash took place at about 8 am GMT and TASS cited the governor of the region, stating on his Telegram channel that the incident occurred in Korocha district.

MANY DEAD IN AIRCRAFT ACCIDENT IN CANADA

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

An unspecified number of people died after a plane crashed in Canada's remote Northwest Territories near the town of Fort Smith while it was headed to a diamond mine, CNN reported, citing officials.

The incident happened on Tuesday, and the Northwest Territories coroner also said that there were fatalities in the crash but did not specify the number.



Some of the passengers on board the plane were employees at Rio Tinto, a global mining company.

However, the company did not confirm how many of its workers were on the plane but noted the crash resulted in fatalities.

Air India slapped with Rs 1.1-cr fine for safety violation

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Civil aviation regulatory body Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has fined airline Air India Rs 1.1 crores concerning a safety violation.

The civil aviation regulator had launched an extensive investigation following a safety report filed by an airline employee, alleging violations on certain "long-range terrain critical routes" operated by Air India.

The inquiry indicated non-compliance by the airline,



leading to the issuance of a Show Cause Notice to Air India Limited's Accountable Manager.

"In response, DGCA has

- An airline employee, alleging violations on certain "long-range terrain critical routes" operated by Air India
- The airline said it disagreed with the order and reserved its right to appeal before the regulator.

taken enforcement action, imposing a penalty of Rs 1.10 crore on M/s Air India," DGCA said. **■P5**

FILE 25 MORE CASES, WILL NOT BE INTIMIDATED: RAHUL GANDHI DARES HIMANTA IN ASSAM

Guwahati Police had registered an FIR on January 23 against Rahul Gandhi and other party workers for “want on acts of violence”.

TDG NETWORK
BARPETA

A day after Assam Police registered a case against him for allegedly provoking the crowd, Congress MP Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday dared Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma to file “as many cases as he wants” but still he will not be intimidated.

“I don’t know from where he (Himanta) got the idea that he can scare Rahul Gandhi. File as many cases as you want against me, I am not afraid. I am not afraid of the BJP or the RSS. If you have filed 25 cases against me, file 25 more. Be happy,” the Congress leader said while addressing a public meeting at Barpeta during his ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra.

The Guwahati Police had registered an FIR on January 23 against Rahul Gandhi and other party workers for “want on acts of violence”.

Rahul Gandhi said, “Ear-



lier I gave a speech against (Gautam) Adani. He is a special friend of PM Modi. A case was registered against me and disqualified me from the Parliament, they took away my house.”

“When they came to take the keys of my house it is their house and I do not want it. I reside in the hearts of every Indian. I have lakhs of homes in Assam, Odisha, Uttar Pradesh,” Rahul Gandhi said.

On Saturday, Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma said that an FIR has been registered against Congress MP Rahul Gandhi, party General Secretary KC Venugopal, National Students’ Union of India All India Congress Committee Incharge Kanhaiya Kumar and other individuals under various sections of the Indian Penal Code and the Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act.

COURT DISPOSES OF FIR PLEA FOR REVEALING IDENTITY OF RAPE VICTIM AS POST DELETED

NEW DELHI: The Delhi High Court on Wednesday disposed of a petition seeking registration of an FIR against Rahul Gandhi for revealing the identity of an alleged rape victim, after taking note of the submissions by the Congress leader, the city police and social media platform X that the post has been taken down.

A division bench of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora was hearing a 2021 petition filed by social activist Makarand Suresh Mhadlekar seeking registration of an FIR against Gandhi for revealing the identity of the victim by publishing a photograph with her parents on X (Previously Twitter).

Revealing the identity of a rape victim is an offense under Section 228A of the Indian

Penal Code (IPC), punishable with imprisonment up to two years and a fine.

The Delhi Police informed the court that an FIR had been filed against Gandhi for his social media post, revealing the identity of the alleged rape victim, and further investigation is underway.

Gandhi’s counsel informed the bench that he had taken down the tweet disclosing the identity of a minor Dalit girl allegedly raped and murdered.

The counsel for social media platform X (formerly Twitter) confirmed to the court that Gandhi deleted the tweet himself.

The court, having considered the submissions of the said parties, stated that the prayers in the petition stand satisfied and disposed of the petition.

Venugopal, Kanhaiya Kumar and other individuals under section 120(B) 143/147/188/283/353/33 2/333/427 IPC R/W Sec. 3 of PDPP Act,” Sarma said in a post on X’.

Following the incident

where Congress workers clashed with police at the Khanapara area, the Assam Chief Minister alleged that Rahul Gandhi had tried to enter Guwahati with around 3000 people and 200 vehicles.

SC TO EXAMINE BAR COUNCIL OF INDIA’S RULES ON LAWYER STRIKES

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday said that it will examine the rules drafted by the Bar Council of India (BCI) to address issues related to strikes by lawyers.

A bench of justices Sudhanshu Dhulia and SVN Bhatti scheduled further hearings on the matter for February.

The BCI had submitted a draft rule to tackle concerns related to lawyer strikes. BCI Chairman Manan Kumar Mishra, a senior advocate, informed the court that the rules were open for examination, and any suggestions from the court would be accepted without conditions.

The court stated, “We will examine these rules. The rules therefore need to be examined in detail.”

Chairman Mishra also conveyed to the court that they had considered suggestions from the petitioner’s lawyer, Prashant Bhushan, while formulating the rules addressing issues related to lawyer strikes.

The court was hearing a contempt petition filed by the NGO Common Cause regarding lawyer strikes. The petitioner sought action against lawyers abstaining from work and urged the BCI to issue directives incorporating rules prohibiting strikes by advocates in the ‘Standards for Professional Conduct and Etiquette’ framed under Section 49(1) (c) of the Advocates Act, 1961.

During the hearing, Prashant Bhushan proposed that if a requisition for a meeting to consider a strike is received, committee members, a Bar Association, or Bar Council should refuse to call a meeting for that purpose. Additionally, if a strike call is given by any officer-holder of the Bar Council or Bar Association, immediate disciplinary action should be initiated against them for professional misconduct by the concerned Bar Council.

BCI Chairman Mishra advocated for practicality, emphasizing that they can’t deny a lawyer the right to observe a strike in protest of certain incidents.

NEW SHOW TO ENHANCE TOURIST EXPERIENCE AT GOLCONDA FORT: KISHAN REDDY

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Union Minister of Culture, Tourism and Development of the North Eastern Region (DoNER), G Kishan Reddy, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for envisioning a tourism boost in Telangana through the new light and sound show inaugurated at Golconda Fort in Hyderabad on Wednesday.

“This light and sound show will now attract more tourists here. For this initiative, I thank PM Modi. He envisioned this; this will further boost tourism in Hyderabad,” Reddy said.

Recognising its appeal to

tourists, Reddy highlighted the impactful sound and light show at Golconda Fort, which vividly narrates its rich history.

“Golconda Fort is one of the famous forts of India, and it remains a popular destination that attracts tourists. The sound and light show at Golconda Fort beautifully depicts its historical narrative,” Reddy said.

“It is equipped with highly dynamic 3D mapping projection, embracing state-of-the-art technology with high-resolution projectors, laser lights, and moving heads to enhance the tourist experience,” the Union Minister added.



Kishan Reddy

In a promising development for Hyderabad’s tourism sector, Reddy announced, “In the coming days, various programmes will be held in Hyderabad under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to boost tourism.” Speaking after attending the

event, former union minister and actor Chiranjeevi heaped praise on the newly inaugurated show.

“The way they visualised, put up graphics and did the storytelling is fantastic. These kinds of things should come so that future generations get to know what Golconda is and its history,” he said.

According to officials, the project has been taken up by the Ministry of Culture as part of improving facilities at the Golconda Fort.

The Golconda Fort, a symbol of Hyderabad’s heritage, has been a key attraction for tourists, and initiatives like the sound and light show contribute to its allure.

GYANVAPI MOSQUE: ALLAHABAD HC JUDGE RECUSES FROM HEARING PLEA SEEKING SURVEY OF ‘WAZUKHANA’ AREA

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Allahabad High Court judge Justice Manish Kumar Nigam on Wednesday recused himself from presiding over a plea challenging the Varanasi district court’s decision not to instruct the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) to conduct a survey of the ‘wazukhana’ area, excluding the ‘Shivling’ inside the Gyanvapi mosque complex.

The court directed that the matter be placed before the Chief Justice for the appointment of another judge, setting January 31 as the next date of hearing. The revision petition was lodged by Rakhi Singh, one of the plaintiffs in the

Shringar Gauri worshipping suit presently under consideration before the Varanasi district court.

In her application before the Varanasi court, rejected on October 21, 2023, Singh argued that surveying the wazukhana, excluding the ‘Shivling,’ is essential to determine the religious character of the property.

However, the district judge, in his order, noted that the apex court on May 17, 2022, had mandated the proper protection of the area where the ‘Shivling’ was claimed to be found. Consequently, directing the ASI to survey the area would be in violation of this order.

On July 21 last year, the Varanasi district court had instructed the ASI to conduct a “detailed scientific survey”—including excavations, where necessary—to establish whether the mosque near the Kashi Vishwanath temple was constructed on a temple site. The survey would exclude the mosque’s “wazukhana,” where Hindu litigants claimed the existence of a ‘Shivling,’ in adherence to a previous Supreme Court order protecting that specific spot in the mosque complex.

Hindu activists assert that a temple previously stood at the site, demolished in the 17th century on the orders of Mughal emperor Aurangzeb.

PAWAR’S GRANDNEPHEW TO APPEAR BEFORE ED FOR QUESTIONING, SHARAD-NCP WORKERS STAGE PROTEST

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Nationalist Congress Party (NCP) chief Sharad Pawar’s grandnephew Rohit Pawar is all set to appear at the Enforcement Directorate’s office on Wednesday as he was summoned by the central agency for questioning in the Maharashtra State Cooperative Bank (MSCB) case.

Meanwhile, security has been beefed up at the ED office in Mumbai as the Sharad Pawar faction of the NCP staged a protest outside the probe agency office on Wednesday. Earlier on Tuesday, Rohit Pawar said that he will be cooperating with the central investigating agency.

He urged everyone to keep supporting Sharad Pawar in case the ED takes any wrong action against him.

“After going to the office on January 24 for inquiry, I will cooperate fully with the authorities as I have cooperated earlier. But looking at the current politics of revenge, as there is a lot of pressure from the government on all the systems, under this pressure, if ED takes any wrong action against me, no one should be afraid, instead, everyone should stand united with the respected Pawar sahib and every person who preserves the self-respect of Maharashtra and believes in the Constitution,” he said in a post on X’.

WITHOUT MAMATA, NO ONE CAN IMAGINE I.N.D.I.A. BLOC: CONGRESS



Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh

TDG NETWORK
BONGAIGAON

The Congress on Wednesday said no one can imagine the existence of the opposition I.N.D.I.A. bloc without West Bengal Chief Minister and TMC supremo Mamata Banerjee.

The Congress statement comes immediately after Banerjee announced that her party Trinamool Congress has decided to go alone in the state in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls.

Addressing a press conference in Assam as part of the party’s ‘Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra’, Congress General Secretary Jairam Ramesh said that the Trinamool Congress is an “important pillar” of the opposition alliance.

“We cannot imagine the INDIA alliance without Mamata ji. The I.N.D.I.A. bloc will fight the Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal and all (partners) will participate,” he said.

“Banerjee said that defeating BJP is the priority and prime responsibility of all of us. With this sentiment, our ‘Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra’ will enter West Bengal tomorrow,” Ramesh said when asked about the TMC supremo’s statement regarding the seat-sharing talks.

The TMC supremo had on Tuesday criticised the Congress for causing a delay in discussions for seat-sharing in West Bengal, citing “unjustified” demand for 10-12 Lok Sabha constituencies when her party was willing to share only two.

Ramesh said, “Mamata Banerjee’s full statement was that we want to defeat BJP and will take all possible steps for it. During a long journey, we get speed breakers and red lights. It does not mean that we will push back the journey. The journey crosses the speed breaker and the red light

IT WAS AN UNHOLY ATTEMPT FOR AN UNHOLY ALLIANCE: JAKHAR

CHANDIGARH: Sunil Jakhar Punjab BJP Chief stated on I.N.D.I.A. alliance breakup and AAP declaration to fight general election of their own in Punjab, ‘It was an unholy attempt for an unholy alliance, and its fate was destined. Keeping ‘I.N.D.I.A.’ as the name doesn’t bring the spirit of India,” says Punjab BJP chief Sunil jakhar after the state CM Bhagwant Mann announces to go it alone in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls in the state”.

turns green.”

Citing Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, he asserted that the TMC and especially Banerjee, who is a leader of West Bengal and India, are “very important pillars of the I.N.D.I.A. alliance”.

Ramesh also claimed that seat-sharing talks are “going on” with the TMC for West Bengal” and a solution to the stalemate will be found soon.

“We hope that the talks, which are going on, will find some middle path and the I.N.D.I.A. alliance will fight Lok Sabha polls in West Bengal and all partners will cooperate,” he added.

Banerjee, however, asserted that she has not spoken to anyone in the Congress on the seat-sharing issue.

Talking about Banerjee’s statement that she was not invited to participate in the ‘Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra’ when it will enter West Bengal, Ramesh said Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge, Rahul Gandhi and the party’s West Bengal in-charge have spoken to her.

SIX-WEEK MAHAMANDAL FESTIVAL BEGINS IN AYODHYA’S RAM TEMPLE

TDG NETWORK
AYODHYA

Two days after Pran Pratishtha of Ram Lalla at the Ram Janmabhoomi Temple complex, a 42-day Mahamandal festival began on Wednesday in the Shri Ram Janmabhoomi complex in Ayodhya. The festival was started in the sanctum sanctorum of the newly constructed Ram temple in conjunction with Ram Mandir trustee Jagadguru Vishvesh Prapann Tirtha. The festival will include a daily Kalash puja and forty-eight worshipped urns will be kept in the sanctum sanctorum, said the trustee of Ram Temple.

Govind Devagiri, treasurer of the Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra, said that the worship of Lord Ram will be done according to Vaishnav tradition. All types of sweets should be offered to him in Rajbhog.

Havan will be performed daily for 42 days and along with the havan, various types of mantras will be recited and chanted. “We are starting a new process of worship. The worship will be done according to Vaishnav tradition. Our trustee brothers and Pujyashri Vishvaprapan Tirthaji Maharaj of Peja Math are sitting in the Mandal after gathering their seats to perform the puja.



An 80-kg gold-studded sword arrives for Lord Ram Lalla from Maharashtra, in Ayodhya on Wednesday.

among the visiting devotees and locals were noticeable as they were on the prior when the temple was opened for darshan.

The temple witnessed surging footfalls following the ‘Pran Pratishtha’ of Shri Ram Lalla and the grand opening on Monday.

Security was tightened in the holy city after the first day of darshan on Tuesday drew an estimated 5 lakh devotees.

Speaking to ANI on Wednesday, Rapid Action Force (RAF) Deputy Commandant Arun Kumar Tiwari said, “We will ensure that devotees are not in-

convenienced. About 1,000 jawans have been deployed inside and outside the temple. The deployment will continue for the next few days.”

The huge influx of devotees was not just seen at the Ram Temple but at the adjoining Hanuman Garhi Temple as well. The devotees, in their thousands, were seen offering laddus to Lord Hanuman and distributing the ‘prasad’ among themselves.

The celebratory ambience and festivity in the temple town are likely to be amplified further over the next few days as the Indian Council for Cultural Relations, New Delhi, in collaboration with the International Ramayan and Vedic Research Institute Department of Culture, Uttar Pradesh will be organising the International Ramayan Utsav at the avowed birthplace of Lord Ram from January 24-28 at Ram Katha Park and Tulsi Udyan in Ayodhya.

TWEET OF THE DAY

President of India
@rashedpatibbvn



President Droupadi Murmu inaugurated Kaushal Bhawan – a new building of the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship in New Delhi. The President also visited exhibition set up on the occasion and interacted with beneficiaries of various government’s initiatives.

Narendra Modi
@narendramodi



On behalf of my family members across the country, my respectful tribute to Jannayak Karpoori Thakur ji on his birth centenary. On this special occasion, our government has the privilege of honoring him with Bharat Ratna.

Amit Shah
@AmitShah



The efforts made by Karpoori Thakur ji for social justice brought a big change in the lives of crores of people. Must read Prime Minister Shri @narendramodi ji’s article published in Dainik Jagran on the 100th birth anniversary of Jannayak Karpoori Thakur ji.

Mailikarjun Kharge
@kcharge



Full of its spiritual glorious history, where the holy feet of Lord Shri Ram, Lord Shri Krishna, Baba Vishwanath, Kabir, or Guru Raidas... all are present - the great confluence of that unique Ganga-Jamuni culture, to all the citizens of Uttar Pradesh. Best wishes on Foundation Day.

Yogi Adityanath
Yogi Adityanath



It is our duty to provide easy darshan of Lord Shri Ramlala to every Ram devotee in Shri Ayodhya Dham. In view of the arrival of a large number of devotees from all over the country with the desire to have the darshan of their adored Lord Shri Ramlala, a week before the arrival of VIPs/special dignitaries to Ayodhya Dham, the local administration/Shri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra Trust or the State It would be beneficial to inform the government.

Arvind Kejriwal
@ArvindKejriwal



Wishing our daughters a promising and bright future on National Girl Child Day. A safe environment and equal opportunities will enable them to shine and succeed.

NDMC APPROVES TECH-DRIVEN EDUCATION AGENDAS IN COUNCIL MEETING

The success of pilot project has led to the expansion of tablet distribution to students

TIKAM SHARMA
NEW DELHI

The New Delhi Municipal Council (NDMC) has approved several proposals aimed at benefiting citizens, employees, and advancing technology-driven educational initiatives. During a meeting on Wednesday, January 24, 2024, the NDMC members extended their appreciation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for inaugurating the Ram temple in Ayodhya.

Among the approved proposals, the NDMC has given the go-ahead for the upgrade of 29 computer labs in NDMC schools. Kuljeet Singh Chahal, a council member, revealed to the



media that the NDMC had initiated a pilot project by distributing 811 tablets to students in classes 10 and 12 across four schools. The success of this pilot project has led to the expansion of tablet distribution to students in classes 9 to 12, as well as teachers in the same classes, across all NDMC and Navyug Schools.

Chahal stated, “The combined student and teacher population in classes 9 to 12 is 8766. Of these, 8138 tablets are allocated for students, and 628 tablets are designated for teachers for the current academic session (2023-2024). The total proposed tablets for procurement and distribution are 8766, with a slight

TECH-DRIVEN EDUCATION

■ NDMC has given the go-ahead for the upgrade of 29 computer labs in NDMC schools

■ The total number of proposed tablets for procurement and distribution is 8766

potential variation based on actual enrollment in the 2024-25 academic session for these four classes (Class 9-12).»

Additionally, Chahal announced the NDMC’s approval of a proposal to upgrade computer labs in 29 NDMC and Navyug schools. This initiative encompasses the procurement

of computers and peripherals, including preloaded Windows with MS Office and antivirus software, networking infrastructure, interactive flat panels, and printers. The council has also approved a comprehensive on-site warranty for five years to ensure the maintenance of the computer labs.

DELHI POLICE IMPLEMENTS ROBUST MEASURES FOR R-DAY SECURITY

RAHUL GAHLAWAT
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Police has intensified security measures for Republic Day, deploying 14,000 personnel and a thousand officers to fortify Kartavya Path and central Delhi. With each person assigned a specific role, continuous CCTV monitoring, and collaboration with central agencies, the police aim to ensure smooth celebrations. SWAT, PCR, traffic, and anti-sabotage teams actively contribute to showcasing a robust security presence.

Special CP Protective Section, Dependra Pathak, in-

formed the media that, in light of the recent Pran Pratistha ceremony at Ayodhya Dham, extra vigilance has been taken to prevent any hindrance during Republic Day. He also mentioned that, considering the parliament security breach, a special check of visitors will occur at entry gates. Monitoring via CCTV cameras and coordination with central agencies will enable real-time monitoring of any mischievous actions.

Special CP Law and Order, Madhup Tiwari, stated that anti-terror measures are in place at busy markets through CCTV and manual

monitoring. The north district has been divided into twenty-eight zones, each under a DCP and an additional DCP rank officer. For visitor convenience at Kartavya Path, booths for missing persons, help desks, first aid booths, etc., have been set up. Visitors are advised to arrive by 8 a.m. for smooth seating arrangements.

Special CP Traffic, HGS Dhaliwal, announced that, with existing traffic restrictions in Delhi, the entry of commercial vehicles will be prohibited from 10 p.m. on January 25. Special vehicular checks are underway at the national capital borders and

central Delhi areas. Parking restrictions at railway stations are enforced from 8 p.m. on January 25 to 12 p.m. on January 26, urging commuters to use public transport.

To address aerial threats, the police have banned drones or flying objects in central Delhi. Adequate security measures, including flag marches and patrolling along the Yamuna coast, are implemented to ensure the smooth flow of national celebrations and foster patriotism. The Delhi Police appeal to everyone to cooperate for the success of this grand event.

Delhi Metro to begin services at 4 am on R-Day

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi Metro will commence services at 4 am on all its lines to facilitate the public to reach Kartavya Path for the Republic Day parade on January 26, DMRC officials said on Wednesday.

Services will be available at headway of 30 minutes till 6 am and the regular timetable will be followed after that for the rest of the day, they said.

“People who will be in possession of bona fide e-



invitation cards or e-tickets for attending the Republic Day ceremony will be issued coupons on production of government-issued identity cards at stations, which will be valid for exits from Cen-

tral Secretariat and Udyog Bhawan stations only to reach Kartavya Path,” a Delhi Metro Rail Corporation (DMRC) statement said.

The same coupon will be valid for return journeys

from these two stations. The officials further said passengers with invitation cards marked for enclosures 1 to 9 and V1 and V2 should disembark at Udyog Bhawan. “Similarly, those (with invitation cards) marked for enclosures 10 to 24 and VN are advised to disembark at Central Secretariat. Regular announcements will also be made inside the trains to inform passengers about the same so that they disembark at the designated stations in order to reach their enclosures smoothly,” the DMRC said.

DELHI GOVT-RUN ITIs RECORD OVER 72 PER CENT PLACEMENTS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Delhi government-run Industrial Training Institutes have recorded a 72.30 per cent placement for the year 2023-24, officials said on Wednesday. Out of 14,800 students in 19 ITIs run by the Delhi government, 10,700 students secured placements in dif-

ferent companies, whereas ITI Vivek Vihar and ITI Dheerpur recorded the highest placement, they said. Delhi Education Minister Atishi said the placement numbers of Delhi ITIs are the result of focused placement strategy of the government for these institutes. “The Delhi government is preparing students for excellent job opportunities

with world-class technical education and a splendid placement ecosystem in its ITIs. We are dedicated to nurturing a skilled and employable workforce by aligning education with industry demands,” she said. She said that to ensure better placement opportunities and industry exposure for ITI students, the government has formed the cen-

tralised placement and industry outreach cell. “This cell has adopted a transformation strategy for placement, aiming to modernise the placement approach by focusing on academia-industry collaboration, career services, flexible learning options, entrepreneurship support, and more,” the Delhi Minister said.

SpiceJet bomb threat sparks emergency response at Delhi airport

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The security agencies at Delhi airport conducted a massive search operation on Wednesday evening after SpiceJet received a call claiming a bomb had been placed on a Darbhanga-Delhi flight. The plane landed safely at 6 pm today.

In a statement, the company said that flight SG 8496, operating from Darbhanga to Delhi, was taken to an



isolated bay at Delhi airport. Security agencies carried out a thorough search of the aircraft to eliminate the possibility of explosives.

The threat call was received by the company’s reservation office.

Passengers were swiftly deplaned after the flight landed in Delhi.

“The flight landed safely at Delhi airport at 6 pm, and the aircraft was moved to an isolated bay,” SpiceJet said in a statement.

NGT directs DDA and Saket SDM for park remediation

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The National Green Tribunal has directed the Delhi Development Authority and the Saket SDM to take “joint action” for reviving a south Delhi park.

The tribunal was hearing a petition alleging that a park or Delhi Development Authority (DDA) ground in south Delhi was encroached upon by the building of ‘jhuggis (temporary hutments)’ and polluted by garbage dumping and dairy farming.

Last February, the tribunal directed the authorities concerned to clear the land, fence it and ensure afforestation measures through the Forest Department. It also formed a panel that submitted its inspection report in July.

“The DDA is required to take action to remove the garbage dumping. (Official).....”

In an order passed on Tuesday, a bench of National Green Tribunal Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava and Expert Member A Senthil Vel noted the submissions of the Saket sub-divisional magistrate.

The Saket sub-divisional magistrate said, “The DDA is required to take action to clear the garbage dumping and to ensure that no dairy activity or keeping of buffaloes and cows is done on that land.” The tribunal directed the Saket sub-divisional magistrate and the DDA to take “joint action” and ensure compliance with its earlier order.

SC ADJOURNS UMAR KHALID’S BAIL PLEA IN DELHI RIOTS CASE TILL JANUARY 31

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court has postponed the hearing on former JNU student Umar Khalid’s bail plea in a case related to the February 2020 northeast Delhi riots under the anti-terror law UAPA. The bench, comprising Justices Bela M Trivedi and Ujjal Bhuyan, deferred the matter due to time constraints, stating, “List on January 31. High on board.”

Senior advocate C U Singh, representing Khalid, expressed readiness to present arguments but acknowledged the bench’s rising after lunch. The case was listed alongside petitions challenging various provisions of the UAPA. It is noteworthy that Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra recused himself from hearing Khalid’s plea on August 9, 2023.

Khalid’s petition, challenging the Delhi High Court’s October 18, 2022, order rejecting his bail plea, was scheduled for a hearing before a bench of Justices A S Bopanna and Mishra. The high court had denied Khalid’s

bail, citing his continuous contact with the co-accused and the prima facie truth of the allegations against him, classifying his actions as a «terrorist act» under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Umar Khalid, along with Sharjeel Imam and others, faces charges under the UAPA and various provisions of the Indian Penal Code, accused of orchestrating the February 2020 riots that resulted in 53 deaths and over 700 injuries during protests against the Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) and the National Register of Citizens (NRC).

Arrested by the Delhi Police in September 2020, Khalid sought bail, asserting his lack of a criminal role in the violence and the absence of a conspiratorial connection with other accused. The Delhi Police opposed Khalid’s bail plea in the high court, emphasising the calculated nature of his speech and addressing contentious issues like Babri Masjid, triple talaq, Kashmir, the alleged suppression of Muslims, and the CAA and NRC.

Delhi HC directs free lodging for visually impaired students at JNU

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court has instructed Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU) to allow a visually impaired student, who was evicted from the hostel, to stay in a campus guest house without any charges temporarily.

The court’s decision followed the revelation by the student’s counsel that, despite interim accommodation being provided in line with the court’s earlier order, the 100 percent visually impaired student was being charged Rs 100 per day, which exceeded his financial means.

Justice Hari Shankar has granted the university a final opportunity of 10 days to respond to the petition challenging the eviction of Sanjeev Kumar Mishra from the hostel.

The challenge is based on the argument that applicable rules prohibiting hostel accommodation for a student pursuing a second postgraduate course should take into account individual physical disabilities.

Advocate Rahul Bajaj, representing the petitioner, contended that applying such rules without considering individual disabilities is unjust.

Following the petitioner’s counsel informing the court

that JNU was charging Rs 100 per day for accommodation, the high court, on January 22, directed the university to allow the student to stay in the provided room without any fees until the next date of the hearing.

Previously, on January 4, JNU’s counsel had offered temporary accommodation for Mishra, and the court had emphasised that this interim arrangement aimed to prevent the petitioner from enduring ongoing hardship.

The court has now scheduled the case for further hearing and disposal on February 12, instructing both parties to submit their written submissions.

DELHI AQI CROSSES 400-MARK, CENTRE HOLDS OFF STRICTER CURBS

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Amid worsening air quality, the Centre on Wednesday decided to hold off the implementation of stricter measures to curb pollution in Delhi-NCR as forecasts suggested that the situation may improve.

Delhi’s 24-hour average Air Quality Index (AQI) on Wednesday breached the 400 mark, a level requiring authorities to invoke stricter curbs under Stage 3 of the Centre’s air pollution control plan called the Graded Response Action Plan (GRAP). “CAQM Sub-Committee for operationalisation of GRAP met today and took stock of the air quality situation, the meteorological forecast, and the projected air quality index by the India Meteorological Department



and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology,” a statement said.

With the India Meteorological Department (IMD) and the Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM) forecasts suggesting an improvement in the air quality, the Sub-Committee unanimously decided to watch the situation for a day or more before invoking Stage 3 of GRAP.

The ongoing preventive and restrictive actions implemented under Stage 1 and Stage 2 of GRAP will

continue, it said.

Stage 3 curbs include a ban on non-essential construction work and the plying of BS III petrol and BS IV diesel four-wheelers in Delhi-NCR.

Construction work related to national security or defence, projects of national importance, healthcare, railways, metro rail, airports, interstate bus terminals, highways, roads, flyovers, overbridges, power transmission, pipelines, sanitation, and water supply were exempt from the ban.

TOP OF THE DAY

SHINDE URGES MARATHAS NOT TO PROTEST FOR QUOTA DEMAND

MUMBAI: Maharashtra Chief Minister Eknath Shinde on Wednesday appealed to members of the Maratha community not to stage protests as the government is thinking positively about the quota demand. Shinde's assurance comes at a time when quota activist Manoj Jarange and thousands of his supporters are on their way to Mumbai to launch a protest on January 26. "The state government is positive about the Maratha quota demand. We will take a decision. I appeal to the Maratha community to refrain themselves from staging agitations," he told reporters.

BOY'S BODY RECOVERED FROM FOREST IN AYODHYA

AYODHYA: The body of an eight-year-old boy with stab injuries was recovered from a forest here on Wednesday, a day after he went missing from his house in the Tarun area, police said. Raj Gupta, son of Manoj Gupta, a local businessman, went missing from his house in Kichuti Bazar after 7 pm on Tuesday, they said. The boy's father lodged a complaint with the police alleging kidnapping but a missing report was lodged in the matter, officials said.

WANTED DRUG SUPPLIER AMONG FIVE ARRESTED IN SAMBA



JAMMU: Five criminals, including a wanted drug supplier, were arrested with heroin worth Rs 28,000 and weapons in Jammu and Kashmir's Samba district on Wednesday, police said. While the drug peddler, Farman Ali alias Munna, is wanted in several cases, the other four criminals allegedly aided heroin smugglers in their business, they said. Acting on specific information, a police team conducted a raid and arrested Ali for transferring Rs 4.5 lakh to a Punjab-based drug smuggler in exchange for heroin, they said.

ACCUSED DIES, FIR AGAINST POLICEMAN FOR CUSTODIAL TORTURE

JUNAGADH (GUJARAT): A First Information Report (FIR) has been registered against a police official here for alleged custodial torture as a man arrested in a cheating case died at a hospital on Wednesday. Sub-inspector M K Makwana, the official, was absconding since the FIR was registered against him on charges of attempt to murder and voluntarily causing grievous hurt on Tuesday evening, police said. Harshil Jadhav, an accused in a cheating case, died at the ICU of the civil hospital in Ahmedabad on Wednesday, days after he was allegedly subjected to custodial torture, said inspector Gayatri Rajput of Junagadh B-division.

ANNAMALAI SLAMS STALIN, SAYS CONGRESS BANNED JALLIKATTU

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin had said in Madurai that it was the BJP which tried to thwart Jallikattu in the state

LATHA SRINIVASAN
CHENNAI

Tamil Nadu BJP leader K Annamalai has slammed chief minister and DMK president M.K. Stalin for alleging that it was the BJP which tried to thwart the jallikattu (bull fighting). The BJP leader said that it was the Congress government which announced a ban on jallikattu over a decade ago.

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister M.K. Stalin stated while speaking at the inauguration of the new jallikattu arena in Madurai that it was the BJP which tried to thwart the jallikattu.

Tamil Nadu BJP leader K Annamalai took to his social media on Wednesday to slam the DMK leader for his 'lies' and stated that it was the Congress government in 2011 which announced a ban on jallikattu.

Annamalai wrote on X (formerly Twitter), "Tamil Nadu Chief Minister Stalin's life is only about telling lies. Last time when he was in the ruling party, he signed whatever was handed to him and apologized for unknowingly signing for methane extraction from the delta area; now



he has a habit of reading whatever is written on the piece of paper. Thinking that people would have forgotten that it was the parasitic model DMK that banned jallikattu competitions in Tamil Nadu, he has unleashed new hoaxes. It was during the DMK-Congress coalition government that on July 11, 2011, Mr. @Jairam_Ramesh of the Congress, who was the then environment minister, announced a ban on Jallikattu. The DMK, which was getting sticky central ministerial posts and doing corruption as its full-time job, did not raise its voice against

it."

He further stated, "In January 2016, the Central Government led by our honorable Prime Minister Mr. @narendramodi to re-hold the jallikattu competitions which had been banned by the DMK-Congress coalition government, the Supreme Court banned and extended the ban on jallikattu. Immediately, the Hon'ble Union Minister Mrs. @nsitharaman instructed the Tamil Nadu Government to enact an ordinance to hold jallikattu. Accordingly, in January 2017, after much

persuasion and deliberation, the then Tamil Nadu government passed an ordinance."

As for the latest case regarding jallikattu, Annamalai said, "In the case against this, last December 2022, in support of jallikattu, the Solicitor General Mr. Tushar Mehta, who appeared on behalf of the central government, said that the emergency law allowing jallikattu has been passed with all the necessary documents and features for the approval of the President. Accordingly, after the ban on jallikattu competitions was lifted, the Supreme Court gave permission to hold jallikattu, but the parasitic model DMK has nothing to do with it. DMK can be proud that BJP was able to lift the ban on jallikattu only because the DMK alliance banned it. Let Cauvery be an issue, let Khachathivu be an issue, let jallikattu be banned. Position has always been more important to DMK than Tamil heritage, than the welfare of Tamils. DMK is the origin of all the problems faced by the Tamil people. How many more years will this Gopalapuram family lie and deceive people for their family's hunger for power?"

SCHOOL GIRLS MANAGE GUJARAT ASSEMBLY ON GIRL CHILD DAY

GANDHINAGAR: A group of schoolgirls on Wednesday sat in the Gujarat assembly and managed its "functioning" by assuming the role of the chief minister, ministers and legislators in an event organised to mark the National Girl Child Day. Inaugurating the 'Tejaswini legislative assembly', as it was called, Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel called upon the girls to take forward the journey of holistic development of the state, a government release said.

SIX DEAD AFTER TRUCK OVERTURNS IN ODISHA'S MAYURBHANJ

TDG NETWORK
MAYURBHANJ

At least six people were killed while nine others sustained injuries after a truck they were travelling in overturned in Mayurbhanj district on Wednesday morning. The incident took place in the Duarsuni Ghat on National Highway 49 amid heavy a downpour, said an official.

Sub-Divisional Police Officer, Sujit Kumar Pradhan

said, "The accident took place when the truck of a jatra (dance drama troupe) was on its way from Rairangpur to the Jaleswar area of Balasore district.

The driver lost control of the vehicle at Duarsuni Ghat on National Highway 49 amid rains and met with an accident."

Shortly after the incident, the injured were rescued and admitted to the nearby Bangiriposi Community Health

Centre, said the official. As per Fire Officer Bhabendra Nath Dey, "A team of fire officials reached the spot and carried out a rescue operation." The Bangiriposhi police have begun an investigation into the accident. Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik has expressed deep grief over the deaths in the road accident and announced an ex-gratia of Rs 3 lakh each for the next of kin of the deceased.

WB ration scam: ED raids absconding TMC leader Shahjahan's home again

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

Nineteen days after an Enforcement Directorate (ED) team faced assault by a mob, federal agency sleuths once again conducted a raid at the residence of absconding Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Shahjahan Sheikh in North 24 Parganas district on Wednesday morning.

This operation is part of the agency's investigation into the multi-crore ration distri-

butions scam, according to an officer.

Accompanied by more than 120 personnel from the central armed police force, the ED officers forcibly entered Sheikh's residence in the Sandeshkhali area. The collapsible gate was broken open in the presence of local police and two locals serving as witnesses, the officer stated. "We are searching Sheikh's house today. We will also try to talk to the residents there," informed the ED officer. Upon entry,

the Enforcement Directorate officers secured the gates from inside and initiated searches, he added.

On January 5, a team of Enforcement Directorate officers faced an assault by a mob while attempting to enter the residence of the TMC leader. Three officers sustained injuries during the attack. Following the incident, the district police and Sheikh's family members filed a complaint against the Enforcement Directorate officers.

Caste, religious differences created to destroy Tamil unity: CM Stalin

LATHA SRINIVASAN
CHENNAI

Inaugurating the new jallikattu (bull-taming) arena in Madurai, Tamil Nadu CM MK Stalin said he was proud to have reinstated the glory of jallikattu in the state. The new arena is named after his father former CM K. K. Kallanur and called 'Kalaigarnar Nootrandu Aeruthazhuvuthal Arangam' (Kalaigarnar Centenary Jallikattu Arena). In his speech, Stalin also spoke about how caste and religious differences were created to destroy the unity of the Tamils but celebrating such cultural festivals, like



jallikattu, will unite everyone. "The Jallikattu arena, a traditional sport of Tamils, has been built by the DMK government in Madurai. The opening of this Jallikattu arena during the Karunanidhi centenary is an extra special feature. I

am proud to have my name in history as Stalin who built the Jallikattu stadium." Stalin added, "At this juncture what I want to tell you is--caste divisions and religious differences were created later to destroy Tamils' unity. Let us conduct

such cultural festivals unitedly with the Tamil identity." Jallikattu is referred to as 'aeruthazhuvuthal' meaning embrace the bull and Stalin reiterated that 'aeruthazhuvuthal' was a symbol of Tamil culture. He alleged that the BJP government created a 'drama' over allowing Tamil Nadu to conduct the jallikattu but the Supreme Court gave Tamil Nadu a positive verdict. "Aringar Anna gave Tamil Nadu its name. Kalaigarnar Karunanidhi took efforts to get 'Semmozhi' status for our ancient language, Tamil. Now, the DMK government has constructed Kalaigarnar

Centenary Aeruthazhuvuthal Arena. People are asked to celebrate the Aeruthazhuvuthal (jallikattu) with unity," concluded Stalin. The 'Kalaigarnar Nootrandu Aeruthazhuvuthal Arangam' (Kalaigarnar Centenary Jallikattu Arena) is situated in Keelakarai village in Alanganallur, Madurai, and is spread over 65 acres and was a built at cost of around Rs 63 crore. After the inauguration, the CM flagged off the first jallikattu in the arena. The event saw 500 bulls and 300 tamers take part and a reward of a Thar jeep worth Rs 20 lakh apparently for the winner.

RESERVED CATEGORY CERTIFICATES

Cal HC single bench directs CBI to probe, division bench stays order

TDG NETWORK
KOLKATA

A division bench of the Calcutta High Court on Wednesday stayed within hours a single bench's direction to the CBI to investigate allegations of irregularities in issuance of certificates of reserved category candidates and use of those for admission in medical colleges in West Bengal.

The stay came after Advocate General Kishore Dutta, representing the West Bengal government, moved the division bench presided by Justice Soumen Sen on the ground that the state was not allowed to rely on documents to show that it had initiated a probe about the issuance of fake caste certificates.

Orally moving the division bench soon after the single bench order, Dutta submitted that there is no prayer for a CBI investigation by the petitioner.

The division bench stayed the order of the single bench for two weeks and directed that the matter will be taken up for hearing on Thursday. Earlier in the day, the single bench of Justice Abhijit Gangopadhyay directed that the entire process of issuance of reserved category certificates and admission of candidates with such certificates in medical colleges for the last three years be thoroughly investigated by the CBI.

He directed that the SIT (special investigation team) constituted by this court in

respect of alleged irregularities in education appointment cases will probe the matter.

Justice Gangopadhyay further directed that if necessary, the Enforcement Directorate (ED) will also come into the picture for investigation if it finds any money trail involved in the matter.

The division bench, also comprising Justice Uday Kumar, observed that unless there is a prayer in the writ petition for a CBI investigation or a case is made out for a CBI probe, "the right of the state to conduct a fair and impartial investigation by its agencies cannot be lightly interfered with as it would result in disruption of the co-operative federal structure of the country."

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Chairman of the High-Level Committee (HLC) on One Nation One Election, Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India, held the fourth round of consultations with eminent jurists. The eminent jurists who gave their considered opinion on the subject included Justice Dilip Bhosale, former Chief Justice of Allahabad High Court, and Justice Rajendra Menon, former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court. Initiating discussions with financial and economic experts, Ram Nath Kovind also held interactions with Ajay Singh, President of ASSOCHAM, and Chairman and Managing Director of Spicejet Airlines who was also accompanied by the Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary general of ASSOCHAM. Ajay Singh put forth his views in detail on the economic advantages of holding simultaneous elections for the nation. Recently, the High-Level Commit-

tee relating to the holding of simultaneous elections in the country has initiated a consultation process under the Chairmanship of Ram Nath Kovind, former President of India. As part of this consultation, on January 17, the Chairman of the Committee met Justice Munishwar Nath Bhandari, former Chief Justice of Madras High Court in New Delhi. Continuing with the deliberations the Chairman of the HLC held discussions with Justice Gorla Rohini, former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court and Sushil Chandra, former Chief Election Commissioner of India.

As part of this consultation process, suggestions and considered views are solicited from the citizens, political parties, eminent jurists like former Chief Justices of the Supreme Court and High Courts, constitutional experts, and former CECs among others.

The consultation process shall continue in the coming days, stated the press communications issued. The High-Level Committee recently

also sought public view regarding the One Nation One Election issue. The public notice issued stated that "Notice for inviting suggestions from members of the general public for making appropriate changes in the existing legal administrative framework to enable simultaneous elections in the country", stated the notice. Earlier the High-Level Committee constituted held its preliminary meeting under the chairmanship of Ram Nath Kovind, Former President of India. Amit Shah, Union Home Minister and Minister of Cooperation; Arjun Ram Meghwal, Minister of State (Independent Charge) Ministry of Law and Justice, Ghulam Nabi Azad, former Leader of Opposition, Rajya Sabha, N. K. Singh, former Chairman, 15th Finance Commission, Dr. Subhash C. Kashyap, former Secretary General, Lok Sabha, Sanjay Kothari, former Chief Vigilance Commissioner attended the meeting. Harish Salve, Senior Advocate joined the meeting virtually.

STRONG STEPS TO MEET AI THREATS: CEC

‘We stand firm in our resolve to maintain a level playing field.’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Any deepfake or Artificial Intelligence (AI) attempts to compromise electoral process through false narratives will be met with swift, strong and robust measures to uphold the integrity of our elections, Chief Election Commissioner of India Rajiv Kumar on the occasion of the 14th National Voters Day, said.

“While technology has made possible many enabling features to enrich the electoral process, it has also posed various challenges to the democratic exercise. We, however, stand firm in our resolve to maintain a level playing field and foster an informed electorate,” he said.

Emphasizing that technology has been leveraged to bring in transparency and efficiency in all aspects of elections, he said that misinformation, deep fakes and the use of AI are being used increasingly to undercut the “faith and trust” of the people in the electoral process.

He further urged first-time voters to exercise their fran-



Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar interacting with media persons at the Press Conference

chise with full enthusiasm adding that the youth will make a resounding and emphatic statement by voting and motivating their peers to do the same.

“Over 60 democratic countries will have elections this year to elect their respective governments. India shall be the focus of all, as the world’s largest and most vibrant democracy conducts 18th Lok Sabha elections and elections to around eight state legislative assemblies during 2024.

This day is an occasion to celebrate voters, youngsters

in particular, as central to this great democracy of ours,” Rajiv Kumar said on Wednesday.

Kumar said that India will be having the World’s largest peacetime logistical exercise of movement of man and materials, to enable over 96 crore voters to exercise their franchise over 12 lakh polling stations through our 1.5 crore plus election officials.

The Chief Election Commissioner thanked and appreciated their polling teams who traverse the harshest of terrains to deliver democracy to the last mile.

“Our focus has been to make the electoral experience pleasant, all-inclusive and inducement-free. Our electoral roll serves as a vibrant and diverse mosaic, reflecting the rich diversity of our democracy,” Rajiv Kumar said.

Recalling a few lines from Tiruvalluvar’s, Kural, “It is compassion, the most gracious of virtues, which moves the world”. Reflecting this sentiment, it is the Commission’s resolve to make our elections inclusive and accessible. We have over 81 lakh persons with disability

voters, over 1.8 crore 80 plus voters, 2.5 lakh 100 plus voters and over 48,000 third-gender voters registered with us. Optional Home voting facility is also available for 80 plus and PwD voters to vote from the comfort of their homes, he added.

Rajiv Kumar further said that in 2023 the Commission has successfully conducted elections in 9 states, where more than 16 crore voters gave voice to their cherished democratic right and voted in an atmosphere of fairness, confidence and joy.

“Elections were held peacefully, with no major incidents of violence and near zero repolls. In 126 villages of Bastar, polling stations were set-up for the first time in independent India, where voters came to polling stations without any fear and anxiety. Women voters participated enthusiastically, even surpassing male voters in many constituencies across these 9 states. The Commission’s efforts have meant 100 per cent registration of Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups in the festival of democracy,” he added.

Punjab Police to establish AI, machine learning lab

TDG NETWORK
CHANDIGARH

Punjab Police inked a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) Ropar on Wednesday for the establishment of a first-of-its-kind in-house Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Machine Learning (ML) Lab.

Taking the first step towards realising the vision of Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann of having AI-driven modern policing in the state, ADGP Technical Services Punjab Ram Singh and Director IIT Ropar Professor Rajeev Ahuja signed the MoU in the presence of DGP Punjab Gaurav Yadav.

SP Technical Services, Punjab Sandeep Kaur Sandhu and Asst. Professor IIT Ropar Santosh Kumar Vipparthi were also present on the occasion.

DGP Gaurav Yadav, while thanking CM Mann for his complete support to the Punjab Police in its modernisation, said that this collaboration will not only pave the way for various technological innovations but will also help in harnessing cutting-

edge technologies for predictive policing, crime pattern recognition and analysis, facial recognition and intelligent decision-making.

He said that while AI can assist the police in the detection of criminal activities and fraud by identifying patterns and trends in large volumes

of leveraging state-of-the-art technologies, will further enhance law enforcement capabilities, improve public safety, and foster innovation in AI-driven security solutions.

This initiative reflects the commitment to exploit the advancements in ML and

AI-driven dashboards can provide law enforcement agencies with real-time analytics and insights into ongoing operations and events, improving situational awareness, the release added.

of data, on the other side, ML algorithms can help understand criminal behaviour and allocate resources accordingly.

The lab will also help in optimising the deployment of manpower based on real-time data, he said.

Sharing more details, ADGP Ram Singh said that in the present era, the rapid progress in machine learning and artificial intelligence holds the potential to transform the operations of law enforcement agencies.

He said that this initiative, which is driven by the goal

AI for revolutionising law enforcement practices and enhancing security measures throughout Punjab, he added.

According to a Punjab police release, the lab is expected to play a crucial role in automating the generation of reports and paperwork, saving time for officers and administrative staff.

AI-driven dashboards can provide law enforcement agencies with real-time analytics and insights into ongoing operations and events, improving situational awareness, the release added.

Mamata snubs Congress, to contest all Bengal LS seats

CONTINUED FROM P1

Yesterday, in Assam, Rahul Gandhi had said that he and his party enjoyed good relations with Mamata Banerjee and had downplayed the war of words between his party colleagues like Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury and Trinamool leaders.

Rahul Gandhi, asked about these attacks, played them down, insisting: “Mamata Banerjee is very close to me and our party” and that it is “natural”, sometimes, for the two sides to criticise each other.

“But they are not going to disrupt the relations between the Congress and the TMC,” he had insisted.

However, in a further sign of fraying tempers, Mamata Banerjee today also hit out at Rahul Gandhi and his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, which is expected to enter Bengal on Thursday.

“They are coming to my State... but did not have courtesy to inform me, even though I am part of the I.N.D.I.A. bloc. So, there is no relations with me, as far as Bengal is concerned,” she said.

“I.N.D.I.A. will be present in India (but) in Bengal, the Trinamool Congress will

fight. In Bengal, it is only Trinamool that can teach the BJP a lesson. It can show the country the path to victory...” she said.

Minutes later, the Congress responded through its communications head Jairam Ramesh.

Ramesh, who is with Rahul Gandhi and the yatra in Assam, said his party “cannot imagine INDIA bloc without Mamataji”. Mr Ramesh insisted “all I.N.D.I.A. partners will unitedly fight Lok Sabha polls in Bengal”.

Congress General Secretary KC Venugopal said the party would “talk to the Trinamool”.

“There will be an alliance in West Bengal. Our aim is to decrease BJP seats. (We) will talk to Trinamool... Mamata Banerjee is a senior leader in the I.N.D.I.A. alliance. These are small differences (that) will be sorted out.”

However, Trinamool sources later told The Daily Guardian that the party was open to “courtesy back-channel” talks but there is almost no hope of a deal being struck.

Banerjee also said the Congress was welcome to fight 300 seats on its own, but urged the party to surrender some seats to regional par-

ties that will have the best chance of defeating the BJP.

“Particular regions should be left to regional parties. They can fight 300 seats alone... I will help them, I will not contest those seats... but they are adamant about doing what they want,” she said.

“I have the power to take on the BJP, but some people don’t want to listen to us about seat-sharing. If you don’t want to fight the BJP, then at least don’t give away seats to it,” the Trinamool leader said.

Predictably, Mamata Banerjee’s announcement drew a scathing response from the BJP’s Amit Malviya, who called it a “sign of desperation”. “Unable to hold her political ground, Mamata Banerjee wants to fight all seats, in the hope that she can still be relevant, after the polls...” the BJP’s IT Cell chief posted on X.

On Tuesday evening also, in an internal party meeting, Mamata Banerjee had criticised the Congress’ “unjustified” demand for 10-12 Lok Sabha seats in her State; she had offered two, pointing to the Congress’ “abysmal record” since it won four seats in 2014 and only two in 2019.

Air India slapped with Rs 1.1-cr fine for safety violation

CONTINUED FROM P1

Hours after civil aviation regulatory body Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) fined airline Air India Rs 1.1 crore concerning a safety violation matter, the airline said it disagreed with the order and reserved its right to appeal before the regulator.

DGCA said that the airline’s response was scrutinized against statutory provisions and original equipment manufacturer (OEM)-specified performance limits, which revealed discrepancies in the operations of leased aircraft. Recently, DGCA imposed fines worth Rs 30 lakh each on Air India and SpiceJet after finding lapses in pilot rostering related to operating flights in low visibility conditions.

The decision stemmed from an analysis of December 2023 data, revealing that both airlines did not roster CAT II/III and LVTO qualified pilots for certain flights.

“We disagree with the order issued by the DGCA. The issues raised were thoroughly examined by Air India along with external experts concluding that there was no compromise on safety, whatsoever,” an Air India

spokesperson said.

“We are studying the order in detail and will review the options available to us including our right to appeal as well as taking it up with the regulator,” the Air India spokesperson said.

While slapping the monetary penalty, the civil aviation regulator earlier today said it had launched an extensive investigation following a safety report filed by an airline employee, alleging violations on certain “long-range terrain critical routes” operated by Air India. The inquiry indicated non-compliance by the airline, leading to the issuance of a Show Cause Notice to Air India Limited’s Accountable Manager.

“In response, DGCA has taken enforcement action, imposing a penalty of Rs 1.10 crore on M/s Air India,” DGCA said

DGCA said that the airline’s response was scrutinized against statutory provisions and original equipment manufacturer (OEM)-specified performance limits, which revealed discrepancies in the operations of leased aircraft.



The final stage preparations for the Interim Union Budget 2024 commences in presence of Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman.

CJI to Centre: ‘How can you not accept an amendment by Parliament?’

CONTINUED FROM P1

India, Parliament’s cause is eternal, indivisible and indestructible and we can’t hear the Government of India say that the amendment which the Parliament made is something I don’t stand by. You have to stand by it,” observed Justice Chandrachud.

The bench highlighted that the government has the option to amend the law again if it disagrees with the 1981 amendment.

“This is an amendment by Parliament (in 1981). Is the government accepting the amendment?” inquired Justice Khanna.

“I am not,” responded Mehta.

Mehta clarified that he was not presenting a case of “A versus B” and was addressing constitutional questions before a seven-judge constitution bench.

“The amendment in question was subjected to challenge before the (Allahabad) high court, and there is a judgment declaring that it is unconstitutional for A, B, C, D grounds, and as a law officer, it is my right as well as my entitlement and duty to say that this view appears to

be correct,” he asserted.

The Allahabad High Court had invalidated the provision of the AMU (Amendment) Act, 1981 in January 2006 granting minority status to the university.

The CJI expressed concern, stating that it would be “radical” for a law officer to tell the court, “I don’t abide by what Parliament has done.” “You have to stand by what Parliament has done. Parliament is supreme. Parliament is undoubtedly supreme in its law-making function. Parliament can always amend a statute, in which case a law officer can say I have an amended statute,” noted Justice Chandrachud.

“Can we hear any organ of the Union government say that notwithstanding a parliamentary amendment, I don’t accept this amendment,” added the CJI, emphasizing that Parliament is an eternal, indivisible, and indestructible entity under democracy.

Mehta argued that he was supporting the 2006 high court verdict. “How can you say I don’t accept the validity of an amendment?” questioned the bench.

In response, the solicitor



general said. “Would a law officer be expected to say that whatever amendments were made in the Constitution of India during Emergency were true only because they were made by Parliament.”

The CJI pointed out that the 44th Amendment Act, 1978, rectified the issues arising during the Emergency. “The 44th amendment came in only for that. The 44th amendment came to redress the evils which were perpetrated in the name of a constitutional amendment,” he said.

The 44th Amendment Act was enacted by the Janata Party government in response to the Emergency, proposing changes to uphold the Constitution’s secu-

lar and democratic character. Mehta referred to the high court verdict and stated that the 1981 Amendment Act was set aside and, therefore, no longer part of the statute book.

“There is an affidavit filed by the government. It’s not my stand...,” he clarified.

Senior advocate Kapil Sibal, representing one of the parties supporting AMU’s minority status, recalled how the then Attorney General defended the Emergency provision.

“I was sitting in the court when the then Attorney General of India Niren De was standing here and arguing what is being done is right. I (attorney general) defend the Emergency provision. Why? Because he could not say otherwise,”

Sibal said.

Mehta highlighted the distinction, noting that the then attorney general was not in a situation where one high court had invalidated the 1981 amendment, and the provision no longer existed in the statute book.

The arguments in the matter remained inconclusive and are scheduled to resume on January 30.

On February 12, 2019, the top court referred the highly contentious issue to a seven-judge bench for adjudication. A similar reference was made earlier in the S Azeez Basha versus Union of India case in 1967, where a five-judge constitution bench held that since AMU was a central university, it could not be considered a minority institution. However, it regained its minority status when Parliament passed the AMU (Amendment) Act in 1981.

The Congress-led UPA government appealed against the 2006 high court order, while the NDA government led by the BJP informed the apex court in 2016 that it would withdraw the appeal filed by the erstwhile UPA dispensation.

ASSESSING JAYANT SINHA'S PERFORMANCE AS HAZARIBAGH'S MP

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

A ground-level survey of the Hazaribagh Parliamentary constituency was conducted by India News to analyse the performance of Jayant Sinha, the Member of Parliament from Hazaribagh, and gather voters' feedback about him.

Hazaribagh, often referred to as the Shimla of Jharkhand, boasts enchanting landscapes with dense forests, picturesque valleys, meandering rivers, and rolling hills. Nature has bestowed the Hazaribagh Lok Sabha constituency with not only scenic beauty but also hidden treasures within its embrace.

Nevertheless, the looming spectre of Naxalism casts a shadow over the region, influencing the political landscape of the nation. Currently, the distinguished leader of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Jayant Sinha, holds the representation of Hazaribagh in the Lok Sabha. Since the year 1957, the Congress and Left parties have secured victory in this constituency only on two occasions.

In contrast, the BJP has tasted success six times, and the socialist factions have also celebrated triumphs in the electoral arena. This intricate blend of natural allure and political dynamics defines the multifaceted character of Hazaribagh.

The Congress party has faced a drought of success in Hazaribagh since the year 1984. The local electorate of Hazaribagh exhibits a notable openness to accepting external candidates. Adding to the historical significance of the region, Hazaribagh Jail has garnered fame since the British colonial era.

Originally constructed by the British, this prison served as a facility to incarcerate freedom fighters during the struggle for independence. Notably, Jayaprakash Narayan, a prominent figure in Indian politics, was confined within the confines of Hazaribagh Jail dur-

ing the period of emergency. Legend has it that it was within these walls that JP crafted the strategy to oust Indira Gandhi from power.

Under JP's guidance, a multitude of revolutionaries managed to evade captivity by digging through the walls during the emergency. The Hazaribagh Lok Sabha constituency comprises a total of 5 assembly seats. With an electorate of around 1.7 million voters, the voter demographic in Hazaribagh is distinctive.

The Kurmi community boasts the highest representation among voters in this region. Additionally, there is a significant presence of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribe, and Other Backward Class populations. In urban areas, Rajputs and Kayasthas are prominent. It is noteworthy that, in Hazaribagh, caste is believed to have a minimal impact on politics, as social harmony and equilibrium are considered influential factors in the political landscape.

In the last decade, notable advancements have been made in education, agriculture, and road infrastructure in Hazaribagh. A new medical college has been set up in Gorja Karma, contributing to the improvement of healthcare facilities.

The Hazaribagh-Barkagaon road has undergone enhancements, leading to better connectivity. Long-distance train services originating from Hazaribagh have been introduced, facilitating improved transportation.

Goria Karma is now home to the Indian Agricultural Research Center, focusing on agricultural innovation and development. Additionally, the implementation of the Hazaribagh-Ramgarh Rural Pipeline Water Supply Scheme has addressed water supply challenges in the region.

A significant milestone is the establishment of the state's first women's engineering college in Ramgarh, providing opportunities for women in the field of engineering. These developments reflect



HISTORY OF HAZARIBAGH LOK SABHA SEAT			
1998-1999 Yashwant Sinha BJP	2004 Bhuvaneshwar Mehta (CPI)	2009 Yashwant Sinha BJP	2014-2019 Jayant Sinha BJP

ASSEMBLY SEATS (05)	
Hazaribagh	Mandu
Barhi	Barkagaon
Ramgarh	

the commitment to progress and upliftment in various sectors in Hazaribagh.

Nevertheless, there are numerous issues demanding attention as the 2024 general election approaches for the Hazaribagh Lok Sabha constituency. The significance of this election underscores the imperative for the public to scrutinize the actions of their elected representative.

India News is actively conducting precise surveys to assess the performance of the Member of Parliament, ensuring that the opinions of the public are transparently conveyed to the nation. This democratic process serves as a vital mechanism for accountability and informed decision-making during the upcoming electoral proceedings.

Attendance in Parliament, number of questions asked, MP fund utilization, and special contributions form the basis of parliamentary performance evaluation. Jayant Sinha's presence in Parliament is around 90%. He has raised 96% of the questions in the House related to the development of the region and

the country. Regarding the utilisation of MP funds, Jayant has spent around 90% of the allocated amount. His special contribution to parliamentary activities is approximately 70%. Based on these parameters, MP Jayant Sinha scores 0.86, which is excellent.

The public in Hazaribagh has responded to our six questions without bias. Most people believe that the MP's work in the region is better than average. While the focus on development in the region was higher earlier, it seems to have slightly decreased. The public is both satisfied and dissatisfied with the MP's work, and opinions vary. Regarding voting preferences, the majority view the BJP and Modi government's work positively. However, the final decision on whom to vote for remains unclear for many voters.

In India News' survey, Hazaribagh's public was asked the same questions as in our survey. The results align with our findings. Social media platforms also conducted surveys, with approximately 60% of users expressing favour-



Jayant Sinha

able opinions about Jayant Sinha.

The region faces a myriad of pressing issues that significantly impact the daily lives of its residents. Naxalism, characterized by insurgent activities and armed conflicts, poses a persistent threat to the region's stability and security. The unauthorized and illegal mining of coal further exacerbates concerns, raising environmental and legal issues. The terror of wild animals has become a serious concern, affecting both human populations and local wildlife. The region grapples with extreme levels of unemployment, creating social and economic challenges for the community. Additionally, a severe water crisis has emerged, highlighting the critical need for sustainable water management solutions. Mass migration has become a prevalent phenomenon, indicating the challenges people face in their pursuit of better opportunities.

VOTER DEMOGRAPHICS	
Male	51%
Female	49%
Rural	70%
Urban	30%
Kurmi	28%
Yadav	4.5%
Agariya Jati	5%
Vaishya	12%
Panch Ponia	10%
SC/ST	28%
Muslim	15%

ISSUES	
	Naxalism
	Illegal coal mining
	Terror of wild animals
	Extreme unemployment
	Water crisis
	Mass migration
	Traffic jams
	Rural roads in disrepair

Traffic jams have become a common occurrence, reflecting the strain on infrastructure and transportation systems. Furthermore, the disrepair of rural roads compounds the difficulties faced by those residing in remote areas, hindering connectivity and access to essential services.

Taking into consideration the parliamentary performance, ground-level activities, and social media survey outcomes, Jayant Sinha secures ratings of 0.86, 0.50, and 0.60, respectively. Averaging these scores results in 3.85, positioning him at the 7th spot. Jayant Sinha attains an approval rating of approximately 58%, and following our assessment criteria, he neither secures a pass nor a fail, thereby creating a "FIFTY-FIFTY" scenario.

Despite positive indicators in parliamentary attendance, question-raising, and fund utilization, uncertainties linger regarding voting preferences and the impact of central govern-

MP REPORT (GROUND)	
1- Are you satisfied with the work of your Member of Parliament (MP) and would you like to vote for them again?	
Yes	54.87%
No	39.50%
Cannot say	5.63%
2- Should your MP be more active in the development of the area?	
Yes	93.84%
No	5.27%
Cannot say	0.89%
3- In the 2024 general elections, which party would you like to vote for?	
N.D.A	57.91%
I.N.D.I.A	5.37%
Other parties	8.15%
N.O.T.A.	3.18%
Cannot say	25.39%
4- On what basis will you vote in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections?	
Performance of the Modi govern-ment	57.61%
Unemployment and inflation	23.58%
Caste	0.69%
None of these	11.94%
Cannot say	6.18%
5- Have you benefited from the central government's schemes?	
Yes	27.18%
No	72.43%
Cannot say	0.39%
6- Which scheme has benefited you?	
Free Ration	13.86%
Jan Dhan Yojana	1.09%
Housing and Toilet	1.49%
Ayushman Bharat	2.18%
Ujjwala Yojana	1.39%
Other scheme	1.99%
All of these	5.37%
None	72.63%

ment schemes.

In this democratic process, the public's active involvement, transparent surveys, and candid opinions contribute to an informed decision-making process. Hazaribagh awaits the democratic exercise of 2024, where the electorate's judgment will shape the future trajectory of the constituency. The region's rich history, intertwined with contemporary challenges and aspirations, sets the stage for a nuanced political landscape that de-

mands both scrutiny and active public participation.

While witnessing progress in education, agriculture, and infrastructure, Hazaribagh faces pressing issues like Naxalism, illegal coal mining, wildlife threats, unemployment, water crisis, mass migration, traffic congestion, and rural road disrepair. The upcoming 2024 general election carries immense significance for the region, prompting an evaluation of the parliamentary performance of Jayant Sinha.

The evolving tapestry of Asian American Hindus

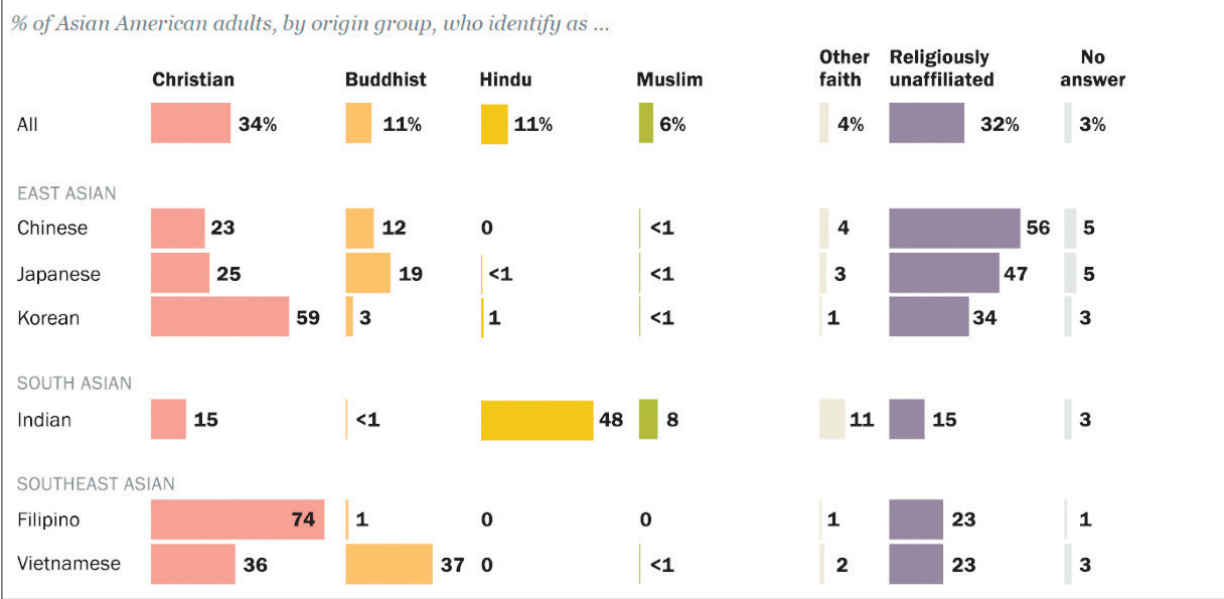
TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Similar to the general U.S. population, an increasing proportion of Asian Americans do not align with any particular religious affiliation, and there has been a decline in the percentage identifying as Christian, as revealed by a Pew Research Center survey on the religious beliefs of Asian American adults.

However, the survey also indicates that 40% of Asian Americans express a sense of closeness to a religious tradition for reasons unrelated to actual religious beliefs. For instance, while only 11% of Asian American adults claim Buddhism as their religion, 21% feel an affinity to Buddhism for other reasons, such as familial background or cultural ties.

The religious profile of Asian Americans

Currently, 32% of Asian Americans have no religious affiliation, up from 26% in 2012. Christianity remains the largest faith group among Asian Americans, comprising 34%. However, Christianity has experienced the most significant decline, decreasing by 8 percentage points since 2012. Among Asian American Christians, there is an even split between



Catholics and Protestants, accounting for 17% and 16% of all U.S. Asian adults, respectively. Born-again or evangelical Protestants make up 10% of the Asian American population. Buddhists and Hindus each represent approximately one in ten Asian Americans, while Muslims constitute 6%. Other religious groups, including Daoists, Jains, Jews, Sikhs, and others, collectively make up about 4% of all Asian American adults.

The survey also inquired about the significance of religion in the lives of Asian Americans, with 31% indicating that it is very important to them. Additionally, 29%

reported attending religious services at least monthly. Another aspect explored was the presence of altars, shrines, or religious symbols for home worship, with 36% acknowledging that they have such items. Among the major religious groups within the Asian American community, Protestants and Muslims emerged as the most likely to attend religious services at least once a month. In contrast, Buddhists and Hindus were notably more inclined to express that they engage in worship at shrines or altars within their homes.

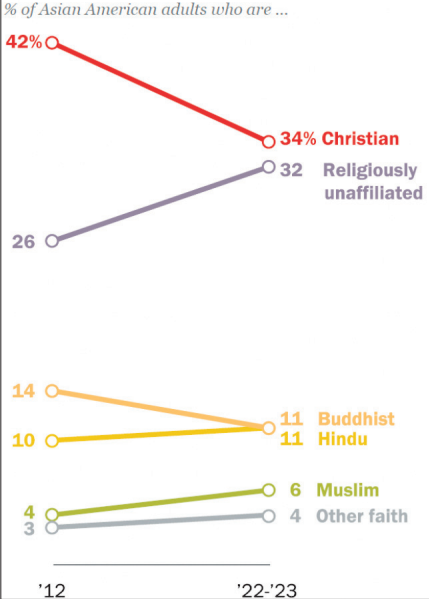
Indian Americans exhibit a distinctive religious profile compared to other major

Asian-origin groups, with a significant majority identifying as Hindu (48%). However, a notable portion of the Indian American population also follows other faiths, including Christianity (15%), Islam (8%), and Sikhism (8%). Approximately one in ten Asian Americans currently identify Hinduism as their religion (11%), a figure consistent with the 2012 data (10%). An additional 6% of the Asian American population express a sense of closeness to Hinduism for reasons unrelated to religious beliefs, such as ancestry or culture.

When examining Asian American adults who identify as Indian, approximately

half state that their current religion is Hinduism (48%), a proportion similar to the 2012 findings (51%). In total, two-thirds of Indian Americans either identify as Hindu or express a close affinity to Hinduism. One-third of Hindus among Asian Americans express that religion holds significant importance in their lives, while an additional 38% consider it somewhat important. A notable 31% mention attending religious services on a monthly or more frequent basis.

When comparing Asian American religious groups analyzed in the survey, Hindus stand out as the most inclined to use an altar, shrine,



or religious symbol for home worship, with 79% engaging in this practice. Among Hindus who emphasize the significance of religion in their lives, this figure rises to 89%.

In terms of social circles, 40% of Asian American Hindus state that all or most of their friends share the same religious beliefs, surpassing the overall Asian American population reporting such uniformity (40% vs. 30%).

Demographically, Asian American Hindus exhibit distinct characteristics. Approximately 77% are under the age of 50, making them one of the youngest Asian American religious groups, with a median age of 40.

Moreover, 92% of Asian American Hindu adults were born in a country other than the United States, marking the highest foreign-born share among Asian American religious groups. Conversely, religiously unaffiliated Asian Americans with a close affinity to Hinduism are more likely to be U.S.-born than those who formally identify as Hindu (35% vs. 8%). Socioeconomically, Asian American Hindus excel, with 61% holding post-graduate degrees, compared to 22% of all Asian American adults. Additionally, 44% of Asian American Hindus boast a family income exceeding \$150,000, surpass-

ing the 32% figure for Asian Americans overall. On average, Hindu Americans exhibit higher educational attainment than any other separately analyzed Asian American religious group.

Politically, three-quarters of Asian American Hindus align themselves with Democratic or Democratic-leaning, in contrast to 62% of Asian Americans overall.

In conclusion, as these dynamics continue to shape and redefine the religious landscape, understanding the nuanced interplay of cultural, religious, and social factors becomes essential in capturing the rich tapestry of Asian American diversity.

CHINA'S PLAN TO SEND ITS SHIP TO MALE FINALISED AFTER MUIZZU-XI TALKS

At the behest of Xi, Chinese diplomats shared Beijing's final plan about the spy vessel's journey with their counterparts

T. BRAJESH
NEW DELHI

Maldives may have said that it received a diplomatic request from China for necessary clearances for the ship to make a port call for rotation of personnel and replenishment, but the reality is that Beijing's plan to send its spy vessel to India's maritime backyard was finalised during Maldivian President Mohamed Muizzu's talks with Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Chinese capital two weeks ago.

"At the behest of Xi, Chinese diplomats shared Beijing's final plan about the spy vessel's journey with their counterparts from Maldivian Foreign Ministry," diplomatic sources following the development in Male and Beijing told The Daily Guardian. "China's

decision to send the spy ship in India's maritime backyard came only after Muizzu's approval for the same during his visit to Beijing itself. There was no process of request being sent by the Chinese foreign ministry for approval of the Maldivian government as is being said by Male now. There was proper planning for it," sources aware of the development said, adding, "Maldives is ready to help China to facilitate research vessel activities after Sri Lanka refused". "New Delhi's diplomatic, security, military, naval and intelligence establishments are fully aware that China had planned it the day Muizzu took charge of Maldives as the President," sources said, adding, "India is also aware that President Muizzu has assured the



Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu and his wife Sajidha Mohamed arrive at Xiamen. (File photo)

Chinese side of allowing more vessels to make a port call at Male regardless of Delhi's concerns." So Male cannot be trusted when it is saying that it allowed a dual use "spy" Chinese vessel Xiang Yang Hong 03 to make a port call only after diplomatic request from the Chinese government,

say sources, adding, "diplomatic requests might have been made just to fulfil the documentary formality, but the final plan was worked out before January 10 when Muizzu was in Beijing". In its statement, Male said, "Concerning the media reports regarding the port call of the Chinese research

vessel Xiang Yang Hong 3 at Male, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would like to inform that a diplomatic request was made by the Government of China to the Government of Maldives, for the necessary clearances to make a port call, for rotation of personnel and replenishment. The vessel would not

be conducting any research while in the Maldivian waters.

"The Maldives has always been a welcoming destination for vessels of friendly countries, and continues to host both civilian and military vessels making port calls for peaceful purposes. Such port calls not only enhance bilateral ties between the Maldives and its partner countries, but also demonstrate the centuries old tradition of the Maldivian people welcoming vessels from friendly countries," the Maldivian government statement added.

Diplomatic sources here say that the second part of the Maldivian government's statement clearly signals that it will be allowing more such vessels from China to dock at Male. "Nothing is hidden in it, as everything

is clear.

The agenda of the Maldives is clear that China will be allowed to needle India as has been its policy," said a diplomat. So, the diplomatic establishment in India is not happy with the statement from Maldives, saying that Mohamed Muizzu allowed China to dock its research ship in Male with proper planning to foment troubles for India. Experts say that Maldives is playing a role of enabler to China which is aggressively engaged in mapping the Indian Ocean bed and collecting seismic and other significant data to facilitate submarine operations in India's maritime backyard.

Similarly, Maldives' Foreign Ministry statement that the Chinese research vessel would not conduct

any research in the country's waters in the Indian Ocean can also not be trusted. Experts are of the view that this claim is laughable as Male had no capability to detect such activity. Sources say the Chinese surveillance ship is currently in the South West Indian ocean region and is expected to dock at Male seaport on February 5. India has already expressed its reservations over surveillance activity of the said Chinese spy ship to Sri Lanka and Maldives last year. India renewed its concerns to Male after Mohamed Muizzu-led government was sworn in on November 17. It is on the basis of Indian concerns that Sri Lanka on December 22 announced that it will not allow any surveillance ship in its EEZ for the entire 2024.

SC CANCELS BAIL GRANTED TO WADHAWAN BROTHERS OF DHFL IN BANK LOAN CASE

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court on Wednesday cancelled the bail granted to former DHFL promoters Kapil Wadhawan and his brother Dheeraj Wadhawan in the multi-crore rupees bank loan scam case.

Justices Bela M Trivedi and S C Sharma opined that both the high court and the trial court erred in granting bail to them. We have no hesitation in holding that the charge sheet having been filed against the respondent accused in the prescribed time limit and the cognizance had been taken by the special court of the offences alleged committed by them, the respondents could not have claimed the statutory right

of default bail under Section 167 (2) of CrPC on the ground that the investigation for other accused was pending stated the bench.

The court also directed the immediate custody of the Wadhawan brothers. The CBI had previously challenged in the top court the statutory bail granted by the lower courts to Kapil and Dheeraj Wadhawan.

Additional Solicitor General (ASG) S V Raju, representing the CBI, argued that the charge sheet in the case was filed well within the 90 days statutory period, yet statutory bail was granted to the accused. According to the Code of Criminal Procedure (CrPC), an accused is entitled to statutory bail if the probe

agency fails to file the charge sheet within 60 or 90 days after concluding the investigation.

In this case, the CBI filed the charge sheet on the 88th day after the registration, and the trial court granted default bail to the accused, a decision upheld by the Delhi High Court. The CBI argued that the probe related to other aspects and against some other accused was ongoing, and the lower courts misunderstood the finality of the charge sheet, leading to the grant of default bail.

On May 30 last year, the Delhi High Court had upheld the statutory bail granted to DHFL promoters in connection with the multi-crore rupees bank loan scam case.

The high court dismissed the CBI's petition challenging the trial court order and stated that the decision to grant bail was based on good reasoning. The Wadhawan brothers were arrested on July 19 last year, and the high court clarified that it did not delve into the merits of the case. The charge sheet was filed on October 15, 2022, and cognizance was taken based on a complaint by the Union Bank of India.

The CBI alleges a criminal conspiracy to cheat a consortium of 17 banks, leading to fraudulent loans and misappropriation of funds. The complainant asserts a wrongful loss of Rs 34,615 crore to the consortium banks.

Karpoori ji gave strength to poor, downtrodden people of Bihar: Lalu

ASHISH SINHA
NEW DELHI

Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) President Lalu Prasad Yadav on Wednesday said that former Bihar Chief Minister Karpoori Thakur gave strength to the poor, downtrodden people of the state.

"Karpoori ji gave strength to the poor, downtrodden people of the state. Those who were not able to raise their voice against the feudalists, Karpoori ji gave strength to such people," RJD chief addressed the Karpoori Thakur Jayanti Program on Wednesday.

Earlier in the day, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar highlighted his relentless efforts for the highest civilian award for his political mentor.

"Jan Nayak Karpoori Thakur has been conferred with 'Bharat Ratna'. We had



been demanding 'Bharat Ratna' for him since 2007 till 2023 from every government including the previous Congress government and the present government But they had not done so. Now, they gave him a 'Bharat Ratna'. I congratulate the PM and Central government for accepting our demand," Nitish Kumar said.

He further said that Karpoori Thakur "never tried to promote" any of his fam-

ily members since he drew inspiration from late Karpoori Thakur who was known for strong moral values in public life.

"It was also Karpoori Thakur who inspired our commitment to the cause of Other Backward Classes and Extremely Backward Classes," he added.

Rashtrapati Bhavan on Tuesday announced that the President is pleased to award Bharat Ratna on Karpoori Thakur (posthumously).

This prestigious award is a tribute to Karpoori Thakur's lifelong dedication to the upliftment of the underprivileged sections of society and his relentless fight for social justice.

Karpoori Thakur was born in 1924 in one of the most backward sections of society, the Nai Samaj.

SUPERTECH CHIEF RK ARORA'S BAIL PLEA REJECTED BY PATIALA COURT

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

On Wednesday, the Patiala House Court in Delhi rejected the bail request of RK Arora, Chairman and Promoter of Supertech, in a money laundering case. Additional Sessions Judge (ASJ) Devender Kumar Janjala dismissed the bail plea of Arora. He sought regular bail in the matter. He was arrested on June 27, 2023. A detailed order on the bail is awaited. The counsel representing the Directorate of Enforce-

ment (ED) opposed his bail. Earlier, the court, on January 16, 2024, granted interim bail for 30 days to Supertech's chairman and promoter, RK Arora, on medical and health grounds. Arora had moved for interim bail, citing health grounds that he had lost 10 kg in custody. Earlier, the trial court took cognizance of the prosecution complaint (chargesheet) filed by the ED against him and others and also issued summons to all accused named in the chargesheet and firms through their representatives.

ED's Special Public Prosecutors Naveen Kumar Matta, Manish Jain and Mohd Faizan had appeared in the matter before the court. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had filed a prosecution complaint (chargesheet) against Supertech's Chairman, RK Arora, in connection with a money laundering case in Delhi's Patiala House Court. Arora was arrested on June 27 under the criminal sections of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act (PMLA). Earlier, ED apprised the court that 23 FIRs were registered

by the Economic Offences Wing (EOW), Delhi Police, Haryana Police and UP Police against Supertech Limited and its group companies under Section 120B (criminal conspiracy) read with 406 (criminal breach of trust)/420 (cheating)/467/471 of the IPC having allegations of cheating at least 670 home buyers for an amount of Rs 164 crore. ED also alleged that the amount collected by Supertech Ltd. was diverted to their group companies for the purchase of properties, with the company with land having much lesser value.

HC NOTICE TO CENTRE ON PLEA CHALLENGING COMMERCIAL OPS AT HINDON AIRFORCE STATION

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court on Wednesday issued notice to the Central Government on a plea of Delhi International Airport Limited (DIAL) challenging the continuation of commercial operations at Hindon Air Force Station.

Justice Subramonium Prasad issued notice to the Central Government and others and directed them to file a reply.

The matter has been listed on March 7 for further hearing.

The high court noted the submissions of the petitioner, DIAL, that permitting regular commercial operations at

Hindon Air Force Station will affect the petitioner.

The petitioner DIAL moved a petition through Advocate Milanka Chaudhary, challenging a decision of October 31 last year of the Ministry of Civil Aviation to allow the Airports Authority of India to commence scheduled commercial flight operations at the Indian Air Force Station situated in Hindon, Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh.

DIAL has also challenged the note on April 17 last year, wherein the Airport Authority of India (AAI) has proposed the cancellation of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) dated November 10, 2017 entered into between the

petitioner, Ministry and Authority, wherein the petitioner consented to use of the Hindon Airforce Station for the limited purpose and limited time of operating certain specific flights falling under the Regional Air Connectivity Scheme (RCS) only as an interim and stop-gap arrangement while the upgradation at IGIA was underway.

The petitioner also sought quashing of the communication dated October 31, last year, issued by Authority inviting various airline operators to increase flight operations and file their respective flight schedule for availing slots at the Hindon Air Force Station.

DEFENCE MINISTRY SECURES DEAL FOR 14 COAST GUARD VESSELS

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

The Defense Ministry inked a deal with Mazagon Dock Shipbuilders Ltd (MDL) in Mumbai on Wednesday to procure 14 Fast Patrol Vessels (FPVs) for the Indian Coast Guard (ICG). As per an official release from the Ministry of Defence, "The value of the contract is Rs 1070.47 crore. These multi-role FPVs will be indigenously designed, developed and manufactured by MDL under the Buy (Indian-IDDMM) Category and will be delivered in a total of 63 months.

MACRON'S VISIT: BILATERAL TIES TO GET AN IMPETUS

NIVEDITA MUKHERJEE
NEW DELHI

As President of France Emmanuel Macron lands in India to be the Chief Guest for the Republic Day celebrations, the visit will be a befitting culmination of a 10-month successive run of economic engagement and gains spanning April-to-January period of FY 2023-24 which saw the bilateral relationship cross significant milestones in the 25 years of their strategic partnership.

Building on this strong edifice, the visit is expected to provide an impetus to various domains of mutual interest, ranging from Defence co-operation to economic ties and from energy collaboration to space and nuclear partnerships. The discussions will likely pave the way for new agreements and deepen existing cooperation, reflecting the dynamic and evolving nature of the India-France strategic partnership. Prime Minister Narendra Modi

and President Macron are set to discuss Indo-Pacific cooperation, counterterrorism and Defence collaboration, bilateral trade and investment, clean energy and climate change global governance and multilateralism space cooperation and civil nuclear cooperation, according to Ajay Srivastava, Founder, Global Trade Research initiative (GTRI).

A study of economic engagements between April to January of FY24 by the Business Guardian saw an upswing in several areas of the bilateral commercial ties. France was among the top three importers of India's aircrafts and spacecrafts during April-November 2023-24 in India's total global exports of the product. The Vibrant Gujarat Roadshow in Paris held on 31 October, 2023, saw participation of 80 high-profile delegations demonstrating the immense potential of collaboration between the state Government and France.

In November, 2023, Chrysoula



Zacharopoulou, French Minister of State for Development, Francophonie and International Partnerships, announced the opening of two new branches of the Alliance française in Udaipur and Bhubaneswar.

In January 2024, the 'Green Indian Financial System (GIFS)' Initiative, founded by SIDBI, Shakti Sustainable Energy Foundation (SSEF) and French Development Agency (AFD), came together to bring MSMEs and stakeholders on a common platform to discuss how the financial system and the MSMEs can find a common ground to ensure a resilient and

low-carbon transition in India. A high priority pillar of the Modi-Macron talks -- post the French President's arrival in India -- is expected to be bilateral trade and investment, especially at a time when France, as India's 8th largest trading partner, is looking to strengthen trade and investment ties. France also has a key stake in India's current negotiations on a free trade agreement with European Union which will also further expand the two-way relationship. Market access, intellectual property rights, investment facilitation are likely top priorities in this discussion. Over 1,000 French companies operate in India across various sectors like manufacturing, services, and technology, while more than 200 Indian companies are established in France. Bilateral trade has expanded in 2023 to reach USD 19.2 billion with India's merchandise exports including diesel worth USD 707.9 million), ATF worth USD 405 million, turbojets worth

USD 496 million, apparels worth 850 million, footwear worth USD 157 million, smartphones worth USD 248 million, gold jewellery worth 160.5 million), airplane parts worth USD 158 million, medicines worth USD 447.8 million, organic chemicals worth USD 364.5 million. These constitute a, total of USD 7.6 billion, as per GTRI data. On the other hand, India imported items worth USD 6.2 billion from France, including planes, helicopters, and/or spacecraft worth USD 2.1 billion, LNG worth USD 400 million, navigation equipment of USD 102 million and turbojets and gas turbines to the tune of USD 442.2 million. In the domain of services, India exported financial, IT, maintenance and repair, travel, transport, and other business services worth USD 3.2 billion to France, while importing services such as other business services, transportation and insurance, amounting to USD 2.2 billion.

BSF SEIZES 8.39 KG GOLD WORTH RS 5.29 CRORE IN 48-HOUR OPERATION IN WEST BENGAL

TDG NETWORK
NADIA

Over the past two days, the Border Security Force (BSF) troops of the South Bengal Frontier conducted two significant gold seizures, totaling 8.39 kg and valued at Rs 5.29 cr, according to an official statement from the BSF.

The official statement mentions that the alert jawans of Border Outpost Vijaypur, 32

Battalion, BSF, conducted a well-planned operation based on solid information and foiled the smuggling of gold at the international border in Nadia district of West Bengal and arrested a smuggler with 19 gold biscuits and one gold brick.

On this achievement of the jawans, DIG AK Arya has expressed happiness

and said that within two days, BSF jawans have seized a total of 8.39 kg of gold worth Rs 5.29 crore and have also arrested 2 smugglers.

The arrest was made when the smuggler was trying to smuggle these gold biscuits and one gold brick from Bangladesh to India.

According to the information from the BSF, the weight of the seized gold is 3.56 kg

and the estimated value is approximately Rs 2.19 crore.

As per the information from the BSF spokesperson, the jawans of border outpost

Vijaypur received concrete information about gold smuggling on January 23 from reliable sources.

Revolutionising medical communication

Future is bright, thanks to the fusion of science, creativity, and a deep understanding of the medical fraternity’s needs.

OPINION

NARESH AHUJA AND
HARESH AHUJA



Effective communication between doctors, medical representatives, and patients is crucial for better outcomes in healthcare. The landscape is evolving, and innovative tools are at the forefront of this transformative journey. There is a need for product management teams to conceptualize, design, curate, and customize products that garner appreciation from doctors, fostering strong brand recall value for their pharmaceutical sponsors. What will set them apart is their deep understanding of the needs of the medical fraternity and their expertise in product design and development, offering cost-effective and timely solutions. One of the key contributions to this medical communication revolution is the fusion of science and creativity to produce world-class medical information. This information is not just confined to traditional channels but is ingeniously printed on

unique on-desk utility assets, creating an immersive way for doctors to educate their patients. With a comprehensive range of therapeutic areas, there is then an assurance that the content is relevant to doctors across various medical fields. But why is this innovation so important? The answer lies in the multifaceted benefits that these tools bring to the table. Firstly, they enable doctors to communicate more effectively with their patients. The on-desk utility assets serve as tangible educational tools, providing a new and engaging way for doctors to impart vital information. Secondly, patients are empowered to make informed decisions about their health and better manage their diseases. By having access to comprehensive and customizable content, patients become active participants in their healthcare journey. Lastly, these innovative tools provide pharmaceutical



cal sponsors with a means to present high utility value and create a lasting impression on their valued doctors. The combination of scientific input, brand recall, and tangible educational resources strengthens the bond between pharmaceutical companies and the medical community. The success of this approach lies in the never-ending ideas and a wide range of products that offer the right options to pharmaceutical clients. Furthermore, the inclusion of globally acclaimed medical content on all therapies ensures that the information is not only relevant but also adheres to international standards. The collaborative effort in medical communication is also leveraging advanced technologies to further enhance the overall healthcare experience. Artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning algorithms are being integrated into these innovative tools, providing personalized content recommendations based on individual patient profiles and medical history. This integration of technology not only streamlines

Doctors and medical representatives can stay updated on the latest medical advancements, treatment options, and best practices through these innovative platforms, contributing to the professional development of healthcare professionals.

the communication process but also ensures that the information provided is tailored to the specific needs of each patient. For instance, a diabetic patient may receive targeted educational content on managing their condition, while a cardiovascular patient might receive information on lifestyle modifications and medication adherence. Moreover, the use of data analytics enables medical representatives to track the effectiveness of communication strategies, allowing for continuous improvement and refinement. This data-driven approach helps pharmaceutical companies understand which content resonates most with doctors and patients, enabling them to fine-tune their communication strategies for maximum impact.

Another crucial aspect of this evolving landscape is the emphasis on compliance and ethical communication. With stringent regulations in the healthcare industry, it is imperative that all communication tools adhere to ethical standards and legal guidelines. The collaborative effort ensures that the content provided is accurate, evidence-based, and compliant with industry regulations, fostering trust between pharmaceutical companies, healthcare professionals, and patients. Furthermore, the ongoing evolution of these communication tools is fostering a culture of continuous learning within the medical community. Doctors and medical representatives can stay updated on the latest medical advancements, treatment options, and best practices

through these innovative platforms, contributing to the professional development of healthcare professionals. The journey towards a more connected and informed healthcare system is an ongoing process, driven by a commitment to improving patient outcomes and fostering meaningful connections within the medical community. In conclusion, the future of medical communication is bright, thanks to the fusion of science, creativity, and a deep understanding of the medical fraternity's needs. By providing innovative tools that bridge the gap between doctors, medical representatives, and patients, this collaborative effort is not only transforming healthcare but also enhancing the overall experience for all stakeholders involved. The journey towards a more connected and informed healthcare ecosystem has just begun, and the possibilities are limitless.

Nareesh Ahuja is Founder and CEO, SMS Scientific Products; Hareesh Ahuja is Co-Founder and Managing Director

The profound significance of Ram Mandir: A reflection on Ayodhya’s spiritual resurgence



MANJU SHARMA

In the sacred town of Ayodhya, where history intertwines with spirituality, the construction of the Ram Mandir stands as a testament to the deep-rooted sentiments of Hindus and the cultural fabric of India. The journey toward the realization of the Ram Mandir has been fraught with controversy, legal battles, and emotions that echo through the ages. For Hindus, Ayodhya holds a special place as the birthplace of Lord Rama, a revered deity whose life and teachings are embedded in the cultural consciousness of millions. The construction of the Ram Mandir signifies more than just the laying of bricks; it represents the revival of a cultural heritage and the fulfillment of a longstanding dream. The significance of the Ram Mandir extends beyond religious boundaries, encapsulating a sense of national identity for Indi-

ans. It's a symbol of unity, echoing the rich tapestry of India's pluralistic society. The diverse threads of beliefs come together, weaving a narrative that transcends temporal and spatial confines. To understand the importance of the Ram Mandir, one must delve into the historical layers that shroud Ayodhya. The site has witnessed epochs of change, from ancient civilizations to medieval empires, each leaving its imprint on the sacred landscape. The Ram Mandir, with its resplendent architecture, becomes a living chronicle of this history, bridging the past with the present. The emotional resonance of the Ram Mandir project echoes across generations, uniting people in a shared narrative of faith and heritage. It's not merely about the construction of a physical structure but the reclamation of a spiritual space that has endured centuries. The hymns of devotion, the tales of Lord Rama's valor, and the cultural ethos converge in the bricks and mortar of the Ram Mandir, creating a sanctuary for believers. For Hindus, the Ram Mandir is more than a religious edifice; it's a reflection of their collective consciousness. The journey toward its construction has been a pilgrimage of faith,



marked by unwavering devotion and an unyielding belief in the righteousness of the cause. It symbolizes the resilience of a community that has weathered storms, both metaphorical and literal, to see its cultural aspirations materialize. The construction of the Ram Mandir serves as a beacon of hope and inspiration. It's a reminder that cultural heritage is not static but evolves, adapting to the changing tides of time. The architectural marvel of the temple becomes a canvas, where the artistry

of the past meets the aspirations of the future. It's a living heritage, pulsating with the energy of devotion and the spirit of a resurgent Ayodhya. In the broader context of Indian society, the Ram Mandir is a symbol of cultural inclusivity. It signifies the coexistence of diverse belief systems, fostering an environment where pluralism thrives. The inclusive spirit of the Ram Mandir project is a testament to India's secular ethos, where the celebration of one's faith does not diminish the

respect for another's. The construction of the Ram Mandir also holds geopolitical implications, shaping the narrative of India's identity on the global stage. It sends a message of cultural assertion, asserting that India's heritage is not just a relic of the past but a living, breathing entity that continues to evolve. It positions Ayodhya as a spiritual hub, inviting the world to witness the confluence of tradition and modernity. In conclusion, the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya is a poignant chapter in In-

dia's cultural narrative. It transcends the boundaries of religion, resonating with the hearts of millions who see it as a symbol of cultural resurgence and national pride. The construction of the Ram Mandir is a testament to the indomitable spirit of a people who, against all odds, have reclaimed a sacred space that embodies the essence of their beliefs and aspirations. Manju Sharma is a lawyer by profession, daughter of a freedom fighter and a political analyst.

PERSPECTIVE ELECTIONS AHEAD

QUESTION MARK ON FUTURE OF I.N.D.I.A BLOC

Has the death knell of the I.N.D.I Alliance been sounded? Not that the alliance was in ship-shape even otherwise, but then on Wednesday, Mamata Banerjee shoved it towards a possible painful end by declaring that she would go it alone in West Bengal in the Lok Sabha elections. She thus publicly contradicted Congress' claim that it was discussing seat sharing with the Trinamool Congress (TMC). Alliance woes were aggravated by reports that Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann of the AAP too had decided to go it alone in Punjab, minus an alliance with the Congress. A while ago, there were media reports that Mamata Banerjee was more than ready to have an alliance with the Congress, possibly because she was worried about an erosion in her Muslim vote-bank. Anti-incumbency against the TMC, Bengal's ruling party, is a fact, because of allegations of misrule and corruption. Apparently, the alleged misrule has started affecting the TMC's Muslim voters as well. Along with this was the drift of the Muslim community in general towards the Congress, post the party's thumping win over the BJP in Karnataka, where the majority of Muslims, many of them by shifting from the JDS, voted for the Congress to ensure the BJP's defeat. In July, when the I.N.D.I.A bloc was formed, there was an air of optimism surrounding it. But then the optimism of July 2023 turned into gloom in December 2023, once the Assembly election results of the Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh were announced and Congress lost all three. Congress' importance in the I.N.D.I.A grouping fell faster than Delhi's falling mercury in winter. The question now is: has the possible fracture in Mamata Banerjee's Muslim vote bank got repaired post the Congress' loss in the Assembly elections in the three all-important states? Is she more confident of retaining her vote-bank, now that the Congress may no longer be seen as a potential winner? Has the shift of her Muslim vote-bank towards the Congress been stalled? Is that the reason why she finally decided to go it alone? If this is the case, the fight in Bengal will likely turn out to be bipolar in nature—a straight BJP vs TMC fight, with voters on either side not willing to let their votes get divided by voting for the I.N.D.I.A partners, Congress and the Left, who are in alliance in the state. This increases the possibility of the I.N.D.I.A bloc, or whatever remains of it, to flop in the state completely. The fundamental point is, for the regional parties it does not matter if they are in an alliance with the Congress or not in their respective states. What matters to them is protecting their own turf and to reach the Lok Sabha with as many seats as possible. At best, the Congress can contribute a handful of votes to their kitty, because it is weak in their states. The regional parties' future does not depend on the I.N.D.I.A bloc's performance in the Lok Sabha elections. It is the Congress' future trajectory that depends on the I.N.D.I.A bloc. Hence, in all the states where the regional parties are strong, the Congress is at best a supplicant, and not a party that can decide on how many seats it can fight.

Mamata Banerjee's TMC has lost its national party status, so she wants to get enough votes elsewhere to regain that status. However, she can live with her party being a regional entity for some more time, but cannot afford to lose her home turf to the BJP. This factor will decide her next move on the I.N.D.I.A grouping. The situation is similar with the AAP, which is on a strong turf in Punjab. If it does not need Congress support to win any seats in the state, why will it share seats with the Congress? It will win those seats on its own. It is only in Delhi that both AAP and Congress may need each other's votes to fight the BJP. But an alliance in Delhi does not necessarily mean an automatic vote transfer between the two parties, because elections are more about chemistry than arithmetic. Hence, it is in Congress' interest to have the I.N.D.I Alliance, especially in swing and low-margin seats, where, faced with the BJP, a few thousand votes from its allies can make a difference between winning and losing. Given that in states where the allies are strong, the Congress will never be handed as many seats as it wants, what will eventually matter for the party is the direct fight it will have with the BJP in around 200-odd seats. Therefore, it would make sense for the party to concentrate on these seats. Whether or not Rahul Gandhi's latest yatra has been designed with this on mind, remains to be seen. As for the future of the I.N.D.I.A grouping, right now the alliance seems to be all about optics—to give the appearance of a united front mighty enough to take on the BJP. But it is uncertain if it will actually reach a stage where seat sharing is finalized by the parties.. JOYEETA BASU

LET'S UNDERSTAND OUR REPUBLIC

On the 26th day in January of 1950, which is one of the memorable days in Indian history, the Constitution of India came into force and India became a truly sovereign state.

The word Republic is used to denote that a country in which the supreme power is held by the people or their elected representatives (politicians) or by an elected or nominated President not by a permanent head like the King or queen of Britain. India is one of the important republican countries of the

movement and the succeeding wars. On the Republic Day, the independence pledge of nationalists is renewed. The Republic Day is without speeches. It is the only ceremony in which rhetoric is in the background and visuals are given priority. This national festival at Delhi and the state capitals revolves



Rare pics from early years of the R-Day celebrations

world. In India, the Republic Day is celebrated every year on 26th January with great pomp and pageant.

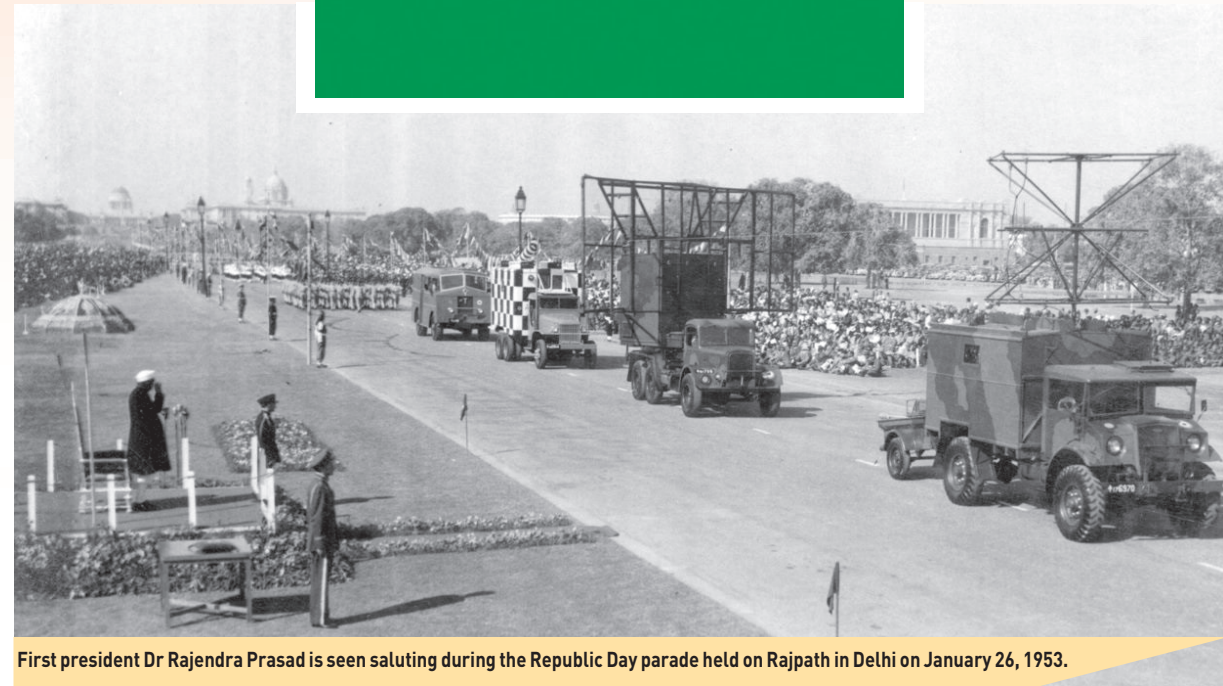
The Republic Day is enthusiastically observed by citizens as one of the important national festivals of India. This national festival is also celebrated all over the country and all the administrative units like the capital cities, district headquarters, sub-divisions, panchayats and educational institutions with a lot of fervor.

WHY 26TH JANUARY?

On the 26th day in January of 1950, which is one of the memorable days in Indian history, the constitution of India came into force and India became a truly sovereign state. On that day, the people of India finally realized the dream of Mahatma Gandhi and the numerous freedom fighters those who fought for and sacrificed their lives for the independence of our motherland. The Republic Day is a national holiday of India to mark the adoption of the constitution of India and the transition of India from the British dominion to a republic on 26th January, 1950. It is always a solemn reminder of the sacrifice of the martyrs who dedicated their lives for the freedom

around the parade in which all the Defence, N.C.C., school children and cultural groups participate followed by a display of tableaux and folk dances.

SALIENT FEATURES OF THE CONSTITU-



First president Dr Rajendra Prasad is seen saluting during the Republic Day parade held on Rajpath in Delhi on January 26, 1953.

TION

After a grand struggle, India achieved her long-cherished freedom on 15th August, 1947 from the British rule. The Independence Day, August 15th is celebrated to commemorate the birth of the world's biggest democracy as a great national

festival. India was governed by a constitution, which was framed by the Britishers previously. It was the Lahore session of the Indian National Congress at midnight of 31st December, 1929, the congress President Jawaharlal Nehru announced the congress policy that Com-

Swaraj'. The resolution on Purna Swaraj was passed by the congress on the last day of the year 1929. The tricolour National flag, signifying independence, was unfurled by the Congress President Jawaharlal Nehru as the thunderous shouts of 'Inquilab Zindabad' or long

unceasingly strive for the establishment of a Sovereign, Democratic Republic of India.

Although, India achieved its independence on August 15, 1947, it did not have a permanent constitution. A Constituent Assembly had been entrusted with the task of

plete Independence was the goal of India.

It was to be 'Complete freedom from British domination and imperialism'. In that historic session, Mahatma Gandhi also moved his famous resolution on 'Purna

live the resolution greeted the occasion from countless throats. The 26 January, 1930 was initially observed by nationalists as the day of Purna Swaraj or Complete Independence.

The nationalists also took the independence pledge on that memorable day. The pledge declared 'freedom as the inalienable right of the Indian people' and criticized the foreign Government for ruling India. Arising out of Gandhi's serious thought, a pledge had been taken that every year on January 26, the Republic Day would be celebrated and that the people would

framing a new constitution for free India.

On August 29, 1947, the Drafting Committee was appointed to draft a permanent Constitution with Dr. B.R. Ambedkar as the Chairman. A Draft constitution was prepared by the Committee and submitted to the Assembly on November 4, 1947. The Assembly met, in session open to public, for 166 days, spread over a period of 2 years, 11 months and 18 days before adopting the Constitution. After many deliberations and some modifications, the 308 members of the Assembly signed two handwritten copies of the document (one each in Hindi and English) on January 24, 1950. Two days later, the Constitution of India became the law of all the Indian lands. The constitution of India came into effect only on 26th January, 1950.

Following the date January 26, 1950, Rajendra Prasad was elected as the President of India. This was, in fact, a deliberate act signing the Constitution on 26th January, to mark and respect the freedom fighters who wanted 26th January as India's initial Independence Day.

Hence, India finally declared herself as a Republic State on 26th January, 1950.

CELEBRATION OF THE REPUBLIC DAY AT THE NATIONAL CAPITAL

To mark the importance of the occasion, every year a grand parade is held in the capital New Delhi, from the Raisina hill near the Rashtrapati Bhavan (President's Palace), along the Kartavya Path, past India Gate and on the Historic Red Fort.

The different regiments of the Army, the Navy and the Air-force participate in the parade with their finery and

official decorations even the horses of the cavalry are attractively caparisoned to suit the occasion.

The President takes salute at an impressive parade. Then, he comes forward to award the medals of bravery to the people from the armed forces for their exceptional courage in the fields and also the civilians, who have distinguished themselves by their different acts of valour in different situations. The parade is followed by a spectacular tableau from different states of the country.

The Parade is also an occasion for the display of India's military strength and a number of arms, ammunitions, tanks and fighter aircrafts, some of them indigenously developed, are paraded. The latest war weapons move slowly by the saluting base. The band plays martial tunes.

NATIONAL IDENTITY ELEMENTS

National Song:	Vande Mataram,
Currency Symbol:	₹
National Anthem:	Jana-Gana-Mana,
The National Flag:	Tricolor
National Bird:	Peacock
National Animal:	Tiger



Glimpses of Full Dress Rehearsal of Republic Day Parade.

DELHI HIGH COURT UPHOLDS PROHIBITION OF MARRIAGE BETWEEN ‘SAPINDAS’, SAYS INCESTUOUS RELATIONS MAY GAIN LEGITIMACY IF PARTNER’S CHOICE LEFT UNREGULATED

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case observed and has upheld the validity of Section 5(v) of the Hindu Marriage Act which states that no marriage can be solemnized between parties who are related to each other as “sapindas”, unless it is sanctioned by usage or custom governing them. The Division bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora in the case observed and has stated that if the choice of a partner

in a marriage is left unregulated, incestuous relationship may gain legitimacy.

In the Present case, the court was hearing the PIL moved by a woman seeking striking down of the provision. Thus, she was aggrieved by the order of Family Court declaring the marriage between her and her distant cousin as null and void as per the said provision. Last year, the coordinate bench dismissed her appeal against the same in October.

The bench stated that the woman failed to set out any grounds for

The Division bench comprising of Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora in the case observed and has stated that if the choice of a partner in a marriage is left unregulated, incestuous relationship may gain legitimacy.

challenging the prohibition encapsulated in the impugned provision and also failed to plead any legal grounds for challenging the restriction imposed therein.

The court observed that the petitioner neither identifies the basis of the said restriction imposed by the State and nor enlists any co-

gent legal ground for challenging the said impugned Section.

The court in the case observed and has refused to accept the woman's contention that the impugned section is violative of Article 14 of the Constitution of India as the exception is only for marriages between persons on the basis

of custom having force of law, which requires stringent proof and its existence is to be adjudicated upon by Court of law.

Therefore, the petitioner was unable to prove existence of custom in the facts of her case and has relied upon consent of parents which cannot take the place of custom.

Further, the said court find no merits in the challenge to Section 5(v) of the HMA Act in the present writ petition. Adding to it, the court stated that this court is of the considered opinion that no tenable grounds in law for challenging the said impugned provision

have been placed before this Court during arguments or pleaded in the petition. The bench stated that the woman will be at liberty to initiate appropriate legal proceedings against her former husband before an appropriate forum in accordance with law.

Accordingly, the court dismissed the PIL.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Tushar Kumar, Mr. Junaid Qureshi, Ms. Dishani Guha, Ms. Varnika Bajaj and Mr. Rishub Kapoor appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Advocates Mr. Apoorv Kurup, CGSC, R-1/UOI with Mr. Akhil Hasija represented the respondent.

Delhi High Court Granted Divorce To Man From ‘Non Adjusting Wife’ On Grounds Of Cruelty

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case X v. Y observed and has granted divorce to a man on the grounds of cruelty by his wife.

The court in the case observed that she had a ‘non-adjusting attitude’ and no maturity to sort out the differences with him without his public humiliation due to which he suffered mental cruelty.

The Division bench comprising of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Neena Bansal Krishna in the case observed and has stated that no fruitful purpose would be served in flogging a dead horse and granted divorce to the husband. The court stated that the evidence on record makes it abundantly evident that the discord between the parties was not a mere normal wear and the tear of marriage but when viewed comprehensively, were necessarily the acts of cruelty which being towards the appellant making their continuation in matrimonial relationship an act of perpetuation of cruelty. The bench in the case observed and has set aside the order of Family Court, wherein the court dismissed the petition filed by the husband seeking a divorce from the wife as stated under Sections 13(1)(ia) and 13(1)(ib) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955. In the present case, the parties got married in 2001 and the two girls were born from their wedlock. Thus, the divorce petition was filed in the year 2017. The court while allowing the appeal of husband's stated that the parties had been in a matrimonial relationship for a long period, their married life was not blissful, was tumultuous and they were not able to forge any love, affection, and trust between them. The bench stated

that the wife, from her conduct, demonstrated that she had been persistent and insistent on making allegations against the husband without any basis.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that restoring to legal remedies cannot be termed as an act of cruelty, however, invoking of the jurisdiction of legal authorities has to be bona fide and with some basis. Thus, the respondent has not been able

The bench in the case observed and has set aside the order of Family Court, wherein the court dismissed the petition filed by the husband seeking a divorce from the wife as stated under Sections 13(1)(ia) and 13(1)(ib) of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1955.

to prove or justify the grounds of either alleged dowry harassment or of domestic violence in the present case.

The counsel, Advocate Ms. Raavi Birbal appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Advocate Mr. Prateek Mehta, Advocate Mr. Anshul Luthra and Advocate Mr. Vikas represented the respondent.

Supreme Court Granted Leave In Nagaland’s Petition Against Kerala’s Regulations On Lotteries From Other States

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Supreme Court in the case The State of Nagaland and Ors. v. The State of Kerala and Ors., observed and has granted leave in a Special Leave Petition filed by the State of Nagaland challenging the order of Kerala High Court, wherein the court upheld the power of the State Government to regulate lotteries from other states. The bench comprising

ing of Justice Hrishikesh Roy and Justice Prashant Kumar Mishra in the case observed and has granted leave.

The court observed during the hearing that the said matter would eventually have to go to the Hearing List.

The bench headed by Justice Roy remarked that for the similar matters, the said court have to go

into...there is a whole gamut of things.

Therefore, on the petitioners’ counsel apprising

the court that Solicitor General Tushar Mehta, who had been appearing for Nagaland, was on his legs before the Constitution Bench, thus, an accommodation was granted. The court observed that the petition moved assails a judgement dated

The court observed during the hearing that the said matter would eventually have to go to the Hearing List.

The bench headed by Justice Roy

remarked that for the similar matters, the said court have to go into...

there is a whole gamut of things.

17.05.2021 of the Kerala High Court, wherein the court upheld amendments brought to Kerala Paper Lotteries (Regulation) Rules in 2018

(Rules) to regulate marketing and sale of lotteries organized by other States in their own State. The court in the case observed and has issued notice

in 2022. Thus, a gist of earlier proceedings can be accessed here. The counsel, Advocates Rishi Agrawala, Parminder Singh, S. Lakshmi Iyer, Shraavan Niranjani, and Prathama Vir Singh; AORs EC Agrawala and Rohini Musa appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Senior Advocate Pallav Shishoddia; AOR CK Sasi; Advocate Meena K Poullose represented the respondent.

KERALA HIGH COURT QUASHED PREVENTIVE DETENTION OF 21-YR-OLD, APPOINTS ADVOCATE AS HIS ‘MENTOR’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Kerala High Court in the case Sreejith R v State of Kerala observed and has released a 21-year old boy, who was implicated in seven crimes for allegedly causing obstruction to police officer in performing official duties and under the NDPS Act, from detention under the Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 2007.

The Division bench comprising of Justice A. Muhamed Mustaque and Justice Shoba Annamma Eapen also appointed an Advocate as his ‘Mentor’, while considering the age of detention.

The 21-year-old boy and his parents had appeared before the Court.

The court in the case observed and has set aside the impugned order. As since the detenu is before us, he has been set at free

from this Court forthwith.

The court while taking note of the age of the detenu who is present before us, we appoint, Adv. Leo Lukose as the Mentor for the detenu.

In the present case, the petitioner, father of a 21-year-old detenu has approached the Court

against the detention of his son.

The court in the case observed and has noted that the detenu has disclosed the details of activities committed by him and his friends to a Civil Police Officer. Thus, it has been alleged by the father that the police officer has implicated his son for various crimes.

The court in the case found that the alleged offences cannot be classified as offences having an impact on public order. It has also been stated before the court that the detenu can pay fine for the offence registered under

The court in the case observed and has noted that the detenu has disclosed the details of activities committed by him and his friends to a Civil Police Officer. Thus, it has been alleged by the father that the police officer has implicated his son for various crimes.

the NDPS Act.

Further, the court stated that if those crimes were excluded, the other alleged crimes were of the year 2021 and 2022 and that there was a long delay between the last prejudicial activity and the detention order.

The bench stated that if those crimes are excluded, there will be a long delay in proceeding against the detenu under the Kerala Anti-Social Activities (Prevention) Act, 2007 (for short, KAA(P) Act) as all other crimes were occurred between the years 2021 and 2022.

Therefore, the said court

is of the view that the live link between the last prejudicial activity has been snapped for the purpose of KAA(P) Act and the detenu has to be set at liberty.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case observed and has directed the detenu to be set at liberty who appeared before the Court. The said order was also communicated to the jail authorities.

The counsel, Advocate K. M. Muhammed Husain appeared for the Petitioner.

The counsel, Public Prosecutor K A Anas represented the respondent.

DELHI HIGH COURT ORDERED SUSPENSION OF GOOGLE FORMS UNAUTHORIZEDLY INVITING PUBLIC TO APPLY FOR ‘STARBUCKS’ FRANCHISE

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Delhi High Court in the case Starbucks Corporation and Anr. v. National Internet Exchange of India and Ors. observed and has directed the Google to suspend URLs of various Google Forms inviting general public to apply for ‘Starbucks Franchise’. The Starbucks does not work on a franchise model in India.

The bench headed by Justice Anish Dayal in the case observed and has stated that Starbucks, the multinational chain of coffeehouses, will be at liberty to file an affidavit listing out other similar URLs of Google Forms after which Google may suspend the same.

The court stated that the defendant No. 4 i.e., the Google for reason whatsoever, has a reservation to any particular URL, they

The bench headed by Justice Anish Dayal in the case observed and has stated that Starbucks, the multinational chain of coffeehouses, will be at liberty to file an affidavit listing out other similar URLs of Google Forms after which Google may suspend the same.

will be at liberty to respond to the plaintiffs in that regard and who will turn will be at liberty to approach

this Court for further adjudication and relief.

The bench of Justice Dayal was dealing with the suit

filed by Starbucks against the unknown ‘john doe’ entities holding themselves out to be its franchisees, without any authorisation in that regard.

The court in the case observed and has passed an interim injunction in favour of Starbucks.

Further, an application was also filed seeking to restrain various imposters impersonating as ‘Starbucks Franchise’.

The court stated that the

importers were doing so through Google Forms which had the heading as ‘StarBucks franchise’ and states that one can apply on the form to get more information about taking franchise of Starbucks.

The court while considering the facts and circumstances of the case stated that the plaintiff would be entitled to the relief they seek in this application, on account of not only that these Google Forms are

being posted by imposters in order to elicit information relating to Starbucks franchise as the same does not exist in India as well as seeking private information and data from the general public, which cannot be countenanced.

The counsel, Advocate Ms. Rima Majumdar and Advocate Ms. Shilpi Sinha appeared for the Plaintiff.

The counsel, Ms. Chhavi Arora, Adv. for D-1; Mr. Vaibhav Gaggar, SPC with

Mr. Kartikeya Asthana, GP with Mrs. Monika Lakhnawal Gaggar, Ms. Vasudata, Ms. Shefali Munde and Mr. Dhruv Mehta, Adv. for D-2; Mr. Harish Vaidyanathan Shankar, CGSC, Mr. Srish Kumar Mishra, Mr. Alexander Mathai Paikaday and Mr. Krishnan V., Adv. for MEITY & DOT. Mr. Neel Mason, Mr. Vihan Dang, Mr. Ujjawal Bhargava and Ms. Pragya Jain, Adv. for D-4 represented the defendants.

TOP OF THE DAY

PAK COMMISSION TO HOLD MOCK TEST BEFORE POLLS

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s top electoral watchdog will conduct a mock test of its online system on Friday to transmit and tabulate the results of the February 8 general elections, a media report said on Wednesday. The Election Commission of Pakistan (ECP) has prepared the Election Management System (EMS) app for the transmission of results from each polling station to a centralised system where tabulation of all results would be completed. Through a letter addressed to all four provincial election commissioners, the ECP issued standard operating procedures and guidelines to hold a mock exercise of EMS on January 26, the Dawn newspaper reported.

THIRTY-NINE KILLED IN BUILDING FIRE IN CHINA

BEIJING/NANCHANG: At least 39 people were killed in a building fire in east China’s Jiangxi province on Wednesday, the local government said. The fire broke out at approximately 3 pm from a street shop in the Yushui district of Xinyu, the local fire response emergency headquarters was quoted as saying by the state-run Xinhua news agency. Rescue efforts have ended, it said.

SRI LANKAN PARLIAMENT APPROVES CONTROVERSIAL ONLINE SAFETY BILL

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan Parliament on Wednesday approved with amendments the controversial Online Safety Bill that seeks to regulate online content amid criticism from the opposition that claimed it will stifle freedom of speech. As many as 108 parliamentarians voted for it while 62 voted against the bill that was passed after a two-day debate. The new legislation would lead to the establishment of the Online Safety Commission which is empowered to make punitive rulings on offenses.

DEATH TOLL IN CHINA LANDSLIDE RISES TO 34

BEIJING: The death toll from a landslide in a remote, mountainous part of southwestern China rose to 34 on Wednesday, while 10 people remained missing, Chinese state media reported. The disaster struck early Monday in the village of Liangshui in the north-eastern part of Yunnan province. Search and rescue operations continued amid freezing temperatures and falling snow. More than 1,000 rescuers were working at the site with the help of excavators, drones and rescue dogs, the Ministry of Emergency Management said Tuesday.

PAKISTAN: IMRAN KHAN MOVES ISLAMABAD HC FOR BAIL IN TOSHAKHANA, AL-QADIR CASES

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan moved to the Islamabad High Court seeking bail in the Toshakhana and the Al-Qadir Trust cases, ARY News reported on Tuesday.

The Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) founder, through his counsel, filed two separate pleas against an accountability court verdict that dismissed his post-arrest bail in both cases.

In the pleas, Khan has requested the Islamabad HC to set aside the accountability court’s decision and grant him bail. It was pleaded in the pleas that the accountability court had rejected bail after the arrest pleas of the PTI founder in both cases, ARY News reported.

The PTI founder has maintained that the cases against him aimed at “political victimisation” and are based on “mala fide intentions”.

Earlier on January 9, the Accountability Court in Islamabad rejected the bail



Former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan.

applications of Imran Khan in Toshakhana and the 190 million-pound Al-Qadir Trust cases.

Judge Muhammad Bashir, presiding over the Toshakhana and 190-million-pound scandal case references, announced the verdict on petitions filed by deposed prime minister, ARY News reported.

EX-AMBASSADOR REJECTS MENTION OF ‘CONSPIRACY, THREAT’

Pakistan’s former ambassador to the US and a key wit-

ness has rejected the mention of the words “conspiracy” or “threat” in the secret document at the centre of controversy in the cipher case.

Involving jailed former prime minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who also is a senior leader from his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), the cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable -- the cipher -- that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022.

Naming the US, Khan had

claimed that it was ‘evidence’ of an “international conspiracy” to topple his government. Khan and Qureshi, accused of mishandling it for political purposes, were indicted in December 2023 and both have pleaded not guilty.

During a hearing on Tuesday at the Adiala Jail in Rawalpindi, former Ambassador Asad Majeed gave a first hand account to the special court Judge Abual Hasnat Zulqarnain about his meeting with a top US government official in March 2022, The News newspaper reported on Wednesday.

Majeed was the ambassador of Pakistan to the United States from January 2019 to March 2022.

Bringing out details about the meeting in public domain for the first time, Majeed said, on March 7, 2022, Assistant Secretary of the US Department of State for South and Central Asian Affairs Donald Lu was invited to a working lunch, which was a pre-arranged meeting hosted at Pakistan House in Washington.

EX-SECRETARY’S STATEMENT RECORDED

Earlier, Pakistan’s former foreign secretary Sohail Mahmood said that the copy of the controversial cipher had not been returned to the foreign ministry until his retirement.

He was recording his statement on Monday in the cipher case involving jailed former Prime Minister Imran Khan and former foreign minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi, who also is a senior leader from his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI).

The cipher case pertains to a piece of paper, purported to be a diplomatic cable -- the cipher -- that Khan had waved at a public rally on March 27, 2022, and naming the US, had claimed that it was ‘evidence’ of an “international conspiracy” to topple his government.

Khan and Qureshi, accused of mishandling it for political purposes, were indicted in December 2023 and both have pleaded not guilty.

Militants attack check post in Pakistan’s Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, three killed

AGENCIES
PESHAWAR



Unidentified militants attacked a security check post in Pakistan’s restive Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, killing at least three persons and injuring two, police said.

The attack took place on Tuesday. The militants attacked the Aba Shaheed check post in the Dikhan district bordering South Waziristan.

Two labourers and one security personnel were killed in the attack, police said, adding that the presence of militants was spotted through thermal vision cameras.

The dead bodies were found during a search operation on Wednesday. The two labourers injured have been shifted to Dera district hospital, police said.

No group immediately claimed responsibility for the attack. Pakistan has seen a resurgence of attacks by armed groups since 2022 when a ceasefire between the outlawed group Pakistan Taliban (TTP) and the government broke down.

More than 300 attacks have hit Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province in 2023 alone, according to official data, with a vast majority of them claimed by the TTP, which was founded in 2007.

SAUDI ARABIA PREPARES TO OPEN FIRST ALCOHOL STORE FOR DIPLOMATS



A view of a street in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia. (File Photo)

AGENCIES
RIYADH

Saudi Arabia is preparing to open its first alcohol store in the capital Riyadh which will serve exclusively non-Muslim diplomats, a source familiar with the plans and a document showed on Wednesday.

Customers will have to register via a mobile app, get a clearance code from the foreign ministry, and respect monthly quotas with their purchases, the document said.

The move is a milestone in the kingdom’s efforts, led by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, to open the ultra-conservative Muslim country for tourism and business as drinking alcohol is forbidden in Islam.

It is also part of wider plans known as Vision 2030 to build a post-oil economy.

The new store is located in Riyadh’s Diplomatic Quarter, a neighbourhood where embassies and diplomats reside and will be “strictly restricted” to non-Muslims, the document said.

It was unclear if other non-Muslim expatriates will have access to the store. Millions of expatriates live in Saudi Arabia but most of them are Muslim workers from Asia and Egypt.

A source familiar with the plans said the store is expected to open in the coming weeks.

Saudi Arabia has strict laws against drinking alcohol which can be punishable by hundreds of lashes, deportation, fines,

or imprisonment and expatriates also face deportation. As part of the reforms, whipping has largely been replaced by jail sentences.

Alcohol has been available only through diplomatic mail or on the black market.

The Saudi government did not respond to a request for comment.

State-controlled media reported this week that the government was imposing new restrictions on alcohol imports within the diplomatic consignments, which may boost demand for the new store.

The new regulation will curb imports to counter “improper exchange of special goods and alcoholic beverages received by the embassies of non-Muslim countries inside Saudi Arabia”, Arab News daily reported on Sunday.

Saudi Arabia, which was relatively closed off for decades, has in recent years relaxed strict social codes, such as segregating men and women in public places and requiring women to wear all-covering black robes, or abayas.

Prince Mohammed’s tightening grip on power has been accompanied by changes which included opening the country for non-religious tourism, concerts and allowing women to drive, as well as a crackdown on dissent and political rivals.

Vision 2030 also includes developing local industries and logistics hubs, and aims at adding hundreds of thousands of jobs for Saudi nationals.

Launch poll campaign or lose tickets to contest elections, Imran Khan warns party candidates

AGENCIES
ISLAMABAD

Pakistan’s jailed former prime minister Imran Khan has warned his party candidates to launch their poll campaigns peacefully, failing which their tickets to contest the February 8 elections will be cancelled, according to a media report on Wednesday.

The 71-year-old Pakistan Tehreek-

e-Insaf (PTI) founder made the statement while talking to reporters at Adiala jail in Rawalpindi on Tuesday after the hearing of the cipher case, the Geo News reported.

PTI-backed candidates are struggling to launch their election campaign amid a crackdown on the party supporters.

Asking his party’s candidates to take out “massive rallies” and orga-

nise public gatherings to show the strength of the PTI in their constituencies, Khan warned that he would replace “inactive” nominees with “suitable candidates” if the party electioneering did not pick up steam by Sunday.

Khan, who is facing multiple cases, has been incarcerated at high-security Adiala Jail since August last year. His party’s electoral ‘bat’ symbol — a

major voter driving force was taken away this month. Furthermore, the party — PTI-Nazriati — with which it sought an alliance also backtracked from its commitment.

However, the PTI has vowed not to boycott the polls and run without its iconic electoral symbol. Since the ‘bat’ symbol has been taken away, all its candidates will be running with different signs.

NORTH KOREA APPEARS TO DEMOLISH ‘REUNIFICATION ARCH’ AS KIM JONG UN TURNS AGAINST TIES WITH SOUTH

AGENCIES
SEOUL (SOUTH KOREA)

North Korea appears to have torn down a huge arch in its capital that symbolised reconciliation with South Korea, a week after leader Kim Jong Un dismissed decades of hopes for peaceful reunification with the war-divided peninsula’s south, according to satellite photos analysed by a news agency on Wednesday.

South Korea’s military also said Wednesday that North Korea fired several cruise missiles into waters off its western coast. North Korean leader Kim Jong Un last week described the Pyongyang monument as an “eyesore” and called for its removal while declaring that the North was abandoning longstanding goals of a peaceful unification with South Korea and ordered a rewriting of the North’s constitution to define the South as its most hostile foreign adversary.

Satellite images from Planet Labs PBC appeared to show the destruction of Pyongyang’s Monument to the Three Charters for National Reunification, also called the Arch of Reunification. An image Tuesday clearly showed the arch missing along a roadway.

Clouds and snow cover made it difficult to ascertain when North Korea tore down the monument, but it appeared to be within the last few days. NKNews, a website focused on North Korea, first reported on the satellite images.

The arch was a 30-meter (about 100-foot) tall structure that looked over a highway leading to the city of Kaesong near the border with South Korea.

The cruise missile launches were North Korea’s second known launch event of the year, following a Jan. 14 test-firing of the country’s first solid-fuel intermediate range ballistic missile, which reflected its efforts to advance its lineup of weapons targeting U.S. military bases in Japan and Guam.

South Korea’s Joint Chiefs of Staff said Wednesday that the U.S. and South Korean militaries were analyzing the latest launches. It did not immediately confirm the exact number of missiles fired or their specific flight details.

“Our military has increased surveillance and vigilance and is closely coordinating with the United States while monitoring for further signs and activity from North Korea,” the Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

Tensions on the Korean Peninsula have increased in recent months as Kim continues to accelerate his weapons development and issue provocative threats of nuclear conflict with the United States and its Asian allies.

The United States, South Korea and Japan have been expanding their combined military exercises in response to the North’s missile tests. Kim characterizes these drills as rehearsals for an invasion. In the latest tit-for-tat, North Korea said last week that it conducted a test of a purported nuclear-capable underwater attack drone in response to a combined naval exercise by the United States, South Korea and Japan, as it blamed its rivals for tensions in the region. Cruise missiles are among a broad range of weapons North Korea has been testing in recent years as it attempts to build a viable nuclear threat against the United States and its Asian allies.

DUBAI TO BENEFIT FROM RECORD 349 BUSINESS EVENT WINS

AGENCIES
ABU DHABI

Dubai further consolidated its status as a central hub for international business events in 2023, with the city winning a record 349 bids to host international conferences, congresses, meetings, and incentive travel programmes.

Driven by Dubai Business Events (DBE), the city’s official convention bureau, the wins reflected a robust 49 per cent increase in successful bids compared to 2022.

These events captured in 2023 are set to attract over 191,000 international delegates.

Under its business events and delegate boosting strategy, DBE brought an impressive citywide offering to the global market that resonated

with the core needs of the business events industry.

Positioning Dubai as the foremost destination for international business events and increasing appetite among associations and corporations to conduct meetings in the city, DBE worked closely with stakeholders across the public and private sectors to covert interest in confirmed events.

While some of these already took place within 2023, others are confirmed for coming years, joining wins from previous years, with Dubai’s strong appeal driving a pipeline of impactful events as far as 2029. Bidding activity and success have continued to accelerate since the global COVID-19 pandemic, with the number of bid wins in 2023 exceeding the previous

record of 295 bids registered in 2019.

The events secured for the city will be vital in driving trade, investment, and attracting global talent - all critical pillars to building a stronger, more productive, and diverse economy - in line with the Dubai Economic Agenda D33. Ahmed Al Khaja, CEO of Dubai Festivals and Retail Establishment, said, “Driven by the leadership and vision of His Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai, the city’s business events ecosystem continues to play a vital role in wider tourism and economic development, in line with the priorities of the Dubai Economic Agenda D33.

CHINA ASSURES PAKISTAN OF ITS SUPPORT TO DEFEND

AGENCIES
BEIJING

China has assured Islamabad of its support in defending its sovereignty and territorial integrity even while welcoming on Tuesday the restoration of diplomatic ties between Tehran and Islamabad after their recent air strikes against each other.

As China’s Foreign Minister Sun Weidong visited Pakistan on a mediation mission, a statement from Foreign Ministry on Monday said it is maintaining close contacts with Pakistan and Iran to “bridge their differences.”

China on January 18 offered to play a “constructive role” to ease tension between Pakistan and Iran following their missile strikes against each other and asked the two countries to “exercise restraint and calmness and avoid escalation.”

Earlier on January 18, Pakistan conducted “precision military strikes” against what it called “terrorist hideouts” in Iran’s Siestan-Balochistan province that killed 9 people. The attack was seen as retaliation to Ira-

nian missile and drone attacks on January 16 which targeted two bases of the Sunni Baloch militant group Jaish al-Adl in Pakistan’s unruly Balochistan province.

Commenting on China’s mediation efforts to dial down Iran-Pakistan tensions, Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin told a media briefing here on Tuesday that “China welcomes the good progress that Iran and Pakistan have made in repairing their ties and supports them in further enhancing mutual trust and deepening co-operation through friendly consultation.”

China and Pakistan are all-weather strategic cooperative partners, Sun was quoted as saying by the Chinese Foreign Ministry about his meeting with Pakistan’s President Arif Ali on Monday.

Sun is a former Ambassador to Pakistan and India both.

China appreciates Pakistan’s firm adherence to the one-China principle and “supports Pakistan in safeguarding its sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity,” as well as its unity, stability, development and prosperity, Sun told Alvi.

EARTH AND MOON FROM BEYOND



Although frequently photographed together, the earth and the moon was captured with this unusual perspective in late 2022 by the robotic Orion spacecraft of NASA's Artemis I mission as it looped around Earth's most massive satellite and looked back toward its home world. Since our Earth is about four times the diameter of the Moon, the satellite's seemingly large size was caused by the capsule being closer to the smaller body. Photo credit: NASA

TRUMP WINS NEW HAMPSHIRE PRIMARY AGAINST NIKKI HALEY

This puts Trump a step closer to securing nomination and getting a historic 2020 rematch with incumbent Prez Biden

AGENCIES
NEW HAMPSHIRE

As the counting begins in New Hampshire, early trends have projected former US President Donald Trump to win the New Hampshire GOP primary, The Hill reported, citing Decision Desk HQ.

This comes as a major blow to his rival Nikki Haley and puts Trump one step closer to securing his party's nomination and getting a historic 2020 rematch with incumbent President Joe Biden.

The Hill showed Trump leading with 53.8 per cent votes and Haley trailing at 45.5 per cent with 26 per cent of the votes counted.

According to CNN, after 15 per cent of votes counted, Trump leads with 53.1 per cent votes and 11 delegates, while Haley has 45.4 per cent votes and eight delegates.

The New York Times, on the other hand, has shown Trump winning the primary by securing 52.5 per cent of votes and 11 delegates, while Haley managing 46.6 per cent votes and six delegates.

Trump's win in the Granite State is especially damaging to Haley because she had invested much of her time and resources in the state, even notching the endorsement of popular Governor Chris Sununu, as per The Hill.

Polling at one point showed Haley trailing Trump by just

single digits.

Earlier, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis pulled out of the White House race and endorsed Trump -- leaving Haley as Trump's sole remaining major challenger.

The former UN ambassador faced pressure to perform well in New Hampshire after being a close third in Iowa to DeSantis, who dropped out just days before the first-in-the-nation primary.

But polling in recent days showed Haley facing a tough hill to climb in toppling Trump, with a polling average of New Hampshire surveys from Decision Desk HQ and The Hill showing Trump at 51 per cent and Haley at 37 per cent.

NIKKI HALEY
CONGRATULATES
DONALD TRUMP

NEW HAMPSHIRE: Republican presidential candidate Nikki Haley on Tuesday congratulated former US President, Donald Trump for his projected win in the New Hampshire Republican primary, however, added that the fight is "far from over" with many states left to vote, reported by CNN. "I want to congratulate Donald Trump on his victory tonight. He earned it, and I want to acknowledge that," the former South Carolina governor said in New Hampshire, shortly after CNN projected that Trump would come out on top in the first-in-the-nation primary.

Russian plane with 76 PoWs crashes, all feared dead

AGENCIES
MOSCOW

A Russian military transport plane with 74 people on board, including 65 Ukrainian Prisoners of War (PoWs), crashed in Belgorod region of Russia on Wednesday, the country's defence ministry said as reported by news agency TASS.

The crash took place at about 8 am GMT and the Russian news agency cited the governor of the region, stating on his Telegram channel that the incident occurred in the Korocha district, situated near the country's border with Ukraine and all aboard the military plane Ilyushin-76 were killed.

"On January 24 this year an Ilyushin-76 transport plane crashed in the Belgorod Region during a scheduled flight at about 11 a.m. Moscow time (8 a.m. GMT). There were 65 Ukrainian prisoners of war who were being moved to the Belgorod Region for an exchange, and three escorts on board," Russia's Defence Ministry said as cited by TASS.

Officials said that Moscow has dispatched a panel of inquiry to probe



A video grab of the plane crash

into the incident.

Meanwhile, CNN reported that Ukraine is investigating Russia's claims that the crashed plane was carrying Ukrainian servicemen ahead of a prisoner exchange.

However, the official Ukrainian information service, citing sources in Kiev military claimed that the Soviet-era military plane was carrying missiles for the Russian S-300 air defence system, CNN said that it has not verified either side's claim.

Washington Post quoted senior Russian officials who without, providing evidence said it was shot down by Ukrainian forces using either German or US-made missiles." According to media outlet RT, Russian MP Andrey Kartapolov said that there were two planes carrying Ukrainian PoWs, and that Moscow had to urgently divert the second IL-76, carrying 80 captured troops, out of the danger zone.

The legislator said that despite Kiev being aware about the flight route, the plane was shot down by three anti-aircraft missiles fired from either US-made Patriot or German-made IRIS-T systems.

PLANE CARRYING DIAMOND MINE WORKERS CRASHES IN CANADA

AGENCIES
ANKARA

An unspecified number of people died after a plane crashed in Canada's remote Northwest Territories near the town of Fort Smith while it was headed to a diamond mine, CNN reported, citing officials.

The incident happened on Tuesday, and the Northwest Territories coroner also said that there were fatalities in the crash but did not specify the number.

Some of the passengers on board the plane were employees at Rio Tinto, a global mining company, according to a statement issued by the group.

However, the company did not confirm how many of its workers were on the plane but noted the crash resulted in fatalities while the airplane was on its way to a company diamond mine, CNN reported.

"At this time, we can confirm there are fatalities but we will not be providing any additional information pending next of kin," Northwest Territories Coroner Garth Eggenberger said in a statement.

In response to the crash, Fort Smith Health Centre activated its mass casualty protocol around 8:50 am on Tuesday, according to the Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority.

The crash also drew attention from the Royal Canadian Mounted Patrol, the Canadian Rangers and

the Royal Canadian Air Force, according to CNN.

Following the crash, investigators with the Northwest Territories coroner's office and the Transportation Safety Board were also sent to Fort Smith.

The Transportation Safety Board of Canada said that it is investigating the crash. Moreover, the aircraft involved is a British Aerospace Jetstream regis-

tered by the government.

"The impact of this incident is felt across the territory," Simpson said. "The people we lost were not just passengers on a flight; they were neighbours, colleagues, friends, and loved ones. Their stories and contributions to our communities will not be forgotten."

Moreover, on the day of the incident, the Canadian



Representational Image

tered to Northwestern Air Lease.

Notably, the aircraft can carry up to 19 passengers, according to Northwestern Air Lease's website, as reported by CNN.

The Premier of the Northwest Territories, RJ Simpson, released a statement extending his deepest condolences to the families, friends and loved ones of those who were aboard the airplane.

He further encouraged affected residents to seek support and use mental health resources provided

Rangers and the Royal Canadian Air Force responded to a report of lost contact with an aircraft outside of Fort Smith, David Lavallee, a public affairs officer with the RCAF in Winnipeg, said.

Adding to this, visibility was poor during the early hours on Tuesday morning but improved by around 10 am, according to CNN's weather team.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) and Canadian Rangers also conducted ground searches, Lavelle said.

DELTA BOEING PLANE LOSES WHEEL BEFORE TAKEOFF AT ATLANTA AIRPORT

AGENCIES
ATLANTA

A Delta Air Lines Boeing plane lost a nose wheel before it took off Saturday from the Hartsfield-Jackson Atlanta International Airport in Atlanta, United States, as reported by The Hill.

A spokesperson for the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) said in a state-

ment that the Boeing 757 plane lost its nose wheel as it was preparing for takeoff just after 11 am to head to Bogota, Colombia.

Following the incident, all passengers were deplaned and bused back to the terminal, the spokesperson added.

Moreover, according to the spokesperson, the FAA will be investigating the incident, The Hill reported.



A Delta spokesperson highlighted that the nose gear tyre "came loose from the landing gear," adding that the company apologises "to our customers for the inconvenience."

This comes as Boeing is

also facing questions over a door plug that blew off an Alaska Airlines Boeing 737 Max 9, promoting the plane to conduct an emergency landing.

This also resulted in an investigation by the FAA and the National Safety Transportation Board, according to The Hill.

Moreover, the FAA later grounded 171 Boeing 737 Max 9 aircraft so they could

undergo inspection.

Last summer, a Delta Boeing 737 plane's left main gear tires blew and caught fire while landing at the Atlanta airport.

The airline further said that, at the time, 190 passengers needed to be evacuated using emergency slides and at least one customer was injured during the incident, as reported by The Hill.

Turkey okays Sweden's NATO bid

AGENCIES
ANKARA

The Turkish Parliament on Tuesday voted to approve Sweden's NATO membership bid, bringing the Nordic country one step closer to joining the military alliance after months of delays, CNN reported. Out of the 346 MPs who voted, 287 were in favour of Sweden's accession and 55 voted to reject it. Four others abstained from voting.

The vote was the second step of Turkey's ratification process after the parliament's Foreign Affairs Commission approved the bid last month. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan can now sign the protocol into law.

Even after a significant hurdle has been cleared for the Nordic country's accession into the military alliance, Hungary remains the only member state that has not yet ratified Sweden's accession, CNN reported.

However, on Tuesday, Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban said he



had invited his Swedish counterpart, Ulf Kristersson, to visit Hungary to negotiate the terms of Sweden's accession.

Notably, Sweden and Finland applied for NATO membership in May 2022, following Russia's invasion of Ukraine earlier that year. Finland joined NATO in April 2023, doubling the alliance's border with Russia, but Sweden has faced numerous delays in its path to accession.

Erdogan initially objected to Sweden's membership bid, accusing Swedish officials of being "too lenient" on militant groups, including the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK). Since applying, Swe-

den has tightened its anti-terror legislation and agreed to work more closely with Turkey on security concerns, as reported by CNN.

Meanwhile, Erdogan's approval of Sweden's accession bid also rides on a commitment by the United States, with the Turkish president signalling that he won't sign the protocol into law unless the US approves the sale of F-16 fighter jets to Turkey.

US Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Ben Cardin said on Tuesday that Congress, however, is waiting to see the accession documents completed before moving forward on the matter.

US CARRIES OUT AIRSTRIKES ON 'IRANIAN-BACKED MILITIAS' IN IRAQ AFTER REPEATED ASSAULTS

AGENCIES
BAGHDAD

The United States has carried out airstrikes in Iraq targeting facilities used by "Iranian-backed militias" in the country following repeated attacks on US forces, Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin said in a statement on Tuesday (local time).

The strikes targeted three facilities used by Iranian-backed 'Kataib Hezbollah' and other Tehran-affiliated groups in Iraq.

Austin said that the strikes "are in direct response to a series of escalatory attacks against US and coalition personnel in Iraq and Syria" by Iranian-backed militia groups. US Central Command also released a state-

ment on Tuesday saying US forces "conducted unilateral airstrikes" targeting "KH headquarters, storage, and training locations for rocket, missile, and one-way attack UAV capabilities," CNN reported. According to a US defence official, the strikes were carried out at two sites in western Iraq, including Al-Qa'im near the Syrian border and Jurf al-Sakhar south of Baghdad.

"I am grateful for both the skill and professionalism with which our personnel planned and conducted these strikes and the continued efforts of our troops on the ground as they work with regional partners to further dismantle and degrade ISIS," Austin stated. "The President and I will not hesitate to take the nec-

essary action to defend them and our interests. We do not seek to escalate conflict in the region. We are fully prepared to take further measures to protect our people and our facilities. We call on these groups and their Iranian sponsors to immediately cease these attacks," he added.

The strikes come just days after US personnel at Al-Asad Air Base in Iraq were injured in a ballistic missile and rocket attack on the base. While most missiles and rockets were intercepted by the base's air defences, some projectiles made an impact, CNN reported, citing US Central Command.

As per the initial assessment, Kataib Hezbollah was responsible for the ballistic missile attack, the defence

official said.

Pentagon spokesman Maj. Gen. Pat Ryder said Tuesday that a total of four US troops were diagnosed with traumatic brain injury as a result of the attack, and all had since returned to duty.

The strikes on Tuesday are the first in Iraq since the beginning of the month, when the US targeted a member of an Iranian proxy group operating in the country who one US official said had "US blood on his hands."

They also come after multiple strikes against the Iran-backed Houthis in Yemen over the last week and a half, as the US looks to rein in the aggressive actions of Iranian-backed groups in the Middle East amid heightened tensions in the region.

‘THE HUNGER GAMES: A BALLAD OF SONGBIRDS AND SNAKES’ SAGA

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes debuted at Number 1 over the weekend box office. Arnav Banerji is a Los Angeles based 3D artist and animator who has worked at multiple pre- production studios for Hollywood productions. His latest credit is for his work as a previs and postvis artist for the prequel to the Hunger Games franchise - ‘A Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes’. He did his schooling in Bangalore and studied Entertainment Technology at Carnegie Mellon University.

Arnav has worked as a visualization artist across the acclaimed pre production studios such as ‘The Third Floor’, ‘Zoic’, ‘Halon Entertainment’ and ‘Proof’. Some of his projects include, ‘The Marvels’, ‘Hawkeye’, ‘The Flash’ and ‘For All Mankind’.

The movie ‘Hunger Games’ required visualization of the action beats and fight sequences in the Hunger Games arena. Two different teams were formed. One focused on pre-visualization and the other on post-visualization. After the script, early in the pipeline, the previs team worked with the director, visual effects supervisor and producers to visualize action sequences and complex beats for the movie. Using animation and virtual production tools, the artists animated 3D models for the actors, creatures and props to make rough versions of movie sequences before they were shot on set. This helped creative decisions to be made early in the process with the director fine tuning his vision.

Arnav and other artists on the team, worked on broken up sequences with each artist taking responsibility on one chunk. These underwent revisions as shots were refined and supervisors came up with ideas on how to accentuate the tension and action. The previs supervisor then assembled mini edits that showcased the entire sequence.

These sequences went through numerous iterations during the process to create the best possible version of the movie. Once those sequences were shot with actors on set, the shots were sent to the postvis team where Arnav and the other artists on the team worked on removing the green screens, placing the postvis version of the background assets, creatures and props when necessary. This

TAKE A LOOK AT TRAILER OF KIRAN RAO’S ‘LAAPATAA LADIES’

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Makers of ‘Laapataa Ladies’ unveiled the trailer of the film.

The official page of Jio Studios took to Instagram on Wednesday and wrote, ‘Ghunghat uth chuke hain. #LaapataaLadies trailer is out! Pre-book your tickets now to avail the BMS offer.’

The story set in 2001 in rural India is about two young brides who get lost on a train and the quest of individuals who become engrossed in a series of puzzles while travelling.

‘Laapataa Ladies’ won a standing ovation at the Toronto International Film Festival. The film stars Pratibha Ranta, Sparsh Shrivastav, and Nitanishi Goel in important parts.

‘Laapataa Ladies’, produced by the team behind Delhi Belly, Dangal, and Peepli Live, is likely to be a laugh when it hits theatres.

Presented by Jio Studios, ‘Laapataa Ladies’ is directed by Kiran Rao and produced by Aamir Khan and Jyoti Deshpande.



helped the director get a sneak peak at what those sequences would look like when the sual effects were completed. Those shots also served as a guide for the final visual effects team to ensure alignment with the director’s vision. This step created a blueprint for the lighting on the characters and environment along with creature placement, movement and FX timing.

For ‘The Ballad of Songbirds and Snakes’, Arnav tackled action filled shots with characters, environment assets, props, effects and creatures.

Elaborating, he recalls, “I worked on shots involving characters running, fighting each other, moving props and dodging debris. We also had to use FX in realtime software and tweak lighting to best showcase the characters and the story. For instance the team visualized dust moving when vehicles and prop elements in the arena were destroyed and flashes when weapons fired to make for a more immersive viewing experience. The team came up with unique workflows to tackle the large number and waves of CG elements in the scene. There were custom rigs designed to allow creatures to move along the terrain and characters. The Postvis team added the creatures chasing and attacking the actors through compositing. “We had to make sure the CG elements in the shots looked like they were part of the same environment as the plate and the interaction between the plate elements (footage shot on set) and the CG elements was realistic.”

Arnav has multiple movies being released in the near future, such as ‘Aquaman 2’ this christmas and ‘The Kingdom of the Planet of the Apes’ next spring. He says “I’m fortunate to have contributed to some of the most famous movies this year. I can’t wait to work on some even bigger projects, and perhaps, y on some of my own stories.”



Earlier, Aamir said, “I am absolutely thrilled with the audience, press and industry response to ‘Laapataa Ladies’. I feel especially proud of Kiran, and her emergence as a strong voice in the popular space! Can’t wait for the film to release now.”

Kiran, recently, also shared her excitement for receiving such a great response and added, “There’s no better reward for a filmmaker than to experience firsthand the laughter, tears, and applause of your audience, and at TIFF we were delighted and humbled by it. A big thank you for all the support and love we received, and looking forward now to bringing ‘Laapataa Ladies’ to theatres at home in India.”

The film is produced under the banner of Aamir Khan Productions and Kindling Productions, with a script by Biplab Goswami.

PICTURE PERFECT

Salman Khan, Alia Bhatt pose with Anthony Hopkins, John Cena at Saudi award show. (social media ‘X’)



‘BADE MIYAN CHOTE MIYAN’ TEASER: STARRING AKSHAY KUMAR AND TIGER SHROFF

TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Finally, the teaser is here! Makers of Akshay Kumar and Tiger Shroff starrer ‘Bade Miyan Chote Miyan’ unveiled the intriguing video on Wednesday. Taking to Instagram, Akshay treated fans with a much-awaited teaser video and captioned it, “Soldier by heart, devil by brain. Beware of us, we are India!”

The teaser showcased Akshay and Tiger in action pack mode as they battle with their enemy, who wants to destroy India. As soon as the teaser was released, fans flooded the comment section. One of the users wrote, “Baap of action and stunts is back.” Another user com-



mented, ‘Goosebumps.’ Helmed by Ali Abbas Zafar, the film is all set to hit the theatres on the occasion of Eid 2024. Shot across stunning locations such as Mumbai, London, Abu Dhabi, Scotland, and Jordan, this pan-India film is creating buzz for its grand scale and Hollywood-style cinematic visuals. The film features Prithviraj Sukumaran in an intriguing villainous role, while also

starring actors Sonakshi Sinha, Manushi Chhillar, and Alaya F in significant parts.

Speaking about the teaser, Ali Abbas Zafar shared his thoughts, “Extreme hard work and commitment of shooting in multiple countries with the most talented crew from different parts of the world has gone behind bringing Bade Miyan Chote Miyan to the audiences and who better than

Akshay Sir and Tiger, India’s original action heroes who would translate the challenging sequences so effortlessly and yet root the film to its target mass audience. More than thrilled to bring this film for their fans and audiences on big screens on Eid April 2024” “The teaser tells its own story with larger-than-life action and the perfect portrayal of iconic roles by Akshay Sir and Tiger Shroff. Additionally, Prithviraj adds a surprising twist, making him the hidden gem.

I am thrilled to have our action heroes on board; Ali’s magic is evident once again. We hope audiences feel the dedication of our entire team and appreciate the efforts we’ve put into this project,” producer Jackky Bhagnani added.

One year of SRK’s ‘Pathaan’

TDG NETWORK
NEW DELHI

Propelled by a long absence and fans’ desire to give a hero’s welcome to an actor who had gone through professional and personal setbacks, “Pathaan”, which released a year ago, not only reinstated Shah Rukh Khan’s superstardom but also breathed a new life to the Hindi cinema theatrical business.

Released on January 25, 2023, the high-octane action spy thriller completes one year of its release on Thursday. Directed by Siddharth Anand, it was the next chapter in the Yash Raj Films (YRF) spy franchise and also starred Deepika Padukone and John Abraham.

Before “Pathaan”, many believed the glory days of Bollywood were over as big



titles such as “Samrat Prithviraj”, “Shamshera” and “Laal Singh Chaddha” failed to work at the ticket window in the immediate aftermath of the pandemic. The rise of the South cinema and the boycott calls against Hindi movies also added to its woes.

According to trade expert Taran Adarsh, “Pathaan” was the bona fide “first biggie of 2023” which opened to Rs

55 crore in the Hindi version alone. Its Tamil and Telugu dubbed versions brought in additional Rs 2 crore on day one. It was touted as the “highest grossing first day for a Hindi film” at the time of its release by YRF.

“One year of ‘Pathaan’ means a lot for both the Hindi film industry as well as Shah Rukh Khan, who made a solid comeback with the film.

Those who had written off Shah Rukh, it was a shock to them when ‘Pathaan’ opened to such terrific numbers.

“For the film industry, it mattered a lot because we were going through a rough patch and this was the first biggie of 2023. The box office numbers were so huge that it brought a lot of optimism, cheer and confidence back, and I think that was more important than anything else.

It was a win-win situation for the industry as well as Shah Rukh Khan,” Adarsh told PTI. The success of “Pathaan” came after the actor went through a period of intense media scrutiny when his eldest son Aryan Khan was arrested in the Mumbai cruise drugs case in 2021. Aryan, who spent almost a month in prison, was cleared of all charges later.

DELHI-BORN NISHA PAHUJA’S ‘TO KILL A TIGER’ NOMINATED FOR OSCARS 2024

TDG NETWORK
LOS ANGELES

Delhi-born Nisha Pahuja’s film ‘To Kill a Tiger’ has been nominated in the best feature documentary category for the Oscars 2024.

She said that she learned about the honour along with the rest of the world while watching the live announcement, reported The Hollywood Reporter.

“I was in shock. I couldn’t believe it. I was over the moon. Yeah, I just couldn’t believe it,” Pahuja told The Hollywood Reporter about her emotional reaction.

“This film has work to do in the world,” said Nisha about her documentary about an Indian farmer’s legal battle for his daughter after a brutal sexual assault.

Indian-born Canadian filmmaker Pahuja’s previous films include the Emmy nominated ‘The World Before Her’, the feature documentary ‘Bollywood Bound’ and the three-part series ‘Diamond Road’.

‘To Kill a Tiger’ is all about Ranjit, a farmer in Jharkhand, India, who takes on the fight of his life when he demands



justice for his 13-year-old daughter, Kiran, after she survived a sexual assault by three men in 2017.

According to The Hollywood Reporter, out of a father’s love for his daughter and his uphill battle for justice for her has come the Oscar nomination for Pahuja, who was born in New Delhi and raised in Toronto.

But aside from her career milestone, the ‘To Kill a Tiger’ director is more focused on the global platform her film has secured to drive impact for greater gender justice for survivors of rape and other sexual violence in India and the rest of the world.

BRAIN PICKING



Life’s all about choices. Everyone’s destination is the same; only the paths are different.

—SUSHMITA SEN
(Indian actress)



CHECK OUT SHAHID-KRITI’S SIZZLING CHEMISTRY IN SONG FROM ‘TERI BAATON MEIN AISA ULJHA JIYA’



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

Makers of the upcoming family entertainer ‘Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya’ starring Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon unveiled a romantic song ‘Akhiyaan Gulaab’ on Wednesday.

Taking to Instagram, Shahid Kapoor treated fans with a song video and captioned it, “Akhiyaan Gulaab out now. #TeriBaatonMeinAisaUljhaJiya in cinemas this Valentine’s week, 9th February 2024!”

https://www.instagram.com/p/C2eOuZqtqsE/ ‘Akhiyaan Gulaab’ beautifully encapsulates the blossoming romance between Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon. This love song is composed and written by duo of Mitraz.

Mitraz, whose composition and lyrics elevate the emotional resonance of

the song expressed, “Akhiyaan Gulaab beautifully captures the chemistry between Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon. The process of reimagining and crafting this love melody has been a heartfelt experience.”

Taking to Instagram, production house Maddock Films treated fans with the trailer.

Shahid Kapoor plays a robot scientist who develops feelings and finally marries Kriti’s character, Sifra, a highly intelligent female robot. The trailer showcased that he eventually falls in love with the robot.

The film ‘Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya’ is written and directed by Amit Joshi and Aradhana Sah.

Dinesh Vijan, Jyoti Deshpande, and Laxman Utekar have produced it. The film will be out in theatres on February 9 and it also features legendary actor Dharmaendra.

NATIONAL GIRL CHILD DAY: KAJOL PENS EMOTIONAL NOTE FOR DAUGHTER NYSA



TDG NETWORK
MUMBAI

On National Girl Child Day, which is celebrated every year on January 24, actor Kajol penned an emotional note for her daughter, Nysa Devgan. On Wednesday, Kajol shared a picture with Nysa and wrote on Instagram, “When you have a girl you always wonder what will the world throw at her? Will she be able to stand with her male counterparts and will the world support her?” “On this day let’s make our girls strong enough to stand up for themselves regardless of the world and do our best to make this world a place where even their daughters will thrive.. let’s work towards that.”

The actor not only shared her personal experiences as a mother, but she also delivered a message about empowering girls and appreciating their passion.

In the picture, Kajol wore a golden saree. Nysa, on the other hand, donned a pink lehenga. As soon as Kajol uploaded the picture, fans chimed in the comment section. A fan commented, “Prettiesttttt girls!!!!” Another wrote, “A strong daughter will definitely be raised from such a mother.” “When a woman gave birth to a girl, she gave birth to her friend,” a social media user wrote. Nysa is daughter of actors Ajay and Kajol, who got married in 1999. The star couple welcomed daughter Nysa on April 20, 2003. Seven years later, their son Yug was born on September 13, 2010. Meanwhile, on the work front, Kajol recently wrapped up shooting for ‘Do Patti’. The film also stars Kriti Sanon. ‘Do Patti’ also marks Kriti and Kajol’s second collaboration after ‘Dilwale’.

TATA MOTORS' LATEST ELECTRIC IN THE MARKET IS THE PUNCH EV

These 10 Cars Ruled The Indian Roads in 2023

SHAMS RAZA NAQVI

Tata Motors has launched yet another electric car in the market. The Punch.ev is the first product from the brand be based on the all-new made-in-India Pure EV architecture called acti.ev, which stands for Advanced Connected Tech-Intelligent Electric Vehicle. According to the company, it is based on the pillars of Performance, Technology, Modularity, and Space Efficiency and consists of four layers – Powertrain, Chassis, Electrical Architecture and Cloud Architecture.

DESIGN

The Punch EV is led by the new digital design approach, where the idea is to match EV modernity with an iconic look. Some smart lighting systems are a highlight on the car prominent among them being a smart charging indicator which is useful to indicate the SOC levels while the vehicle is charging. You also get bi-functional LEDs coupled with the central position lamp which come with a welcome and goodbye signature.

INTERIORS

This latest EV in town is loaded with features. It gets twin 10.25-inch screens, one being the full digital cluster and the other a touchscreen system. The 2-spoke steering wheel gets an illuminated logo like the Nexon SUV. You get wireless Android Auto and Apple CarPlay along with the app suite Arcade.ev which offers 17 apps for gaming, music and media. There are more than 200 voice commands in 6 languages, Alexa, Siri for Apple users and Google Assistant for Android users. The ZConnect Connected Car Technology with smartwatch connectivity is offered as standard.

Other features on the SUV include wireless charging, automatic headlamps, rain-sensing wipers and auto-dimming IRVM. You also get a 45 W type-C USB port for fast charging, front ventilated leatherette seats, an electric sunroof, mood lights and an air purifier with AQI display. The electric SUV gets 16-inch

tyres, 190 mm ground clearance, 350 mm water wading capability, 366 litres of boot space and 14 litres of added space in the frunk.

DRIVE

The Punch.ev comes with two battery pack options. The 25 kWh battery gets a claimed range of 315 km while the bigger 35 kWh option offers 421 km range. While the 60 kW Permanent Magnet Synchro-

nous AC Motor in the former makes 114 Nm, the higher version ensures 90 kW with 190 Nm, resulting in a 0 to 100 kmph sprint time of 9.5 sec and an electronically limited top speed of 140 kmph. The battery pack and motor are IP67 rated for protection from dust and water, with a warranty of 8 years or 1,60,000 km.

The Punch.ev Long Range is available with the op-

tion of a 3.3 kW and a 7.2 kW AC fast charger that can be installed either at home or at the workplace. With DC fast charging, it can be fast charged from 10% to 80% in 56 minutes from any 50 kW DC fast charger. The SUV comes with Paddle Shifters, which enables the 4-level Multi-Mode Regeneration and over-the-air software upgrade capabilities.

SAFETY

The SUV gets 6 Airbags, Electronic Stability Program, ISOFIX, Roll-over mitigation and Brake Disc Wiping as standard across all personas.



You also get Electronic parking brake with Auto Hold, Disc brakes on all 4 wheels and a 360 surround view camera system with blind spot monitor in its high-end trims.

PRICES

There are 5 trims or personas on offer on the Punch EV. Prices start at Rs. 10.99 lakh and go up to Rs. 14.49 lakh, ex-showroom and introductory. In case you want a sunroof

and a 7.2 kW charger you will need to spend Rs. 1 lakh more on the top variant. The lowest Smart and Smart+ personas are not available with the long range model of the SUV.



TOKENIZATION OF REAL-WORLD ASSETS: A 2024 PERSPECTIVE



THE NEXT
ABHISHEKANAND

The concept of tokenizing real-world assets (RWAs) has been gaining significant traction in the financial sector, with estimates suggesting that the market value of tokenized assets could reach as much as \$10 trillion by 2030.

In today's article, let's dive into the current state and future potential of RWA tokenization, exploring how blockchain technology is transforming the way we manage and trade assets like real estate and agriculture.

WHAT IS TOKENIZATION?

Tokenization involves converting the rights to an asset into a digital token on a blockchain network. These tokens represent ownership or a share in the underlying real-world asset. This innovative approach offers enhanced liquidity, transparency, and accessibility, making high-value investments like real estate more attainable to a broader audience.

CURRENT MARKET AND PREDICTIONS

The current market for tokenized RWAs is valued at approximately \$300 billion, with projections indicating a possible increase to between \$3.5 trillion and \$16 trillion by 2030. This growth is attributed to the increasing adoption of blockchain technology by traditional financial institutions and investors recognizing the advantages of tokenized assets.

KEY BENEFITS OF TOKENIZATION

- **Increased Liquidity and Accessibility:** Tokenization allows fractional ownership of assets, lowering investment thresholds and making them more accessible.
- **Reduced Transaction Costs:** Blockchain technology facilitates direct asset transfers without intermediaries,

significantly reducing transactional costs.

- **Enhanced Security and Transparency:** The immutable nature of blockchain provides a transparent and secure record of ownership.
- **Rapid Transaction Settlement:** Blockchain enables instant settlement, offering a higher degree of automation and minimizing counterparty risk.

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

Despite its advantages, tokenization faces several challenges:



- **Regulatory Uncertainty:** Many jurisdictions lack clear legal frameworks for tokenization, requiring multiple platforms to handle assets in different areas.
- **Interoperability and Standardization:** The lack of standardization and interoperability among private blockchain networks can fragment liquidity and complicate investor onboarding.
- **Technical Bottlenecks:** Current infrastructure limitations and technical challenges hinder broader adoption.
- **Incomplete Settlements:** Some platforms only settle trade legs on-chain, not cash legs, leading to incomplete real-time settlements.
- **Incumbent Reluctance:** Established players in the asset management industry may resist changes due to existing profit structures. Addressing these challenges involves creating robust

infrastructure that integrates seamlessly with traditional financial systems, establishing clear regulatory frameworks, and fostering collaboration for standardization and interoperability.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS AND FUTURE OUTLOOK

- **Real Estate Tokenization:** Tokenization is simplifying and accelerating real estate transactions, offering fractional ownership and reducing intermediaries.
- **Financial Asset Tokenization:** Bonds, stocks, and shares are being tokenized to increase accessibility and liquidity.
- **Private Market Revolution:** Private equity and credit markets are increasingly em-

bracing tokenization, potentially allowing retail investors to access these markets through tokenized funds.

CONCLUSION

The Tokenization of real-world assets represents a significant shift in asset management and investment. By leveraging blockchain technology, it promises to democratize access to high-value assets, enhance liquidity, and streamline transactions.

As the industry navigates regulatory and technical challenges, the future of tokenized assets looks promising, with the potential to reshape the global financial landscape.

Disclaimer: This article provides an overview based on current market data and trends. It is not intended as investment advice. Readers should conduct their research and consult professionals before making investment decisions.

TECH FOR ALL: EDTECH REDEFINING SPECIAL EDUCATION WITH CUTTING-EDGE TEACHING METHODS

MR. MUDDASSAR NAZAR

The education industry has experienced significant transformation in recent times. Children are now educated in completely different ways than they were a few decades ago. How knowledge is conveyed and received has altered dramatically as a result of technological advancements. With the advent of cutting-edge flipped classroom models and self-directed study, teaching methods have entirely evolved, and even students are unsure of what lies ahead for them. Furthermore, due to its many benefits, digital learning is quickly taking the place of traditional classroom instruction. According to Markets And Markets, with a compound annual growth rate of roughly 13.4%, the ed-tech and smart classroom market is projected to be worth \$125.3 billion in 2027. Without a doubt, technology has taken center stage in educational innovation, and it will continue to have a significant impact on education in the future. How-

ever, special education is one field where this change is exceptionally noticeable. Therefore, edtech is more than just an upgrade; it is an instrument for empowering students with various learning requirements.

Here's a look at how technology is enabling innovative teaching strategies that are changing the special education landscape-

IMPROVED COLLABORATION AND COMMUNICATION

The use of technology has brought about a new era of collaboration in the special education field. The integration of online discussion forums, video conferencing tools, and collaboration platforms has become crucial in promoting seamless interaction between educators, parents, and students. Thus, with the help of these technological developments, students can collaborate on group projects from a distance, participate in individualized virtual classrooms, and get feedback immediately. This fits with the revolutionary impact caused by edtech

in redefining special education by improving their learning experience and fostering a sense of community.

AUGMENTED REALITY (AR) AND VIRTUAL REALITY (VR)

The immersive and engaging learning experiences provided by AR and VR have revolutionized the educational landscape. As students interact with 3D settings, technological advancements make learning fun and offer a more fascinating way for students to explore the world. Teachers benefit by designing engaging lessons and adjusting virtual environments to meet the requirements of their students. These innovations improve the teaching environment and provide customized stimulation in the context of special education. Hence, it is impossible to ignore the significant influence that new technologies will have on redefining special education through innovative teaching techniques as they become more widely used.

GAMIFICATION

There is no denying that gaming is deeply embedded in many facets of education, and a discussion about EdTech advances in 2024 would be incomplete without addressing gamification. This trend is already visible across academic areas. Teachers are beginning to see gaming as an effective teaching and learning resource. Thus, gamification's profound impact coincides with EdTech's revolutionary wave, which redefines special education through innovative teaching approaches. This includes both integrating games into courses and enabling students to collaboratively create their own.

PERSONALIZED LEARNING

EdTech's ability to personalize learning experiences is one of its main advantages; this is especially true in special education. Traditional classrooms struggle to fulfill the needs of a diverse student body. With the help of edtech tools, teachers may effectively assess each student's learning prefer-

ences, areas of strength and weakness, and subject preferences. Thus, students in special education advance at their own speed thanks to adaptive learning algorithms, which promote a thorough understanding of the material and demonstrate the transforming power of innovative teaching techniques.

EMPOWERING SPECIAL EDUCATION THROUGH CUTTING-EDGE TEACHING METHODS!

Technology's influence on special education is especially noticeable as it continues to change the face of education. Edtech is a driving force behind the empowerment of students with a range of learning demands, from enhanced collaboration and the incorporation of AR and VR to the gamification of learning and customized educational experiences. Hence, there is no denying the revolutionary path toward inclusive and cutting-edge special education instruction.

The author is a CEO of Birla Brainiacs



A TAPESTRY OF INDIAN ART: MASTERS & BLUE-CHIP CONTEMPORARIES TO BE UNVEILED AT THE ART OF INDIA EXHIBITION

Art of India's Third Edition Showcases Tradition, Transition, Modernity

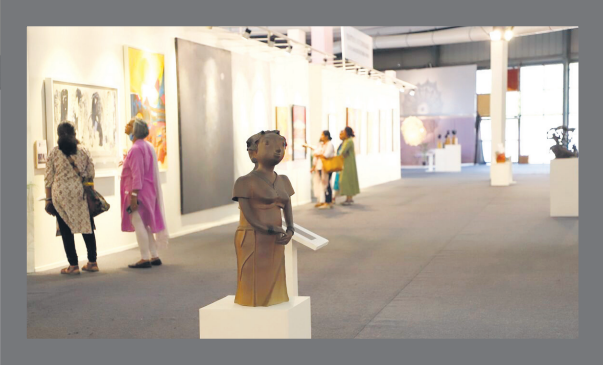
KARISHMA SAIN

In the ever-evolving landscape of Indian art, The Art of India, one of the most distinguished platforms in the art and culture domain, is set to unveil its highly anticipated third edition. Showcasing a spectrum of artistic expressions under the theme "Tradition, Transition, Modernity," the exhibition promises to be a captivating journey through the rich tapestry of Indian visual culture. Curated by the eminent Dr Alka Pande, the show will feature an impressive array of masterpieces from distinguished artists, including Raja Ravi Verma, B Prabh, M F Husain, Ganesh Haloi, Manu Parekh, and Jayasri Burman.

The exhibition will kick off at the Visual Arts Gallery at India Habitat Centre, New Delhi, from January 28th to February 4th, before making its



way to NCPA, Mumbai, where the collection will be on display from March 9th to 15th. The carefully curated selection spans various artistic mediums, including painting, drawing, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, photography, video, digital, and mixed-media works. Speaking about the upcoming edition, Dr Alka Pande emphasizes the exhibition's narrative as a 'ragamalika' or a garland of many stories, representing the diverse voices, languages, and mediums that define Indian art. She states, "The story



of Indian Art is indeed an amazing compendium of different voices, languages, and mediums which defines Indian art. The 3rd edition promises to be a moving feast for art lovers."

The Art of India exhibition not only serves as a platform for art collec-

tors but also stands as a significant gathering for art enthusiasts, offering an immersive experience in diverse forms of visual arts such as sculpture, painting, design, and architecture. With a theme deeply rooted in India's cultural history, the event

highlights the creative expressions of renowned artists, creating a melting pot of artistic proficiency and imaginative concepts. The curator, Alka Pande, shares her thoughts on the exhibition, "This year, The Art of India is looking

at the story of Indian art through a 'ragamalika' or a garland of many stories which makes the narrative of Indian Visual Culture. The story of Indian Art is indeed an amazing compendium of different voices, languages, and mediums which defines Indian art. The 3rd edition promises to be a moving feast for art lovers."

The past editions of The Art of India have been monumental successes, setting the stage for the grandeur that the exhibition embodies. As The Art of India's third edition prepares to enchant art lovers and collectors alike, it promises to be a celebration of India's artistic legacy, a testament to the continuity of tradition, the inevitability of transition, and the allure of modernity. Mark your calendars for this extraordinary showcase that encapsulates the essence of Indian visual culture.

CAPTIVATING PERFORMANCES STEAL THE SHOW ON DAY 3 OF BHARATMUNI RANG UTSAV

TDG NETWORK

Sahitya Kala Parishad, the esteemed Art, and Cultural Wing of the Delhi Government, 'The Bharatmuni Rang Utsav' continues its enchanting journey, having successfully mesmerised audiences over the first two days with a diverse array of performances.

On the third day, the spotlight was on 'Ek Cup Chai,' a gripping one-woman play adapted from Dr. Kiran Singh's original story and dramatised by the eminent Rajesh Tiwari. The play unfolds as a poignant exploration of the multifaceted struggles faced by women, intricately weaving disparate storylines and portraying the journey of women entangled in circumstances leading to incarceration. As the lone performer takes the stage, audiences are immersed in the diverse challenges women grapple with, shedding light on societal pressures and injustices. 'Ek Cup Chai' serves as a powerful commentary on the universal struggles women endure, emphasising the metaphorical imprisonment they may experience daily. Rajesh Tiwari, an acclaimed theatre director and playwright with over 25 years of experience, brings his expertise to this compelling production, promising an evening of thought-provoking theatre.

The day continued with 'Dhoop Ka Ek Tukda,' authored by Nirmal Verma



and directed by the talented Pooja Dhiyani. A theatre practitioner with a thriving 13-year journey, Pooja Dhiyani, a distinguished graduate of Bhartendu Natya Academy, presents an intriguing story of a woman navigating the complexities of life, offering a unique perspective on relationships and self-discovery. In 'Dhoop ka ek tukda,' a woman, sensing an emotional void with her husband, relocates to another part of the city.

The artistic journey further unfolds with 'Baarish,' written by Saadat Hasan Manto and directed by Vijay Shrivastava. BAARISH encapsulates the spirit of 1950s India, vividly portraying its fashion and lifestyle. The plot immerses readers in the profound emotions of Tanveer, a 22-year-old man, as he encounters love at first sight with Parveen. The narrative unravels the hurdles imposed by societal constraints on love and relationships, encompassing factors like background, caste system, age, and sta-

tus. Saadat Hasan Manto's storytelling defies prevailing societal norms, addressing fanaticism head-on and, in the process, reshaping perspectives on love. Vijay Shrivastava, acclaimed actor and director, immersed in theatre from a young age, collaborated with eminent directors, showcasing versatility onstage. In addition to dedicating 11 years to the National School of Drama (NSD) Theatre Extension program, Shrivastava has helmed numerous theatrical productions. The evening concluded on a powerful note with 'Jebkatra,' scripted by Saadat Hasan Manto and directed by Javed Sameer (Sameeruddin), highlighting the transformative journey of a pickpocket.

Bharatmuni Rang Utsav continues to captivate audiences, providing a platform for seasoned artists and emerging talents to showcase their craft. The festival is running until January 25, 2024, at the LTG Auditorium, Mandi House.

SOPAN FESTIVAL WRAPS ON A HIGH NOTE OF CREATIVE BRILLIANCE

TDG NETWORK

The Sopan Festival, organised by Sahitya Kala Parishad, department of Art and Culture, Delhi Government concluded its four-day cultural extravaganza, leaving an endless mark with a stellar lineup of performances that spanned classical, contemporary, and traditional art forms.

On Day One the festival commenced with a soul-stirring vocal performance by Ameen Khan, setting the stage for a mesmerising journey. Madhyama Segal's Odissi took centre stage, featuring captivating dance pieces, including the eloquent 'Bageshwari Pallavi' and the Tandava portrayal of "Jago Maheshwara" composed by Padmashri Kiran Segal. Krishna Babu's enchanting Mohiniattam unfolded the Ramayana in Ragamalikai, accompanied by the rhythmic Thalam Roopakam. Nanda Kumar brought a contemporary twist with "TRIBO," expressing unspoken thoughts through African dance. The day concluded with Shivani Pandey's theatrical brilliance in 'Jayaz-Guftgu,' that delves into love's evolution, blending personal growth with the intricate nuances of love. Her re-interpretation of the Ramayana through Sita's eyes adds depth, offering a thought-provoking,



memorable experience.

The second day featured Suraj's spellbinding vocal rendition, followed by Sani Niyazi's tabla performance. Abhishek Khichi's expressive Kathak ensemble unfolded with a Surdas pada in Rupak Taal, revealing depth through intricate footwork and expressive storytelling. Akshar Tekchandani's enchanting Kathak commenced with a Panchbhoot Shlok from the Rigveda and expertly showcased Kathak's technical aspects in Teen Taal, vividly portraying the Kevat Prasang from the Ramayana in Abhinaya Paksh. The day reached a climax with Govind Mahato's Chhau dance captivating the audience with a distinct taste of tradi-

tional and contemporary art forms.

Rekha Pandey's Hindustani classical vocal performance highlighted day three, featuring Raag Shree and a mesmerising Bandishi thumri. Tushar Goyal's tabla ensemble was presented a 16-beat taal, Teentaal. He began the performance with vilambit laya, progressing through peshkaar, kaidas, and relas. The performance culminated with captivating compositions like tukdas and chakkardaars. Pragati Pandey, a Sahitya Kala Parishad vocal scholar, enchanted the audience with Raag Yaman, skillfully weaving alaap and taans, and ended with a mesmerising Tarana. Later, Partha Mandal's Kathak com-

menced with "Kasturi Tilakam" in Raag Bhupali, followed by traditional dance in Taal Teental. The performance concluded with a beautiful dadra written by Pandit Bindadin Maharaj. Devika Rajaraman's Bharatnatyam added grace, starting with the Mallari and seamlessly transitioning into Meera Bhajan. ("Mai toh nahi jaoon") in Raag Behag and Adi Talam, depicted Little Krishna's excuses to avoid the riverbanks. Choreographed by Guru Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, the act masterfully captured the essence of devotion and storytelling. The evening continued with Ashmita Mishra's Kathak. In her presentation, she first presented Shri Ram Stuti, then the technical aspect in Taal Ashtamangal, and concluded her presentation with a dance performance on Kaisi Niksi Chandni in Raga Bahar, composed by Pandit Vijayshankar Mishra. A powerful theatre act by Amarjee Rai marked a fitting end to the festival.

On Day Four Moni Jha's enthralling performance featured Raag Bhopali

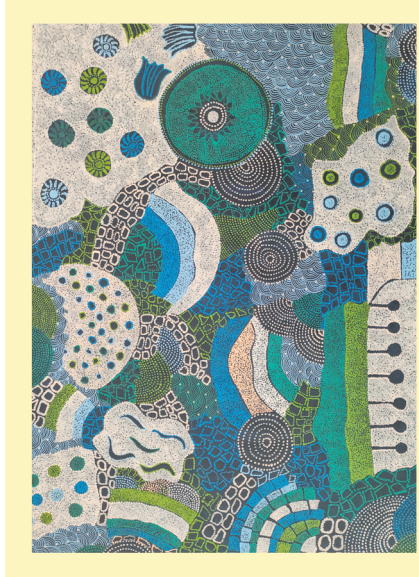
and Raag Yaman, concluding with Raag Darbari Kanada. Following, Vivek Bhola presented Raag Multani and a bhajan. This was followed by T. Reddi Lakshmi's Kuchipudi presentation and then Meera S. Unnithan's Bharatnatyam, where she showcased Bharatnatyam, featuring two captivating pieces. The performance commenced with "Tiruvempavai Koutvam" in Ragam Ragamalika and Adi Talam, portraying a maiden urging her friends to wake up and visit the temple for darshanam of Lord Ardhanareeshwara. The second piece, a Thumri ("Mai toh nahi jaoon") in Raag Behag and Adi Talam, depicted Little Krishna's excuses to avoid the riverbanks. Choreographed by Guru Smt. Rama Vaidyanathan, the act masterfully captured the essence of devotion and storytelling. The evening continued with Ashmita Mishra's Kathak. In her presentation, she first presented Shri Ram Stuti, then the technical aspect in Taal Ashtamangal, and concluded her presentation with a dance performance on Kaisi Niksi Chandni in Raga Bahar, composed by Pandit Vijayshankar Mishra. A powerful theatre act by Amarjee Rai marked a fitting end to the festival.

GONDWANA ART PROJECT EXPLORES FUSION OF TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY IN TRIBAL ART

TDG NETWORK

The Gondwana Art Project presents "Modern Tribal - Connecting Traditions," an exhibition celebrating the convergence of tribal and contemporary art, with a spotlight on Gond and Bhil paintings from January 29 to February 5, 2024 at the Bikaner House. This initiative showcases the dynamic evolution of indigenous art forms, emphasizing the rich cultural heritage of Tribal Art from in central India and Art of First Nations, Australia. Gondwana Art Project announced its collaborative exhibition with Australian artists in conjunction with India Art Fair as a parallel event.

Originating from South Asia's largest tribal community, Gond paintings cover folk stories, religion,



picting life connected to nature, identified by distinct dots with multiple symbolic meanings.

The emphasis of this exhibition is on storytelling, illustrating how artists weave modernity into traditional narratives.

For young collectors, the exhibition features tribal art on unusable gramophone records, a sustainable initiative upcycling old vinyls hand-painted by tribal artists.

Sundeep Bhandari, founder - Gondwana Art Project said, "The Project is focused on supporting tribal artists from the Gondwana region, to create modern and contemporary art using their traditional art form and techniques. The Gond and Bhil art from central India have a remarkable similarity with the First Nation's Art from Australia. The exhibition titled Modern Tribal - Connecting Traditions, will showcase these cultural art forms evolving with modern times."

festivals, and nature with unique use of bright colors and elaborate patterning.

Practiced by the second-largest tribal community in central India, Bhil art manifests in rituals, songs, dances, and paintings de-

'ONCE UPON A MATTRESS' EXPLORES THEMES OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE, AND IMPORTANCE OF BREAKING FREE FROM SOCIETAL EXPECTATIONS

TDG NETWORK

A grand musical - 'Once Upon a Mattress' was recently organized by Apeejay School International (ASI) New Delhi. High on creativity and production values, the school presented a whimsical transformation of the classic fairy tale, The Princess and the Pea. The enchanting rendition was a comedic romp, weaving together humour, love, and unexpected twists.

However, it was the purposeful tweaking of an accepted narrative to question gender stereotypes that elevated the production to a thought provoking piece of entertainment.



Filled with lively musical numbers and witty dialogue, "Once Upon a Mattress" explores themes of love, acceptance, and the importance of breaking free from societal expectations. The play celebrates individuality and challeng-

es the traditional fairy tale narrative with humour and charm.

Also present in large numbers were the members of the parent community. Speaking before the presentation, Purshottam Dutt Vashist, Principal, ASI

said "The musical is set to redefine the social narrative of women. Challenging patriarchal norms and several gender-related expectations often tied to the fairer sex, the musical strives to give women voice and agency. Our students have worked hard and are eager to showcase their magic on the stage."

The show proved to be a visual and auditory feast for the senses. The meticulously crafted sets and props reflected the attention to details. The precision in choreography and harmony in musical renditions all elevated the production to a high-quality theatrical experience.

STELLAR ENSEMBLE OF BOLLYWOOD ARTISTS KEEPS AUDIENCE ENGAGED WITH TWO WITTY PLAYS

TDG NETWORK

The "Laugh re Laugh Theatre Festival", showcased a stellar ensemble of popular, versatile comic Bollywood and theatre personalities from the Film and Television Industry. The acclaimed cast included Asrani, Padmini Kolhapure, Rakesh Bedi, Delnaz, Irani, Naveen Bawa, Chitrashi Rawat among others.

A unique musical play, "Zamaana Kya Kahega?" showcased Rakesh Bedi and Delnaz Irani as the accidental lovers. The play is interspersed with over 20 different dance performances as well. The romantic comedy takes place in 2007, a time where the newly-launched internet cafes play cupid in the love story of



two strangers - Yash and Payal. This family-friendly love story takes us back to the old-school Bollywood era, where we re-live Madhubala's 'Anarkali', Kishore Kumar's melodies, Dev Anand's evergreen charm and ask boldly, 'Jab Pyaar Kiya Toh Darna Kya?'. A fan favourite, "Zamaana Kya Kahega?" has been performed

over 50 times in Delhi-NCR and always received rave reviews.

Actor Rakesh Bedi said, "Zamaana Kya Kahega is a metaphor within which the Indian society survives. We are always surviving in fear that what people are thinking about us. This story is about two persons who have crossed their youth

and are living in isolation. Both are searching a companion but still they fear that in this age if they are found in relationship then what will people think. The story is set in 2007 when people had to go to cyber café for chatting."

Guncha Kanupriya, Co-Founder & Co-Director, Kanupriya Theatre Company (KTC) said, "When one thinks of theatre, they often associate it with serious, dark classics. "Laugh re Laugh Theatre Festival" is an attempt by us to portray that theatre can be light-hearted and meaningful at the same time. Both the plays "Zamaana Kya Kahega?" & "Baap Ka Baap" are unique musical comedies that have never been performed before in Delhi on this scale".

AUSTRALIAN OPEN: MEDVEDEV BATTLES TO REACH SEMIS, YASTREMSKA CRUISES

In the final set, Medvedev broke for a 4-3 lead, and served out to secure the win

TDG NETWORK
MELBOURNE

In Melbourne, Daniil Medvedev seized the limited opportunities presented by Hubert Hurkacz to secure a spot in the Australian Open semi-finals on Wednesday. Meanwhile, Dayana Yastremska made a significant achievement for the new generation by reaching the last four of a Grand Slam for the first time.

Medvedev, the third seed, who had experienced consecutive losses in the 2021 and 2022 Melbourne Park finals, moved a step closer to returning to the title clash with a 7-6(4) 2-6 6-3 5-7 6-4 victory over Polish player Hurkacz. Although he appeared poised to wrap up the match in four sets, Hurkacz gained confidence and forced a decider. In the final set, Medvedev broke for a 4-3 lead, acknowledged the applause, and served out to secure the win.

"I knew how 'Hubi' could play, and he played quite well. I felt like I had a small chance in almost all the games, probably except 2-0 in the first set,"



Medvedev said. "I managed to take it, so I'm really happy and proud about that. Because with him, you don't get many chances."

The former U.S. Open champion, who has sometimes struggled to win over the crowd, received great support in Melbourne this year and hopes to ride that momentum when he faces Carlos Alcaraz or Alexander Zverev in the semifinals.

Spanish second seed Alcaraz will

meet his German opponent in the final match of the day on Rod Laver Arena after China's Zheng Qinwen completes her match with Russian Anna Kalinskaya.

Organizers breathed a sigh of relief on Wednesday as the day session finished on schedule. On Tuesday, epic matches involving holder Novak Djokovic and U.S. Open champion Coco Gauff led to the action spilling over into the evening.

STEP CLOSER

■ Medvedev who had experienced consecutive losses in the 2021 and 2022

■ I felt like I had a small chance in almost all the games

Yastremska ensured things stayed on track with a swift 6-3 6-4 victory over giant-killing Czech Linda Noskova, becoming the first women's qualifier to reach the last four since the 1978 tournament. The Ukrainian world number 93, who had already defeated Grand Slam champions Marketa Vondrousova and Victoria Azarenka, will face either 12th seed Zheng or world number 75 Kalinskaya in the next round.

Zheng triumphs to reach Australian Open semi-finals

TDG NETWORK
MELBOURNE

Zheng Qinwen overcame a sluggish start to convincingly defeat Russian Anna Kalinskaya 6-7(4), 6-3, 6-1 on Wednesday, securing her spot in the semi-finals of the Australian Open for the first time. The Chinese 12th seed is set to face Ukrainian qualifier Dayana Yastremska in the upcoming match.

Kalinskaya, in her first Grand Slam quarter-final, displayed nervousness and gifted Zheng the opening break with a double fault. However, Zheng quickly returned the favor, and both players struggled with their serves, leading to a tiebreak.

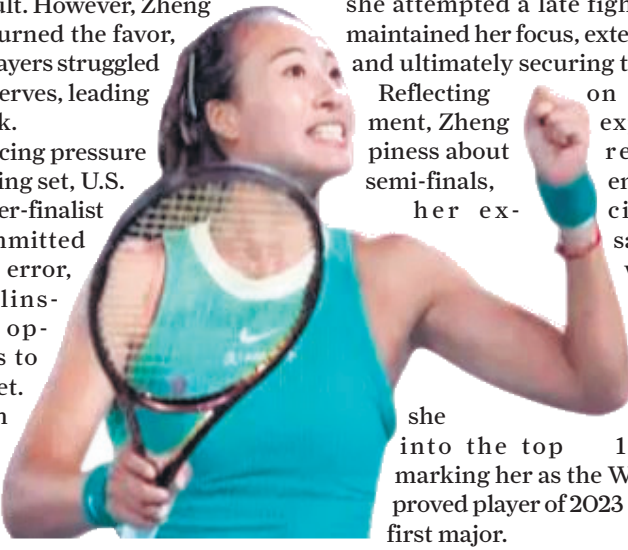
Despite facing pressure in the opening set, U.S. Open quarter-finalist Zheng committed a forehand error, giving Kalinskaya two opportunities to claim the set. The Russian capitalized on the chance and sealed

the set with a backhand winner. Zheng acknowledged Kalinskaya's strong performance, particularly her baseline strokes, and expressed her determination to stay focused.

In the second set, Zheng broke Kalinskaya for a 5-3 lead, leveling the match with high-quality tennis. The Chinese player continued her momentum in the decider, breaking Kalinskaya without losing a point in the third game.

Kalinskaya faced a right leg issue, prompting a medical timeout after falling behind by a double break. Although she attempted a late fightback, Zheng maintained her focus, extending her lead and ultimately securing the victory.

Reflecting on her achievement, Zheng expressed happiness about reaching the semi-finals, her excitement and satisfaction with her performance. Additionally, her victory ensures she will break into the top 10 rankings, marking her as the WTA's most improved player of 2023 after the year's first major.



Bashir returns home after visa delay, England names spin-heavy attack

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

The visitors named three spinners, including Jack Leach, Rehan Ahmed, and Hartley for the upcoming Test match against India.

On the other hand, Mark Wood has been picked as the only seam bowler in the side, which means legendary pacer James Anderson will not take part in the long-format game in Hyderabad.

Ollie Pope and Ben Foakes have also been included in the first eleven after not being involved in England's last Test against Australia at The Oval.

Another English spinner Shoaib Bashir has yet to travel to India due to a visa delay for which he was placed out of the playing eleven. Bashir was born in England's Surrey and holds a British passport, but due to his Pakistani heritage, the bowler was facing trouble entering India for the five-match Test series.

Lancashire's Tom Hartley is set to make his test debut



in Hyderabad after Stokes announced a spin-heavy attack also including fellow left-armer Jack Leach and teenage leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed with Joe Root as the fourth option.

Ben Foakes returned as wicketkeeper, freeing Jonny Bairstow to play as a specialist batter at number five.

The five-match Test series

between India and England begins on January 25 in Hyderabad with the next four matches to be played in Vizag, Rajkot, Ranchi and Dharamsala.

England's Playing XI for Hyderabad: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow, Ben Stokes (C), Ben Foakes (Wk), Rehan Ahmed, Tom Hartley, Mark Wood, Jack Leach.

NO.1 RANKING WILL INSPIRE 'GEN-NEXT' OF INDIAN TENNIS: BOPANNA

TDG NETWORK
MELBOURNE

Rohan Bopanna feels that his ascent to world No. 1 in doubles rankings at the twilight of his career is perfect boost that Indian tennis needed just when it was falling off the radar.

Bopanna is set to become the oldest tennis player to achieve the world No. 1 ranking in men's doubles after reaching the semifinals of the Australian Open along with his partner Matthew Ebden of Australia here on Wednesday.

The 43-year-old, who had entered the tournament with a career-high ranking of world No. 3, and Ebden recorded a comfortable 6-4 7-6(5) win over sixth seeded Argentinian duo of Máximo González and Andrés Molteni in the quarterfi-

nals that lasted an hour and 46 minutes here.

Bopanna will be crowned the new numero uno spot on Monday after the end of the tournament.

"It (the feat) means a lot not to just me but for Indian tennis also. You need something to inspire the next generation. Sumit (Nagal) also had a great Australian Open. He won a round," Bopanna told PTI in an exclusive interview from Melbourne.

And the star player said the feat came with a lot of sacrifices.

"Extremely proud of this (world no.1 ranking in men's doubles). It's a special moment. Lot of sacrifices have gone into this.

My coaches, family everyone. My family is travelling with me, so different feeling," he said.

ROHIT DESCRIBES A DILEMMA IN CHOOSING BETWEEN AXAR AND KULDEEP

TDG NETWORK
HYDERABAD

Indian skipper Rohit Sharma on Wednesday admitted that the team management had a tough time making the third spinner choice between Axar Patel and Kuldeep Yadav for the opening Test against England but hinted that the former might just have made the final cut.

Behind Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja, India are primed to pick a third spinner for the first Test against England, starting here from Thursday.

"If the wicket has bounce or if it doesn't have bounce, he (Kuldeep) still is a factor in those types of conditions because he's got superb variations. Obviously, he is a very mature bowler now from what he was a few years back," Rohit said in the pre-match press conference.

"He's not played a lot of Test cricket in India because of Ashwin and Jadeja. We've seen it in the past as well.



“Axar, you know, with his all-round ability, gives us that batting depth.”
-Rohit Sharma

With our middle-order (batting), in the past, a lot of us (batters) got an opportunity pretty late. "But that's the reality of it, you can't hide away from it. But yes, he's a very tempting option," he added. Although Rohit did not give away his final team for the match, he indicated that Axar might just be the one on the final team sheet. He underlined the utility of the left-arm spinner as an all-rounder, the strongest

clue about the think tank's preference for this Test at least. He dispelled the notion that Axar packs similar abilities as Jadeja and, as such, he might slip down the pecking order.

"Axar, you know, with his all-round ability, gives us that batting depth. The consistency that he's shown, playing in these conditions in Test cricket, also is an important factor for us. "But it was a headache to decide who it is going to be for us. But I am not going to say who it is," said Rohit. The 36-year-old also hoped that premier spinner Ashwin will deliver one more time in conditions familiar to him.

Statistical evidence highlights India's dominance in cricket arena

SUNIL YASH KALRA
NEW DELHI

Hyderabad is set to witness the opening clash between India and England in the five-match Test series during the latter's tour of the country. The Men in Blue, after a three-year hiatus, are hosting the Three Lions for this format, with their last encounter on Indian soil resulting in a 3-1 victory for the host nation in early 2021.

India's formidable dominance at home over the last 12 years faces a unique test as Rohit Sharma's side prepares to take on a trend-defying England in the inaugural match of what promises to be an enthralling five-Test series starting on Thursday. Since their 1-2 defeat against Alastair Cook's Three Lions in 2012, India has been unparalleled at

- Matches Played: 131
- India Won: 31
- England Won: 50
- Drawn: 0
- NR: 0
- Abandoned: 0

home, securing 16 successive series wins, including seven series sweeps. Breaking down the stats further reveals that out of the 44 Tests played on home turf during this phase, India has only lost three, showcasing a dominance surpassing even the formidable West Indies of the '80s and the turn-of-the-century Australian team. India will be without Virat Kohli for the first two Tests, with the batter withdrawing due to undisclosed personal reasons. In Kohli's absence, the team is expected to bring in Yashasvi Jaiswal, Shubman Gill,

and Shreyas Iyer into the top and middle order, aiming to replicate the impact Kohli has exerted over the team for years.

This series also marks India's final international cricket outing before the ICC T20 Cricket World Cup 2024. After its conclusion in early March, both teams will head to their respective camps to participate in the latest edition of the Indian Premier League, expected to commence in late March and continue until the end of May.

In the history of bilateral Test series between India and England, 35 have been played, with India winning 11, losing 19, and five ending in a draw. Notably, England has struggled on Indian soil, winning only 14 out of the 64 Test matches played between the two teams in India, while India secured victory in 22 match-

es, and 28 ended in a draw.

Contrary to expectations, the pitch at the Rajiv Gandhi International Stadium is anticipated to favor fast bowlers rather than spinners. Additionally, it is expected to be a batting-friendly surface, conducive to high scores. In the last Test match held at the venue in 2018 between India and West Indies, both teams posted 300+ scores in their respective first innings, with Umesh Yadav earning the Player of the match award for his remarkable performance with six wickets in the first innings and four in the second. The cricket enthusiasts await an exciting showdown between two formidable teams in the upcoming Test series.

Sunil Yash Kalra is a women's cricket historian and founder of Indian Sports Fans.

knows he can find space and we all hope he has more to put his stamp on the tournament."

South Korea have not yet guaranteed a top-two finish, with the team on four points, and play Malaysia in their final group game on Thursday. Klinsmann said there was a lot of room for improvement as they look to regain their rhythm.

INDIA U-19 SQUAD GEARS UP FOR CRUCIAL CLASH AGAINST IRELAND IN ICC U-19 WORLD CUP

SUNIL YASH KALRA
BLOEMFONTEIN

In a determined effort to secure their place in the knockout stage, the rising cricket talents of India's U-19 team are gearing up for a more proactive batting approach as they square off against Ireland in the 15th match of the ICC Under-19 World Cup 2024. For Ireland U19, this encounter is crucial, marking their third and final group clash. A loss here could bring an end to their journey in the tournament.

The Indian U-19 team made a powerful statement in the ICC Under-19 Men's World Cup 2024, clinching a resounding 84-run victory over Bangladesh. Led by Captain Uday Saharan, the team showcased dominance by posting a formidable total of 251/7 in Bloemfontein. Their momentum continued with an impressive bowling performance, dismissing Bangladesh for 167 and securing two crucial points, propelling India to the top spot in Group A.

In contrast, Ireland U19 started their campaign with a promising seven-wicket win over the United States but faced a setback with a six-wicket defeat to Bangladesh. Their hopes now hinge on re-

INDIA U-19 VS IRELAND
U-19 HEAD TO HEAD

■ Match: 2

■ India U-19: 2

■ Ireland U-19: 0

versing their fortunes in the final group stage game, offering them a chance to advance to the Super Six stage.

In the opening game against Bangladesh, Captain Uday Saharan (64) and top-scorer Adarsh Singh (76) displayed strike rates of 79 and 68, sparking discussions about their adaptability to contemporary cricket standards. The team's reliance on left-arm spinners Saumy Kumar Pandey and Musheer Khan proved effective.

Optimism surrounds Saumy, the standout bowler in the first match, with hopes that any potential shoulder problems are not significant. On the renowned Bloemfontein pitch known for its slower pace, Indian batters are expected to focus on improved strike rotation and finding gaps during Powerplay overs.

With talent scouts closely monitoring the 'Boys in Blue' and a mega IPL auction on the horizon, players like Saharan, Adarsh, and Priyans-

hu Moliya need to elevate their game to attract the attention of key decision-makers. Sachin Dhas's impactful cameo in the first game, guiding India past the 250-run mark, serves as a testament to this requirement.

All eyes are now on Priyanshu, the sole player in the side with two Ranji Trophy centuries for Baroda. His upcoming match against Ireland provides an opportunity for redemption after questions were raised about his defensive mindset in the first game.

For Ireland, the challenge lies in facing the trio of new ball bowlers—Oliver Riley, Reuben Wilson, and Carson McCullough. Simultaneously, the experienced duo of Arshin Kulkarni and Musheer Khan is eager to make a substantial impact with the bat.

Anticipation builds for the India-Ireland clash as cricket enthusiasts eagerly await the unfolding drama on the field. The younger talents aim to leave a lasting impression on the international stage, ensuring each match becomes a captivating spectacle for fans worldwide.

Sunil Yash Kalra is a women's cricket historian and founder of Indian Sports Fans.

KLINSMANN PREDICTS SOUTH KOREA SKIPPER'S SON TO SHINE IN ASIAN CUP

TDG NETWORK
DOHA

South Korea skipper Son Heung-min has struggled to make his mark at the Asian Cup as defensive opponents do their best to shut him down but the Tottenham Hotspur forward will find a way in the coming games, coach Juergen Klinsmann said on Wednesday.

Son is one of the most recognisable players at the tournament in Qatar with years of experience in the Premier League, but he has scored only one goal in two games — a penalty in a 2-2 draw with Jordan.

"Son will always get special attention in this tournament because he plays in the Premier League, it's a normal process," Klinsmann told reporters.

"When he gets the ball there will be two or three players closing him down since they play with a defensive-minded approach. It's similar for Lee Kang-in who plays for Paris St Germain. "For them to find space and opportunities to score and assist, opponents will always try to minimise that wherever they can no matter who you play against. "Sonny knows how to deal with that, he