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UJALA SHIKHAR

News Of The Depths

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'India has skill, technology and manpower to build New Kuwait': PM

➔ Modi visited Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. It is the first time in 43 years that an Indian PM is visiting the Gulf nation



New Delhi (Agency): While addressing the Indian diaspora, Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Kuwait said that India has the skill, technology, innovation and manpower that is needed for the "new Kuwait". Modi visited Kuwait at the invitation of Kuwaiti Emir Sheikh Meshal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Two countries are connected with the bonds of the heart, said Modi at the 'Hala Modi' event in Kuwait. "India and Kuwait are located on two shores of the Arabian Sea; it's not just diplomacy that connects us, but also bonds of the heart. Relationship between India and Kuwait is one of civilization, sea, affection, trade, and commerce," he said at the event. "Kuwait, through trade and innovation, wants to be a dynamic economy...India is also focusing on innovation and strengthening its economy," he added.

This is the first time an Indian PM is visiting the Gulf nation in 43 years. "Every year, hundreds of Indians come to Kuwait; you have added Indian touch to Kuwaiti society. You have filled Kuwait's canvas with colours of Indian skills, mixed with the essence of India's talent, technology and tradition," said Modi. Modi arrived in Kuwait on Saturday for a two-day official trip. He praised the Indians in the country for their cooperation in development. "You all have come from different parts of India, but looking at all of you, it feels like a mini India has gathered here," he said. Bolstering defence and security cooperation is the key focus of the visit. The Ministry of External Affairs also said discussions were underway with Kuwait for a bilateral investment treaty and a defence cooperation agreement.

Rajasthan HC takes suo motu cognizance of Jaipur tanker fire; death toll rises to 14

Jaipur (Agency): The Rajasthan High Court on Saturday took suo motu cognizance of the loss of lives in the LPG tanker fire that occurred in Bhankrota, on the outskirts of Jaipur, on Friday. The tragic incident has claimed 14 lives so far. A Single Bench led by Justice Anoop Kumar issued notices to the Petroleum Ministry, Rajasthan Chief Secretary, Petroleum Secretary, and the state's Disaster Management Department. The court has sought responses on key issues, including compensation for the victims and their families and the relocation of factories and godowns dealing with combustible and inflammable materials from densely populated urban areas.

Meanwhile, three more individuals succumbed to their injuries overnight, bringing the death toll to 14. The accident occurred when an LPG tanker, turning towards Bagru on the Ajmer-Jaipur Highway, was struck from behind by a speeding truck. The collision caused a massive explosion, igniting a fire that engulfed several vehicles and nearby shops. The explosion, which took place near a petrol pump, forced rescue teams to exercise extreme caution. The blaze left around 50 people severely injured. According to the SMS Hospital spokesman, five individuals died en route to the hospital, and six succumbed while receiving treatment. Another victim died at Jaipuria Hospital. Currently, 27 injured victims, most with burns exceeding 80 per cent, are being treated, with seven of them in critical condition and on ventilators. A total of 37 vehicles, including 29 trucks, two sleeper coaches, and 6-7 cars, were burnt in the fire. Police officials confirmed that identifying the deceased has been challenging, as many bodies were charred beyond recognition. So far, only nine victims have been identified.

7 INDIANS INJURED IN CHRISTMAS MARKET ATTACK IN GERMANY: SOURCES

New Delhi (Agency): Seven Indians were injured in the Christmas market attack in Germany, sources said today. Three of them have been discharged from hospital, they said, adding the Indian Embassy is in touch with all the injured Indians. The Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) in a statement said India condemns the "horrific and senseless attack at the Christmas market in Magdeburg, Germany." "Several precious lives have been lost and many have been injured. Our thoughts and prayers are with the victims. Our Mission is in contact with Indians who are injured, as well as their families, and rendering all possible assistance," the MEA said.

Germany's Chancellor Olaf Scholz condemned the "terrible, insane" attack that killed five people and shocked the nation, days before Christmas and eight years after a jihadist drove a truck into a Christmas market in Berlin.

The suspect, a Saudi, in the deadly car-ramming attack held strongly anti-Islam views and was angry with Germany's migrant policy, news agency AFP reported on Saturday. The accused, Taleb al-Abdulmohsen, drove an SUV at high speed through a dense crowd on Friday, also injuring 205 people in the eastern city of Magdeburg. The mass carnage sparked sorrow and revulsion, with a nine-year-old child among the dead and casualties being treated in 15 regional hospitals. A self-described "Saudi atheist" who as an activist who helped women flee the oil-rich kingdom, he has railed against Islam but also against what he saw as Germany's permissive attitude towards refugees from other mainly Muslim countries. Interior Minister Nancy Fraser said he held "Islamophobic" views, and a prosecutor said that "the background to the crime... could have been disgruntlement with the way Saudi Arabian refugees are treated in Germany".





STRATEGIC REALIGNMENT?

New Delhi alert as Pakistan, China swiftly capture diplomatic spaces in Bangladesh

New Delhi (Agency): Swift attempts by both Beijing and Islamabad to engage Bangladesh's interim chief adviser, Muhammad Yunus, haven't gone unnoticed by New Delhi. While India may have been cautious in its interactions with Bangladesh's interim chief adviser Muhammad Yunus, as well as the BNP, since the ousting of Sheikh Hasina from power on August 5, it isn't oblivious to the fast-paced strategic realignment in the region.

The security and strategic concerns are multifold. Pakistan and China seeking to rekindle ties with Bangladesh isn't just about increasing trade and exchanges in culture or sports, rather, the growing political affiliations are an outcome of several policy and strategic moves in the last four months.

Brisk strategic and policy planning went behind closed doors in Islamabad to deliver the outcome of the recent meeting between Pakistan's Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif and Yunus on the sidelines of a conference in Egypt.

The efforts began on August 5 itself, when the high commissioner of Pakistan called on the BNP leaders and the chief adviser of the Bangladesh interim government on separate occasions. Simultaneous moves were made to engage on issues of strategic importance, where meetings were held with the attorney general of Bangladesh, adviser for home affairs, adviser for social welfare and women and children affairs, adviser on cultural affairs and adviser for commerce. The last four months also threw up opportunities for the Federation of Bangladesh Chamber of Commerce and Industries (FBCCI) to exchange views on bringing business communities together and improving trade relations.

By September, the stage was set for foreign affairs adviser, Md. Touhid Hossain, to declare that Bangladesh wishes to have normal relations with Pakistan. "At least 17 one-to-one meetings were held in the last four months compared to two such meetings since 2019," diplomatic experts pointed out, explaining the work that went behind making the Sharif-Yunus meeting a success, especially with the latter expressing keenness to resolve issues from the separation in 1971.

The changed political affiliations have closely been intertwined with demonstrable outcomes in policy decisions. For instance, the first ever direct shipping connection since 1971 was established when a cargo ship arrived in Chittagong port from Karachi port last month and is on its second journey, set for arrival in the eastern neighbourhood today. Besides being a major step in bilateral trade between the two countries, it is also a signal of the close proximity being sought alongside stepping up people-to-people contact.



Pakistan now offers visa prior to arrival to Bangladeshi citizens, who can now get Pakistani Visa free of cost in 48 hours by uploading credentials on their visa portal, even as Dhaka waived customs inspections for Pakistan imports as well as security clearance requirements for Pakistani citizens seeking a visa to enter Bangladesh, immigration officials pointed out. Not to miss the diplomatic talks being held with US-Bangla Airlines teams discussing prospects of direct Pakistan-Bangladesh flights, sources said.

Such a move could bolster higher education opportunities in Pakistan, said diplomatic experts, as talks are on for opening up prospects for Bangladeshi students. Pakistan's facilitation of a performance by singer Rahat Fateh Ali Khan at the Bangladeshi Premier League's opening ceremony is just one among the many steps being taken to explore the opportunities in cultural and tourist spaces as well.

India's second neighbour China, on the other hand, has no political favourites in Bangladesh and has quickly engaged those in power. In early September, when Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Yao Wen met with Shafiqur Rahman, the chief of Jamaat-e-Islami (JeI) at the party's central office in Dhaka, strategic experts in Delhi sat up to take notice as it marked the first time a foreign diplomat had been to the JeI office since 2010.

"The willingness of Beijing to maintain lines of communication across the entire political spectrum demonstrates its capacity to adapt to a rapidly evolving political situation in the region," said a senior security official.

The outcome was positive for Beijing as the Chinese Embassy in Dhaka opened its doors on November 25 to host a reception for leaders of political parties like Jamaat-e-Islami, Hefazat-e-Islam Bangladesh, Khelafat Majlis, Bangladesh Khilafat Andolan, and Nizam-e-Islam Party. In another instance, a BNP delegation attended the political party plus cooperation event in Beijing from November 7 to 16 which brought together representatives from political parties in South East Asian and South Asian nations. The Chinese used to host the Awami League in such events earlier, pointed out a security official.

On November 5, when President Xi Jinping announced China has decided to give all Least Developed Countries(LDCs) having diplomatic relations with China, zero-tariff treatment for 100 per cent tariff lines exported to China starting from December 1, there was much jubilation on both sides.

Known for its soft power prowess, Beijing also facilitated the visit of "Hello, China" youth delegation of Bangladeshi Chinese language learners, Wushu athletes, and outstanding high school students to Yunnan Province from November 25-30. The exchanges have been far and wide, pointed out a security official, referring to the Yunus government's invitation to the Chinese National Emergency Medical Team to Dhaka.

All this was made possible once again by the swift political dialogue by the Chinese diplomats in Dhaka in several meetings since the interim government came to power. For example, Chinese High Commissioner Yao Wen called on the principal secretary to Yunus, the commerce adviser of the interim government and the special envoy on international affairs in Bangladesh as well as the BNP leaders. What has also not gone unnoticed is the Chinese naval fleet visiting Dhaka, becoming the first foreign fleet to do so since the interim government took over in August.

EC clarifies on amendment made in Conduct of Election Rules

New Delhi (Agency): Amid criticism from Congress on the amendment made in the Conduct of Election Rules, the Election Commission of India (ECI) on Saturday categorically said candidates already have access to all the documents and papers, and nothing has been amended in the rules in this regard. In response to a query on the amendment made by the Centre in the Conduct of Election Rules on Friday, an official of the poll panel said recently Punjab and Haryana High Court in a case – Mahmoud Pracha vs ECI had directed sharing of all documents related to Haryana Assembly elections, including treating CCTV footage also as permissible under Rule 93(2) of the Conduct of Election Rules.

Informing that the rule mentioned election papers, the official said, "The election papers and documents does not specifically refer to electronic records." "In order to remove this ambiguity and considering the serious issue of violation of secrecy of vote and potential misuse of CCTV footage of inside the polling station using artificial intelligence by a single person, the rule has been amended to safeguard misuse of CCTV footage of inside of the polling station," the official said.

The poll panel official further said, "Sharing of CCTV footage may have serious repercussions specially in sensitive areas like J&K, naxal affected regions, etc where secrecy is important. Lives of the voters may also be at risk. All election papers and documents are otherwise available for public inspection." "Candidates in any case have access to all documents, papers and records. Even Pracha was entitled for all the documents and records from his constituency when he contested as a candidate in Lok Sabha Elections 2024," the official added.

Earlier in the day, Congress general secretary incharge of Communications Jairam Ramesh slammed the ECI over the amendment in the Conduct of Election Rules and said it will be challenged legally. In a post on X, the Congress MP said, "If there was ever a vindication of our assertions regarding the rapidly eroding integrity of the electoral process managed by the ECI in recent times, this is it. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and information will restore faith in the process – a reasoning the Punjab and Haryana High Court agreed with when it directed the ECI to share all information that it is legally required to do so with the public." "Yet the ECI, instead of complying with the judgment, rushes to amend the law to curtail the list of what can be shared. Why is the ECI so afraid of transparency? This move of the ECI will be challenged legally right away," he said.

Nadda holds meet on 100-day intensified TB elimination campaign

New Delhi (Agency): Union Health Minister Jagat Prakash Nadda on Saturday held a meeting with Chief Ministers/LGs and state Health Ministers, requesting their support toward the ongoing 100-day intensified TB elimination campaign. During the meeting convened by Nadda via video conferencing, the CMs/LGs and state Health Ministers were provided an overview of the campaign, its objectives, the key strategic activities being undertaken, and the role of states/UTs in ensuring the successful implementation of the campaign. The Union Health Minister urged the States/UTs to monitor the campaign at the state level and ensure the same is done by the political and administrative leadership at the district levels. He suggested that to ensure a whole-of-government approach, other ministries and departments can be roped in to support campaign activities, similar to the approach taken at the national level.

Nadda also urged the CMs to involve elected representatives, especially Members of Legislative Assemblies and Councils, as well as Panchayati Raj Institutions, and encourage their active participation to help mobilize communities. He highlighted that the rate of TB decline in India has doubled from 8.3 per cent in 2015 to 17.7 per cent, which is much ahead of the global average. He also informed that deaths due to TB have reduced significantly in India by 21.4 per cent in the last 10 years.

Crediting the state ministers for the achievements made towards TB eradication, the Union Health Minister thanked them for their support towards the campaign. He highlighted the importance of test, track and diagnostics for active TB testing, screening and diagnosis of patients and urged them to actively monitor the campaign in the identified districts in their respective states.

ISRO drafts its first 'POEM' to study how life works in space

New Delhi (Agency): India for the very first time is flying biological experiments into space using a homegrown rocket. The next launch of the Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle (PSLV) will see not one, but three biological experiments with living cells being rocketed into space. Keeping living things alive in the hostile near vacuum of space is a hugely challenging task.

India will fly living biological material from plants such as spinach, cowpea, and gut bacteria - three different experiments are being planned to be flown onboard the PSLV Orbital Experimental Module-4 (POEM-4).

Keeping any organism alive in space is a challenge as all life support systems have to be provided in a small sealed box. The results of the experiments also have to be gathered remotely. This is on the fourth stage of the PSLV which the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) makes available to academics to conduct experiments in the real space environment.

"In a first such venture, ISRO is flying live biological experiments into space from India. We would have had to start studies on astrobiology sooner than later, and now ISRO will write a whole new poem using the PSLV experimental platform and let Indian biologists explore all aspects of how life can survive in the hostile environment of space," ISRO Chairman Dr S Somanath said.

The next mission of the PSLV named C-60, scheduled very soon, is actually a hugely experimental mission with the main experiment being the Space Docking Experiment (SPADEX) where ISRO will show for the first time docking and undocking of two Indian satellites in space. But in an effort to promote testing of new ideas and technologies, ISRO has made the POEM platform available to Indian start-ups and its own in-house scientific teams to try out novel ideas. In the next mission, 24 payloads will be tested on the fourth stage of the PSLV.

The biological experiments being flown may seem small and elementary in comparison to the huge biological experiments conducted onboard global space stations, but then at some point ISRO had to initiate studies of how life forms perform in space.



It is a small biological step by ISRO that will propel India closer to the Gaganyaan mission where India seeks to fly an Indian into space from Indian soil on an Indian rocket. More detailed experiments could also be planned on the Bhartiya Antariksha Station that will come up by 2035.

Scientists from Amity University, Mumbai are testing how cells of common spinach perform in the near zero gravity environment of space. Scientists from the Amity Centre for Excellence in Astrobiology led by Dr AW Santhosh Kumar, Vice Chancellor, and his nine-member team are trying to decipher how a mass of cells derived from Spinacea oleracea will perform in space.

Rather than flying full spinach plants tissue culture, grown cells will be used as an experimental model. Dr Kumar said his team has designed a biological payload to be set on orbit through ISRO with an objective to study the possibility of food and nutrition during space missions. The experiment aims at real time monitoring of the biological payload in space. Dr Kumar in his earlier avatar as a researcher in the US has flown human cell samples to the International Space Station and so, he has experience of conducting astrobiology experiments. In another live experiment using gut bacteria, undergraduate students from RV College of Engineering, Bengaluru are flying RVSAT-1, India's first microbiological payload. In an enclosed capsule, the gut bacterium Bacteroides thetaiotaomicron will be sent into space to better understand them. The team wants to explore the implications of bacterial growth on gut health and gene regulation, providing valuable data for understanding human physiology in space.

An in-house team of ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC), Thiruvananthapuram, using the Compact Research Module for orbital Plant Studies (CROPS) will demonstrate how seeds and leaves of cowpea germinate in near zero gravity environment of space. Seedlings lose orientation when grown in microgravity conditions.

"Studying plant growth in space is new to ISRO and the 15-member team is very excited to see the results," said T Latha, Deputy Director of VSSC. Dr Somanath said these are the first baby steps that could result in mega biological experiments to be undertaken onboard the Bharatiya Antariksha station. "Supporting startups and researchers outside ISRO greatly helps India's large scientific pool get a feel of the space environment," Dr Somanath said.

MAHARASHTRA PORTFOLIOS

Fadnavis keeps Home, Ajit Pawar Finance; Shinde gets Urban Development

Bawankule gets Revenue, Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil Water Resources, Hasan Mushrif Medical Education

Mumbai (Agency): Setting days-long speculations at rest, Maharashtra Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis on Saturday allocated the portfolios among the ministers of his cabinet while keeping the key home department for himself. Among Fadnavis's deputies, Ajit Pawar retained the finance portfolio while Eknath Shinde, who was reportedly lobbying for the home ministry, has got three ministries including the Urban Development.

Besides Home, the chief minister is in charge of Law and Judiciary, General Administration, Information and Publicity and other departments which are not allowed to any other ministers. Shinde will also hold Housing and Public Works departments while Ajit Pawar will be in charge of Excise ministry, too.

The portfolios were allocated six days after the chief minister expanded his cabinet by inducting 39 ministers. Fadnavis, along with his deputies, had taken oath on December 5.

Mahayuti stormed back to power, winning 230 of the 288 seats, with BJP alone pocketing 132 seats. The Shiv Sena and the NCP bagged 58 and 41 seats, respectively.

There were reports that Shinde, who was the chief minister in the previous NDA government, had demanded some key portfolios including Home. The BJP, the single largest party, however, didn't want to give away the plum department to its ally. Among the BJP ministers, Chandrashekhar Bawankule got Revenue; Radhakrishna Vikhe Patil Water Resources- Krishna and Godavari Valley Development corporation; Chandrakant Patil Higher and Technical Education and Parliamentary affairs; Girish Mahajan Water Resources- Vidarbha , Tapi, Konkan Development Corporation and Disaster Management.



Other BJP ministers and portfolios: Ganesh Naik - Forests, Mangal Prabhat Lodha Skill Development, Employment, Entrepreneurship and Innovation, Jaykumar - Raval Marketing and Protocol, Pankaja Munde - Environment and Climate Change, Animal Husbandry, Atul Save - OBC Welfare, Dairy Development and Renewable Energy, Ashok Uike - Tribal Development, Ashish Shelar - Cultural Affairs and Information Technology, Shivendrasinh Bhosale - Public Works, Jaykumar Gore - Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Sanjay Savkare - Textiles, Nitesh Rane - Fisheries and Ports, Akash Fundkar - Labour.

Shiv Sena ministers and portfolios, Gulabrao Patil - Water Supply and Sanitation, Dadaji Bhuse - School Education, Sanjay Rathod - Soil and Water Conservation

Uday Samant - Industries and Marathi language. Shambhuraj Desai - Tourism, Mining, Ex-servicemen Welfare, Sanjay Shirsat - Social Justice, Pratap Sarnaik - Transport, Bharat Gogawale - Employment Guarantee, Horticulture, Salt Pan Lands Development, Prakash Abitkar - Public Health and Family Welfare.

NCP ministers' and portfolios: Hasan Mushrif - Medical Education, Dhananjay Munde - Food and Civil Supplies and Consumer Protection, Dattatrey Bharne - Sports ,Youth welfare and Minority Development, Aditi Tatkare - Women and Child Development, Manikrao Kokate - Agriculture, Narhari Zirwal - Food and Drug Administration, Special assistance, Makrand Patil - Relief and Rehabilitation, Babasaheb Patil - Cooperation.

Every woman is capable to create her own success story: UP CM

Gorakhpur (Agency): Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said that every woman has the potential to create her own success story. During the inauguration of the Shri Baba Gorakhnath Kripa Milk Producer Organization, run by the State Rural Livelihood Mission (SRLM), and the opening of seven milk chilling centres in the Gorakhpur division, CM Yogi highlighted the importance of women's self-reliance and the opportunities available for them to thrive through hard work and training. Addressing the gathering at Yogiraj Baba Gambhirnath Auditorium, CM Yogi stated, "No society can progress by ignoring half of its population. Women's safety, respect, and self-reliance are vital for the development of the nation and society."

He encouraged women to choose their fields, receive proper training, and move forward with dedication. The Chief Minister lauded women's achievements, particularly those in the National Rural Livelihood Mission, and distributed certificates to several women for their outstanding work. Vidyut Sakhis, BC Sakhis, Lakhpati Didis, Namo Drone Didis, and Bank Sakhis were among those honoured for their contributions to society. In a significant move, CM Yogi transferred Rs 242.30 crore to 7,405 women self-help groups under the National Livelihood Mission. This financial support aims to further empower women and enhance their economic participation.



WORKERS MAKING HUGE PANDALS IN KUMBH MELA



Beautiful painting of Adi Ganesh temple located in Daraganj

Christmas celebration organized at SJC

UJALA SHIKHAR

Prayagraj Christmas celebration was celebrated with great enthusiasm in the school premises on 21.12.24. On this occasion, the school was decorated with colorful lights. The school's Principal Father Walter D'Silva, along with the Primary School's Head Teacher Father Melvin Paes, Administrator A Magavan, Middle School Administrator Father Gladwin Fernandes, Chief Coordinator Jyoti Dubey, all the teachers and Father Lawrence as a special guest also participated in the celebration.



Christmas songs were sung by the teachers of LKG, Primary, and Senior Department in the celebration. After this, a message was given by the school teacher Joy Peter highlighting the importance of Christmas. He told that this festival gives the message of brotherhood, sharing happiness and forgiving everyone's mistakes. Throwing light on the life of Jesus Christ, he said that we should adopt his values in our lives. Thereafter, a special prayer meeting was held for the good health and well-being of Miss Diane, a teacher of the primary section of the school, in which the school's principal Father Walter D'Silva prayed. Continuing the series of the program, a Housie game was played for the entertainment of the teachers under the supervision of Middle School Coordinator Aparna Ranjan and Engr. Pratik Hemranjani.

After this, Father Walter D'Silva addressed everyone in his short speech and wished them a Merry Christmas and gave a message full of love and goodwill. The program ended with the blessings of Father Melvin Face.



DASHA SWAMEDH TEMPLE LOCATED AT DARA GANJ

Padam Society Election
Today from 11 am to 2 pm

UJALA SHIKHAR

Prayagraj: Padam Society is a 10 year old society situated on Rewa Road Dandi. For the last four years they have been electing office bearers unopposed. For the first time the residents of Padam have decided to stand for election. The President is Smt. Renu Saxena and Vijay Rai, Mr. Gyanendra Pratap Singh and Samarendra on the post of secretary and Mr. Neeraj ji on the post of treasurer, Mr. Ratan Chaudhary ji, Harsh Pa on the vice president, there are 92 votes in this society. The big issue facing the society is the safety of its society from the recent thefts, lift, sports for the health of seniors and children, sewer line, new boring, appointing a new caretaker, improving the society budget. Festivals like Khichdi, Diwali, Holi, Christmas, Eid and Bakrid etc. have to be celebrated together with enthusiasm and enthusiasm. Its election officer is Mr. Vivek ji and acting chairperson is Mrs. Purnima Nirkhi ji.

Contribution of Mahakumbh imp in protecting Sanatan religion and culture: Shankaracharya Adhokshajanand

SHIV JI MALVIYA

Prayagraj: The Bhoomi Pujan of the Maha Kumbh Mela Camp of Shri Aadya Shankaracharya Dharamotthan Sansad was performed on Saturday at Kumbhnagar located on Harshvardhan Road, Sector 18. Bhoomi Pujan was completed amidst the chanting of Vedic mantras in the presence of Purvaamnaya Govardhanmath Puri Peethadhishwar Jagadguru Shankaracharya Swami Adhokshajanand Devtirtha. While talking to journalists on this occasion, Shankaracharya said that the contribution of Mahakumbh is important in protecting and promoting Sanatan Dharma and culture. During Mahakumbh, sages and saints reflect on various religious, cultural and social topics and give directions to the society. This tradition has continued for centuries.



Shankaracharya Swami Adhokshajanand Devtirtha said that this time also the sages and saints will brainstorm on various subjects in the Mahakumbh and will also give a message to the nation. He said that during Mahakumbh, crores of devotees from India and abroad come here and takes a dip in the holy waters of Sangam. This spiritual gathering of reverence and devotion is unique in the whole world. This is the specialty of Sanatan culture. Shankaracharya said that preparations for Mahakumbh are going on in full swing. He praised Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Aditya Nath for the wonderful preparations for the grand and divine Mahakumbh. He also expressed confidence that this time's Mahakumbh will be unforgettable. Shankaracharya said that this time many religious and cultural programs will be organized in the Mahakumbh Mela camp of Dharmotthan Sansad. During this time, learned sages and saints will give sermons on religious subjects. Also, Akhand Bhandara will be organised. Yagya and religious rituals will be performed under the supervision of learned Acharyas. On this occasion, National President of Nirmohi Ani Akhada Shri Mahant Rajendra Das, Mahant Manohar Puri of Juna Akhada, boy Yogeshwar Das of Badrinath, senior advocate of Allahabad High Court Amarendra Singh, State Information Commissioner PN Dwivedi, administration and police officials, and a large number of Journalists were present.

C. M. P. Degree College and Hare Ram Seva Sansthan jointly distributed old clothes and other materials

UJALA SHIKHAR

Prayagraj: C. M. P. Degree College (Help Committee) and Hare Ram Under the joint auspices of Seva Sansthan, old clothes and other materials were distributed free of cost at Kachhari Road Prayagraj. Chief Trustee of Hare Ram Seva Sansthan Anant Singh (Assistant Professor C.M.P. P.G. College accomplished this noble task. Anant Singh said, "The objective of Hare Ram Seva Sansthan and CMP Degree College is to provide relief to the needy in any time of crisis.

Under this, this institution Distributed relief material in Kachhari Road, Prayagraj.



This organization has always been at the forefront of social service work and we will ensure that the necessary material reaches every victim. Relief work will be expanded to more areas in the coming days. He also told that hundreds of volunteers of the organization are continuously working to provide support to the needy and are ensuring that no helpless and needy person has to suffer. In this noble work, C.M.P.P.G. . College professor Dr. Anil Pandit and students Mitesh Yadav, Avnish Kumar, Anurag Maurya, Sachin Rai, Deepak Yadav, Harsh, Amit, Ajay, Rahul, Ajit, Sameer and others provided support.

Ramta Panch of Niranjani Akhara reached Prayagraj from Haridwar to participate in Mahakumbh

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Prayagraj: Panch left from Haridwar by train after the Kadhi Rice ceremony on Friday and reached Prayagraj on Saturday morning. Ramta Panch was welcomed by the saints of Niranjani Akhara at Prayagraj Sangam station. After this the Panch reached Math Baghambari Gaddi, where the head of the monastery Shri Mahant Balveer Giri welcomed with Vedic mantras. Flowers were showered and the ritualistic Brahmins recited Swastiva. Mahant Balveer Giri said that Ramta Panch's Dera Math will remain in Baghambari till the Cantonment Entry Shobha Yatra to be held on January 4. The Cantonment Entry Shobha Yatra will start from the Math itself and reach the fair camp of the Akhara.

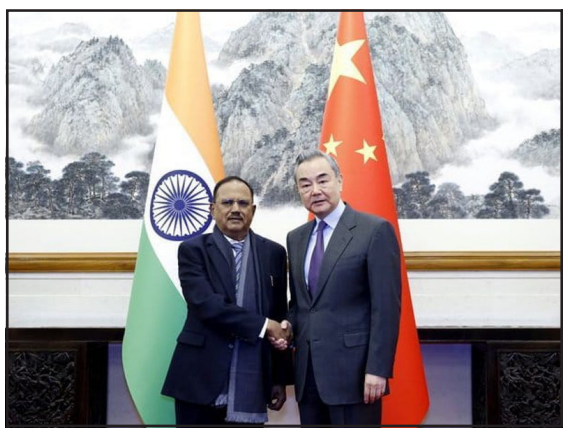


EDITORIAL

India-China talks

A step forward in bilateral relations

THE recent Special Representatives' meeting in Beijing between India's National Security Adviser Ajit Doval and Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi marks a pivotal moment in bilateral diplomacy. This first dialogue in nearly five years, following the 2020 Galwan valley clash, reflects a cautious yet significant shift toward normalising ties between the two Asian giants. Central to the discussions was the implementation of the October 2024 disengagement agreement in Ladakh. Both sides committed to maintaining peace and tranquillity along the Line of Actual Control, a critical step to prevent future conflicts. The meeting also underscored a six-point consensus aimed at deepening cooperation in areas such as border trade, data sharing on trans-border rivers and the resumption of



the Kailash Mansarovar Yatra.

While the agreements signal progress, challenges persist. The border dispute remains a complex and sensitive issue, compounded by historical grievances and mutual mistrust. The emphasis on confidence-building measures and 'step-by-step' resolutions demonstrates pragmatic diplomacy. However, translating these commitments into actionable change will require sustained political will and vigilance. The broader implications of this meeting cannot be overlooked. As both nations grapple with shifting global power dynamics, their engagement holds the potential to influence the multipolar world order. Collaborative initiatives in trade, technology and multilateral platforms like BRICS could pave the way for a more stable and prosperous region.

Yet, peace is only the starting point. Both nations must seize this opportunity to redefine their relationship through people-to-people exchanges, eased trade barriers and cultural cooperation. These steps are essential to build trust and overcome the lingering shadows of conflict. The path to reconciliation is long, but this dialogue offers hope for a more harmonious future. For India and China, peace is not just an ideal but a necessity.

IAF training hiccups

CAG red-flags glaring deficiencies

THE highlight of the Indian Air Force's (IAF) 92nd Raising Day celebrations in October this year was a typically spectacular air show, whose theme was 'Bhartiya Vayu Sena — Saksham, Sashakt, Atmanirbhar (potent, powerful and self-reliant)'. Those three words were supposed to reflect the IAF's "unwavering dedication to safeguarding the nation's airspace". The ground reality, however, is not all that rosy. In a report tabled in Parliament on Wednesday, the Comptroller and Auditor General (CAG) of India has flagged deficiencies in the training of IAF pilots. Under intense scrutiny is the Pilatus PC-7 Mk-II aircraft, which is being used to impart Stage-1 flying training since 2013. The performance audit has noted that 25 per cent of these aircraft reported 38 snags due to engine oil leaks between 2013 and 2021. No less worrying are the delays in the IAF's aircraft modernisation plans that have affected stages 2 and 3 of pilot training for transport and helicopter streams.

Outdated equipment is another area of concern. The world's fourth-largest air force cannot afford to



compromise on the upgrade of training simulators and aircraft. Trainee pilots need state-of-the-art technology to hone their skills. Issues such as engine oil leaks can dampen the spirits of aspirants who want to soar high and protect India's skies. Lowering the bar can prove to be a recipe for disaster.

There are problems not only in terms of quality but also quantity. The shortage of pilots has risen from 486 to 596 in about six years, as the recruitment has fallen short of the targeted intake. The CAG has done its job. Now it is up to the IAF and the government to take corrective action on priority. This vital pillar of India's defence edifice must not be allowed to lose its much-touted potency and power.

Christmas is about caring & sharing

TRYSTS AND TURNS: There is no greater reward than being loved by the men you had the honour of leading

JULIO RIBEIRO

THREE retired head constables invited me to participate in puja to mark Dattatreya Jayanti last week. On arrival at the venue in the Police Lines, I was met by retired and serving cops, who were genuinely pleased that I had come. It was easily the best Christmas gift I could have expected. There is no greater reward than being remembered and loved by the men whom you had at some stage of your career the honour of leading.

That particular temple in the Police Lines had been inaugurated by me in 1982 when I was the city's Police Commissioner. That fact had escaped my memory. A plaque recording the event had been affixed to the temple wall. The men insisted on photographs being taken in front of the plaque that bore my name. The country needs many more people who are willing to part with slices of their wealth for those less fortunate than them.

Without a wife to help me deal with the pressure of touching base with family and friends, I am learning to cope with the Xmas season. There is a constant demand for my presence at gatherings planned for the last month of the year. At my age, it is extremely challenging to venture out of the house in the evenings even once a week, but in this season, the demand is for almost every day of the week.

This year will be my 96th Xmas celebration. I have no recollection of the first seven. My father was the Superintendent of Posts in Baroda when I was born in 1929. He was transferred to Poona (now Pune) as Superintendent of the Railway Mail Service in 1930.

In 1964, I was appointed Superintendent of Police, Pune City. A Hindu priest dressed in a saffron robe strode into my office and introduced himself as "someone who knew me when I was two years old". He said his father had been my father's head clerk in the postal superintendent's office. He introduced himself by the name he had adopted after taking his vow of chastity and commitment to a religious discipline.

Thirty years later, on my way to Rajgurunagar from Mumbai by car, I stopped at Lonavala. On learning of my arrival at the wayside restaurant, two or three men working in an ashram run by the same holy man came over to the table where my wife and I were sitting and greeted us. They told me that the baba had taken samadhi. Since the baba had mentioned me to them more than once, they were delighted to meet me.

That meeting remains etched in my memory, as do the baba's visits to my office in Pune. During one of those visits, he had talked of taking samadhi and I remember trying to dissuade him from doing so. What I regret is that I just cannot remember his name after all these years.

Two Christmases I do remember — one in 1956 and the other in 1989. In 1956, I was the Assistant Superintendent of Police, Nasik division. Deolali was under my jurisdiction. The Artillery Regimental Centre was located there. A young Christian officer named Valladares hitched a ride in my car from Nasik to Mumbai. Both of us were on leave for a week and since our respective parents were from Mumbai, we planned the trip for Xmas.

The young Army officer was from Bandra. I decided to



drop him off at his residence. I had never seen a place so brightly illuminated and decorated as I did on that memorable Xmas eve in 1956. Bandra was almost entirely a Christian enclave in the 1950s. Today, it is only partly so, but the Christians of Bandra still continue to display bright lights.

In 1989, I was posted in Bucharest, the capital of Romania. That was the only year I failed to attend Mass in a church on Xmas Day. Romanian dictator Nicolae Ceausescu had just been deposed. He and his wife Elena were executed by a firing squad that day after a cursory trial. A mini revolution against his dictatorship was at its peak at that time. We could not step out of the ambassador's residence. We spent the day watching armed men move menacingly on the road outside.

This year, I will celebrate the festival in Mumbai in the traditional manner — go to Mass, greeting priests and the congregation, and having Xmas lunch with the family. Some neighbours and close friends will visit. With them I will share cake and wine.

Around Christmas every year, my friend, Leena Gandhi Tewari, observes an annual day for children from the Vakola slums whom she has literally adopted. In the beginning, she began with girls only, but recently she has been admitting boys to her centre, which she has named after her grandmother. These children of domestic help and drivers and the like are taught classical dancing, acting in plays and other forms of art and culture that helps them gain self-confidence, poise and knowledge. Tutors proficient in subjects taught to them in school are employed by the centre to encourage the girls and boys to excel in scholastics.

The results of her efforts over the years have been a source of great satisfaction to the children as well as their parents and also to Leena, her husband Prashant and the staff they have employed in the venture. Leena has spent not only her own money and her time but also her energy with a single-minded devotion to bettering the standards of living of the needy and the dispossessed. This year, two girls cleared the MBA (Finance) exams, three got through the Bachelor of Management Studies course and two in BAF (Bachelor of Accounting and Finance). Their skills are being developed to enable them to compete in the job market.

The country needs many more Leenas who are willing to part with slices of their wealth for those less fortunate than them. Both my own daughters, now into their sixties, mentor girls entrusted to their care by a Delhi-based NGO, the Udayan Shalini Foundation, which has opened a branch in Mumbai. They spend quality time with the mentees, introducing them to polite society and inculcating in them a feeling of self-confidence and pride in their own worth. Two Muslim ladies I know, Mumtaz and Shameem, run the Botawala Trust established by their late father. The trust shelters 50 Muslim girls orphaned at a young age. They house the girls in a building constructed on their own property, feed them and generally attend to their emotional needs. The quality of life in Mumbai has improved for these unfortunate children because the city boasts of such compassionate women.

The alarm over widening trade deficit is misplaced

The govt would rather sustain the narrative of corruption under the UPA than design new PPP policies for large, broad-based private investment in infrastructure.

TK ARUN

IINDIA'S September quarter (Q2) growth came in at a disappointing 5.4 per cent. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has lowered its growth projection for this year to 6.6 per cent, from its earlier forecast of 7.2 per cent. SBI economists put the likely growth rate for the year at 6.3 per cent.

These estimates combine with ordinary folks' lived experience of high prices and persistent unemployment and news flashes of a surge in the trade deficit to record highs, with the official narrative still clamouring that India remains the fastest growing large economy. The economic news is both worse than it looks in some ways and better than it looks in some other ways.

The unexpected spike in the trade deficit in November is no big deal, for example. It was caused by a surge in the import of gold. As global gold prices came down, importers more than doubled the imports of the precious metal — from $7.13 billion in October to $14.8 billion in November. The RBI has, of late, been shoring up gold reserves in the country's overall foreign exchange reserves as well.

What really matters is not so much the trade balance as a broader measure, the current account balance, which takes into account not just the balance in merchandise trade, but also the balance in export and import of services (computer-related services matter a lot), and inflows and outflows of income from the factors of production, labour and capital, comprising remittances, profits, royalties, interest.

The current account balance determines whether a country is a net supplier of savings to the rest of the world, running up a current account surplus, or a net drawer of external savings, running up a current account deficit.

When the current account is in deficit, we end up owing foreigners money. How does that draw external savings into the economy? Let us consider savings and investment in real, rather than monetary, form.

Everything an economy produces in a year is either consumed, invested or exported. Yet, when we add up consumption, investment and exports, we do not get GDP, the value of everything produced in a year. That is because there is an element of imports in the things we consume, invest and even export — we import crude and export refined products, such as petrol and diesel, for example. So, GDP is the sum of consumption, investment and exports net of imports, exports and imports being seen comprehensively, including all services, covering factor services, apart from goods.

Savings are that part of the output that is not consumed. In other words, savings are equal to GDP less consumption, meaning that savings are equal to investment plus net exports. If net exports, that is, the current account balance, is zero, that is, exports exactly match imports, savings would equal investment.

In a closed economy, what the economy can invest is necessarily what it saves, neither bigger, nor smaller.

If exports are less than imports, the current account



balance (next exports) would be negative. Savings, remember, are the sum of investment and next exports. When the net exports element is negative, domestic savings are smaller than domestic investment by that element of net exports. In other words, domestic investment is greater than domestic savings, thanks to that current account deficit (CAD).

With a CAD, you either run down past reserves of foreign exchange or owe foreigners money. That is, foreigners must be willing to finance your CAD. The amount of foreign savings your economy ingests is measured by your CAD, not by capital inflows, classified as foreign direct investments or foreign portfolio investments. These inflows remain as cash balances till they are absorbed into the real economy via financing a CAD.

This is why alarm over a trade deficit is misplaced. India's CAD for 2023-24 was 0.7 per cent of GDP and has nudged up to 1.1 per cent of GDP in the April-June quarter this year. A current account deficit up to 3 per cent is not only sustainable but also desirable, so that the economy can augment domestic savings to invest more and grow faster.

So, worry over a widening trade deficit is wholly misplaced. The only alarm on the external front is that we are unable to run up a current account deficit large enough to accelerate domestic investment and growth.

Slowing growth is indeed a concern, as is the government's contradictory policy response. While the Budget did announce a massive capital outlay, spending has been deficient. At the end of October, while total receipts have been 53.7 per cent of the budget estimate (BE), capital expenditure has been just 42 per cent of BE, even as revenue expenditure has been 54.1 per cent of BE. Nor has there been any coherent policy to boost private investment.

A quarter of the manufacturing capacity has been lying underutilised since 2015-16. This dissuades capacity expansion. The government would rather sustain the narrative of corruption under the UPA than design new public-private-partnership policies for large, broad-based private investment in infrastructure.

Yet another dampener is the regressive tax reform. The latest is the proposal to create a sixth slab for GST, beyond the existing range of zero, 5 per cent, 12 per cent, 18 per cent and 28 per cent. Now, a 35 per cent rate has been proposed, purportedly, for sin goods. More goods and services are liable to turn sinful over time. The net result would be loss of revenue and reinforcement of a culture of tax complexity, avoidance and evasion.

Higher import duties on gold and higher excise duties on cigarettes have both encouraged largescale smuggling. Higher rates on luxury goods would drive their purchases totally abroad. The goal in GST reform is convergence of rates and fewer slabs, not rate creep or retrospective levies.

The government should step up capital spending, keep GST stable and incentivise investment in food processing to escape seasonal price surges in vegetables that hold interest rates hostage.

Kalyan issue seriously considered by state government

Marathi people will not be treated unfairly under any circumstances: Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis

Mumbai - Shrikesh Choubey:- The state government has taken seriously the attack on the people of Marathi society in Kalyan. A case has been registered against the culprits and action is being taken. Mumbai belongs to Marathi people," saying this, Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis said in the Legislative Council today that, "He will not allow injustice to Marathi people under any circumstances." The issue was raised by Legislative Council member Advocate Anil Parab. Legislative Council members Shashikant Shinde, Arun alias Bhai Jagtap, Sachin Ahir participated in this discussion.



Chief Minister Fadnavis said that, "Akhilesh Shukla and his wife insulted a Marathi person in a society quarrel in Kalyan. A case has been registered in this matter at Khadakpada police station. Shukla is an employee of MTDC and action is being taken to suspend him. Maharashtra, Mumbai belongs to Marathi people. Mumbai being the economic capital, talents from across the country come here and live peacefully. Many people from Uttar Pradesh speak fluent Marathi language, celebrate many Marathi festivals. However, this social harmony has been disturbed due to some such people."

Chief Minister Fadnavis also said, "The Constitution has given freedom to choose what one will eat. But no one has the right to stop in this way. Discrimination on the basis of food is not acceptable. Appropriate action will be taken on such complaints. It is our responsibility to maintain diversity in the country. Regional identity means that we are proud to be Marathi, we will not tolerate any attack on it, action will be taken against it."

Always ready leadership for citizens' rights and development!

MLA for development of Kalyan East *Sulabhatai Ganpat Gaikwad's concrete demand to govt in winter session*

Kalyan - Shrikesh Chaubey: In the Nagpur winter session MLA Mrs. Sulbhatai Ganpat Gaikwad raised important questions focusing on civic issues and development projects in Kalyan East Constituency. U-type road work and rehabilitation of project victims:



The widening of the U-type road from Tisgaon Naka to Siddharth Nagar to Katemanivali Naka in Kalyan East is important for the citizens of the area. He demanded that the widening work of this road should be completed at the earliest and the government should take concrete steps to ensure proper rehabilitation of the affected project victims.

Substantial provision for water supply: Realizing the needs of the growing population in the constituency, funds should be made available immediately to improve the water supply system. He urged that substantial provision be made for construction of large water tanks and laying of new pipelines. Construction of Sports Complex: In order to provide excellent sports facilities to the youth of the constituency, a sports complex should be constructed at the earliest on the reserved plot at 100 feet road. He also demanded in the session that funds should be provided urgently for this project.Commitment to welfare-oriented holistic development: Keeping in mind the expectations and development needs of the citizens, Mrs. Sulbhatai Gaikwad has demanded immediate action from the government. He has expressed his determination to continuously strive to raise the standard of every civic facility in the constituency.

Return money or action will be taken

Warning of admin to beloved sisters

MUMBAI -Shrikesh Choubey:-State Women and Child Development (WCD) Department will verify the documents submitted by the beneficiaries, visit the beneficiaries' homes and do a thorough data matching. All this will be done as part of a comprehensive verification drive under the Ladaki Bahin Yojana. According to a report, the WCD department has proposed to file an FIR against the beneficiaries who availed the scheme wrongly and also to give an option to return the benefits to those who have availed them wrongly. The verification campaign will be conducted in every district of Maharashtra. Sources informed that this inspection will be done at district and divisional level

The department has received more than 200 complaints against defrauding beneficiaries. After that, it has been decided to examine 2.5 crore Ajpinki 1% i.e. 2.5 lakh applications in the state. This scrutiny is expected to continue for another three months, almost till the budget. The actual number of beneficiaries will be clear after every month's inspection, the official said. Beneficiaries have an option to opt out of the scheme. However, if the benefit is taken in wrong way, then you will have to return the money or you will be given the option of taking action. So there is still a chance for those benefiting in such a fraudulent and wrong way to get out of.

Conducted joint public awareness via Nukkad Natak

Regarding line crossing/boarding and alighting in running trains at Dombivli rly station

Dombivli -Srikesh Chaubey:- Awareness through symbolic road plays to reduce the number of deaths due to line crossing/caught by/alighting from moving trains to reduce deaths in Central Railway under the campaign has been born

Accordingly today on 21/12/2024 from 15:45 to 16:50 hrs at Dombivli Railway Station we ourselves, Six Police Inspectors Dhanraj Jarwal and RPF, Inspector in Charge of Dombivli Mr. Gajendra Raut, Sub Inspector Mr. Manore and Dombivli Railway Police Line Thane and RPF Dombivli officials have come together to prevent deaths due to crossing and falling from moving trains. For prevention, RPF officer Gaikwad disguised himself as Yamraj and alerted the passengers symbolically. In this awareness..



1) Do not cross passenger railway line, use overbridge

2) Passengers should not travel by catching a moving train

3) Passengers should not alight from a moving train

4) Do not travel outside the local by hanging on the footboard

In this regard, an appeal has been made to passengers through megaphone in Marathi, Hindi and English languages (Kiran Undare), Senior Police Inspector Dombivli Railway Police Station.

BAZM-E-VIRASAT: On 2nd day, musical recital by Padma Shri Shubha Mudgal

Performed enchanting piece "Gaiye Sajana Gunijan Beech"

UJALA SHIKHAR

Prayagraj: On the second day of Bazm-e-Virasat, the event commenced on a melodious note with a heartfelt tribute to her Guru by the renowned Hindustani classical vocalist, Padma Shri Shubha Mudgal. She performed the enchanting piece "Gaiye Sajana Gunijan Beech", accompanied by Aneesh Pradhan on the tabla, Sudhir Nayak on the harmonium, and Vrinda along with Aiya Bose on the tanpura. The presentation of Raag Sur Sarang and a captivating Chaturang mesmerized the audience, and the venue resounded with thunderous applause.

The celebrated artist further enriched the evening by weaving melodies around the poetry of prominent Hindi literary figures of the Chhayavaad era. She rendered Nirala Ji's evocative poem "Bandho Na Nav Is Thav Bandhu" and Mahadevi Verma's soulful piece "Phir Vikal Hai Praan Mere", adding her unique musical touch.

The highlight of the recital was her rendition of a ghazal penned by Shri Vijay Dev Narayan during the 1978 Emergency, titled "Zameen Ke Khaakh Chhanne Par". Shubha Mudgal's soulful voice brought the essence of that era alive, leaving the audience spellbound. Her artistry illuminated the profound depth and emotions of the ghazal, creating an enchanting atmosphere that captivated everyone present.

EVENT 2: A Thoughtful Discussion in Memory of Fareed and Nikhat Kazmi - The second phase of Bazm-e-Virasat began with heartfelt tributes to the late Fareed Kazmi and Nikhat Kazmi. The session delved into three significant topics related to cinema, bringing together insightful perspectives from prominent guests.

The discussion commenced with a question from Irfan Sahab, who asked filmmaker Sudhir Mishra about the future of Middle-of-the-Road Cinema. Mishra highlighted the era of Bimal Roy and Satyajit Ray as exemplary of this genre, describing it as a bridge between commercial cinema and parallel (art) cinema. He pointed out that while commercial cinema often spoon-feeds its audience, parallel cinema serves as a powerful medium for artistic expression.

Filmmaker and actor Nandita Das emphasized



that films are deeply rooted in the conviction and commitment of their creators. She remarked that audiences ultimately determine the type of films they wish to watch. She urged viewers to support good cinema by watching films in theaters, ensuring that the medium does not become limited to OTT platforms.

Remembering Irfan Sahab's contribution to art films, his wife and producer Sutapa Sikdar stressed the responsibility of viewers to engage with meaningful cinema. She added that films are not merely a source of entertainment but also a medium to explore and connect with cultural and societal sensitivities.

Lyricist Kausar Munir highlighted the importance of audience engagement in cinema. Comparing 30-second reels with three-hour films, she pointed out the varying levels of viewer involvement. Sudhir Mishra advocated for courageous filmmaking, urging filmmakers to portray truths and realities. He suggested that films should be made tax-free to encourage audiences to watch thought-provoking movies in theaters.

Nandita Das described filmmaking as a deeply personal journey for creators. She asserted that filmmakers should have the freedom to create films in their unique ways, confident that they would find their audience. She also emphasized the need for government grants for cinema, as institutions like NFDC and FCII had previously provided.

The relationship between Literature and Cinema: The second topic of discussion revolved around the relationship between literature and cinema. Nandita Das remarked that literature-based films are being made, though they are often categorized as regional cinema and not given due recognition within mainstream Indian cinema. However, she noted a positive trend with an increasing number of regional films drawing inspiration from folklore and literary works.

Sudhir Mishra emphasized the importance of preserving the essence and sensitivity of literature when adapting it into films. He highlighted the deep and long-standing relationship between literature and cinema, stating that both mediums enrich each other. Sutapa Sikdar, recalling the legacy of the late actor Irfan Sahab, highlighted the critical role of screenplays in bridging literature and cinema. She stated that cinema is an excellent medium for bringing literary sources to the general public, serving as a meaningful tool for future generations.

A Tribute to Fareed Kazmi: The session began with a tribute to Fareed Kazmi. Irfan Sahab described him as a scholar who deeply analyzed the intricate connections between cinema, society, and politics. A professor in the Department of Political Science at Allahabad University, Kazmi focused on popular (mainstream) cinema for his studies rather than parallel or art cinema. His book "Sex in Cinema" is a pioneering work that examines the portrayal of sexuality and gender relations in Indian films. This session provided a platform to reflect on the evolving nature of cinema, its societal impact, and its enduring connection with literature.

Christy Memorial School & College celebrates Annual Sports Day

Prayagraj: The Annual Sports Day was celebrated with great fervour at Christy Memorial School and College, Hathigan, Purvakhas, Naini. Principal Mr. Gaurav Deep, Vice-Principal Mrs. Alpana Shrivastava and Coordinator Mr. Vishal Charles welcomed the Chief Guest and the distinguished gathering and emphasized the importance of sports in the lives of children. The Chief Guest, our Chairman Mr. Vinod B. Lal, Mr. Rajbali Jaisal (Ex-MLA), Mr. Ajit Singh (Block Pramukh, Jasra), Mr. Anil Kumar Patel, Mrs. Neelisha Yadav (Centre Manager, Sakhi Van Raksha Centre, Prayagraj), Mrs. Ruhi Paul (Principal, Girls Inter College, Faizabad) and Special Guest Mr. Kamal Masih started



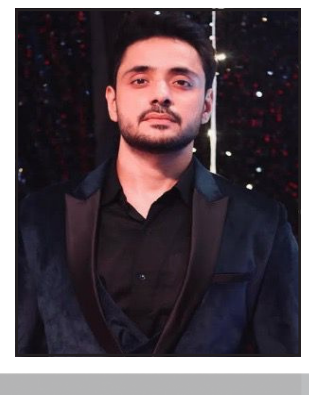
the event by lighting the lamp. Thereafter, the marching band of the school led an impressive parade which showcased the vibrant spirit of the school. The Sports Day included a wide range of events from traditional track and field activities like 100-meter race, relay, pyramid to recreational games for the students. The highlight of the day was the much-awaited "Nativity Play", which drew loud applause from the audience and showcased the significance of this season. The overall champion trophy (Christy Shield) was won by Blue House, further cementing their legacy in sportsmanship and dedication. In his closing address the Principal said, "Sports teach us life lessons that go beyond the classroom. I am happy to see that our students are not only competing but also displaying mutual camaraderie and respect."

Free blanket distribution prog by Lions Club City

Prayagraj: Club's Public Relations Officer Lalu Mittal informed that like every year, this year also under the chairmanship of Lions Club Allahabad City President MJF Lion Anoop Singh ji, on Sunday at Jaiswal Farm House, Iradatganj. A huge blanket distribution program has been organized in Ghurpur Prayagraj in which poor, helpless and people suffering from cold are given free blankets. Blankets will be distributed. A meeting will also be organized in which advice and assistance will be taken from the members to help the poor in the coming winter. Lunch and picnic will be organized on this occasion.

Adnan Khan in COLORS' Mannat Har Khushi Panne Ki'; promo out now

Varanasi: COLORS' upcoming offering, 'Mannat - Har Khushi Paane Ki' turns up the heat of anticipation by dropping another promo, packed with a plateful of drama and emotional twists. Set in a restaurant in Mumbai, this tale revolves around Mannat, a gifted young chef determined to prove her mettle in a world that judges her more for her humble roots than her talent. Her dreams are challenged by Aishwarya, her icy boss who undermines her at every turn, sneering that all she is capable of is running a roadside thela. However, her other boss, Vikrant believes that she has all the ingredients to live her dream of donning the Head Chef's hat, thoroughly impressed with her cooking. Little does Mannat know that Aishwarya is not just her boss - she is her biological mother, the very woman who abandoned her at birth! Starring Ayesha Singh as Mannat, Mona Vasu as Aishwarya, and Adnan Khan as Vikrant, 'Mannat Har Khushi Paane Ki' lifts



the lid on a complicated mother-daughter relationship, exploring what it takes to turn the tables on one's destiny. Sharing his sentiments about essaying the role of Vikrant, Adnan Khan says, "I'm grateful and thrilled to be ending 2024 on a high note with Mannat Har Khushi Paane Ki. The channel has always pushed the envelope in storytelling, and being entrusted with such layered character speaks volumes about their faith in me. The character I essay - Vikrant is a doting family man, who has moved from England to India, determined to expand his restaurant franchise, oblivious to the twist Mannat will bring to his life."

Mahakumbh, flag bearer of Indian culture and tradition: Nandi

UJALA SHIKHAR

Prayagraj: An international seminar regarding the tradition of Kumbh festival in Indian culture and Prayag Kumbh was organized under the joint aegis of Samrat Harsh Vardhan Research Institute and Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies at Moti Lal Nehru National Institute of Technology, Teliarganj on Saturday, in which Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, Industrial Development Minister of Uttar Pradesh Government participated as the chief guest. In the seminar, there was a detailed discussion on Mahakumbh, which introduced the whole world to the eternal Indian culture and the great confluence of spirituality, culture and faith. In the seminar, Minister Nandi said that organizing Maha Kumbh is the flag bearer of Indian culture and tradition, where the global spirit of Sarve Bhavantu Sukhinah takes concrete form. Goswami Tulsidas ji has said- When Magh Makargata Rabi occurs. Everyone comes to the pilgrimage site.

The holy land of Prayagraj has been welcoming millions of devotees with open arms for centuries to attain spiritual upliftment and salvation. The organization of Maha Kumbh not only underlines the special importance of Prayagraj along with the Indian Sanatan culture. Due to this importance, Sangamanagri has got the glory of Tirtharaj. Under the inspiring guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi and hard-working Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, our double engine government has worked to save the glorious tradition and heritage of India. In Mahakumbh-2025, guests and devotees coming from



all over the world will return with memories of a lifetime. They will directly experience the divinity, grandeur and pride of Indian culture every moment. India is a country full of diversity. Unity and brotherhood even in diversity is our identity. People living in different geographical areas, people speaking different languages, people with different lifestyle and clothing come to Mahakumbh and get colored in the same color of Indian culture, here everyone comes together. Mahakumbh is also the most excellent mirror of social harmony. Without any discrimination, without any difference between rich and poor, without asking anyone's identity, crores of people take a dip in the Triveni of holy mother Ganga Yamuna Saraswati. Those who want to divide the society in the greed of vote bank should see that Only in Indian religion and culture there are such sources which present such an ideal. On this occasion, Justice Surya Prakash Kesarwani of Allahabad High Court, Professor DP Tiwari Vice Chancellor Jai Meenesh Tribal University Kota Rajasthan, Dr. Rita Bahuguna Joshi, former Tourism Minister of Uttar Pradesh and former MP Prayagraj, Dr. Swaroop Prasad Ghosh Director Maulana Abul Kalam Azad Institute of Asian Studies Kolkata, Anil Kumar Gupta Annu Bhaiya President Samrat Harsh Vardhan Research Institute, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Kesarwani Director Harshvardhan Research Institute, Raunak Gupta incharge of the organizing committee and other dignitaries were present.

TODAY EVENT

A seminar will be organized on the sacrifice of the children of Shri Guru Gobind Singh Ji at 4 pm at BJP office Civil Lines.

Northern Football Academy & Golden Hawks start with a win

Northern Premier Cash Money (U1-5) Football Tournament

Prayagraj: Northern Premier League Football Tournament kicked off on Saturday under the auspices of the Northern Football Academy in the Under-15 category at the grounds of Vishnu Bhagwan School, Jhalwa. According to organizing secretary football coach Indranil Ghosh, the chief guest of the inaugural match, Taekwondo Coach, Anurag Singh of Vishnu Bhagwan Public School, introduced the players of both the teams. In the first match, Northern Football Academy defeated



Thunder Bolts 3-0.

For the winning team, Shadab scored the first goal on pass from Ansh while Shrestha Maurya scored the other two goals. In the second match of the day, Golden Hawks defeated Prayagraj FC 2-1 in a thrilling match. Ali Ansari scored both the goals for the winning team while Saksham scored one goal for the losing team. The player of the match of the first match was Shrestha Maurya received the prize from Anurag Singh while in the second match Indranil Ghosh gave the player of the match award to Ali Ansari.

Minister meets Juna Akhara's Swami Yatindranand Giri, discusses Kumbh

Prayagraj: Mahamandaleshwar Swami Yatindranand Giri Ji Maharaj of Shri Panchdasnam Juna Akhara, one of the 13 major Akharas in hoisting the flag of Sanatan Dharma all over the world, was heartily welcomed by Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, Industrial Development Minister of Uttar Pradesh Government, at his residence in Bahadurganj



Prayagraj. Saluted and congratulated. Received the blessings and guidance of respected Maharaj ji. During this, the event will be organized from January 13 in Prayagraj, the holy city of virtue and glory, under the leadership of the famous Prime Minister of the country, the most respected Shri Narendra Modi ji and the famous Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, the most respected Shri Yogi Adityanath ji. There was also a detailed discussion about the divine and grand event of Mahakumbh 2025, the great festival of culture, spirituality and faith.

Officer Trainee Cadets from Officers' Training Academy, Gaya on orientation tour to Lucknow

Lucknow: A group of 45 Officer Trainee Cadets from the Officers' Training Academy, Gaya, recently undertook a five-day orientation tour to military formations in Lucknow from 15 Dec to 20 Dec, 2024. The tour aimed at providing these young cadets with a comprehensive understanding of operational readiness, training methodologies, and exposure to key defence-related facilities. The tour itinerary included visits to key military establishments such as the 11 Gorkha Rifles Regimental Centre (11 GRRC), AMC Centre & College, HQ Madhya UP Sub Area (HQ MUPSA) and an Infantry Battalion in the station.

On 20 Dec, 2024, the cadets' visit to the Infantry Battalion offered them a unique opportunity to interact with experienced soldiers and gain first-hand in-



sights into battalion-level operations, command challenges and leadership dynamics. This experience holds particular significance as these cadets will soon assume their roles as young officers leading similar battalions in the future. Adding an industrial perspective to their experience, the cadets visited PTC Industries, a renowned manufacturer of high-quality engineering components for defence equipment. This visit provided an understanding of the precision and technological advancements that contribute to India's defence infrastructure.

In addition to their military engagements, the cadets also explored historical landmarks in Lucknow, gaining an appreciation for the city's rich heritage and cultural diversity. This aspect of the tour served to deepen their understanding of the cultural context in which the Armed Forces operate, fostering a well-rounded perspective. This immersive experience enriched the cadets' understanding of the multifaceted roles within the armed forces and provided a solid foundation for their future responsibilities as leaders in the Indian Army.

Alld HC detains Rajnish Chandra, Special Secretary over contempt

Prayagraj: The Allahabad High Court has taken a firm approach in a case involving non-compliance with its orders, arresting a top government official for contempt of court. Rajnish Chandra, the Special Secretary of Uttar Pradesh's Department of Social Welfare, was ordered detained until the court adjourned after being accused of failing to implement a prior verdict involving a teacher's wage. Justice Salil Kumar Rai issued this significant ruling against Chandra in response to a contempt suit filed by Suman Devi, a retired assistant teacher. Devi claimed that her salary had not been released, despite a March 4 court decision. Despite Chandra's apologies, the court viewed it as genuine, claiming it was only an attempt to avoid punishment. Chandra was subsequently fined Rs 2000, with a payment date of January 4, 2025, to the Registrar General of the High Court. This decision demonstrates the judiciary's solid commitment to enforcing compliance with its directions and maintaining accountability inside government departments.

Annual function of Radha Raman Inter College concluded

Prayagraj: Annual function and prize distribution of the school was completed in the memory of freedom fighter late Dr. Rai Ram Charan Agarwal, the founder of Radha Raman Inter College, Daraganj, Prayagraj. In which the chief guest was Professor Dr. Swatantra Sharma, former Vice Chancellor Raja Mansingh Tomar Music and Arts University, Gwalior Madhya Pradesh, special guest was the great scholar of Shastras Pandit Rakesh Ranjan Mishra ji, management opinion Prem Prakash Agarwal ji, Deputy Manager Mr. Shreesh Agarwal ji, and respected members of the management committee. Members, members of Rotary Club, former Deputy Mayor Mrs. Anamika Choudhary, cleanliness brand ambassador of Municipal Corporation's Srishti Best Management Service, Mahakumbh. International Mustache Dancer of 2025 Mr. Rajendra Kumar Tiwari



Dukan Ji kept making the children aware about cleanliness and polythene. Former Principal of the school, teachers, old students and distinguished citizens of Daraganj and parents of students studying in the school were present. Following are the details of the annual programs held in the school. At Nirala Chowk located in Daraganj, the students of the school organized a street play on the theme of clean, safe and plastic free Mahakumbh 2025 and gave the message of making people aware of cleanliness, in the presence of the manager, deputy manager and principal of the school. Inter-school essay competition was organized on the topic Clean and Safe Mahakumbh 2025. Giving the message of Swachh Mahakumbh 2025, Prabhat Pheri was taken out by the students, the school's annual sports and cultural program was concluded, this information was given to the shopkeeper.

Minister Nandi paid tribute to business leader Vijay Arora

Prayagraj: Uttar Pradesh Government's Industrial Development Minister Nand Gopal Gupta Nandi, during his stay in Prayagraj on Saturday, visited the homes of senior officials, workers and entrepreneurs of his Prayagraj City South assembly constituency and paid tribute, expressed condolences to the family members who passed away recently. Minister Nandi on Saturday visited the house of Meerapur Ward Councilor Sahil Arora and expressed condolences on the demise of his father Vijay Arora, former president of Prayag Vyapar Mandal and senior business leader. Minister Nandi paid tribute to Vijay Arora by offering flowers on his portrait. Minister Nandi said that Vijay Arora had dedicated his entire life to business as well as businessmen. He was always at the forefront in the fight for the interests and rights of businessmen. His life is exemplary for businessmen. Due to his demise the traders of Prayagraj have suffered an irreparable loss. Minister Nandi visited the house of Mrs. Ankita Bhola in Meerapur and expressed condolences after receiving the news of the demise of her father-in-law.

Ashok Kumar, Zonal Officer cracking whip on encroachers

Prayagraj: In view of the city tour of Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, Ashok Kumar, Zonal Officer, Khuldabad, a campaign was conducted from Gate No. 4 to Jogivir intersection on Junction Road, in which 20 handcart vendors, five furnaces and 3 kg of banned polythene were seized and Rs. 2000 fine was collected. Sanitation and Health



Inspector Dayasagar Rajesh Vishwakarma, Vandana Gupta and Municipal Corporation employees and Khuldabad Police Force and Vegetable Market Outpost incharge. The in-charge was present with his team and the ETF team also participated in the campaign. The zonal officer has given strict instructions to the princes that this should not be repeated in future.

BLK-Max Hospital launches GI Surgery OPD services

In partnership with United Medicity Hospital

Prayagraj: BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital on Saturday announced the launch of its exclusive Gastro-Intestinal, Minimal Access, Bariatric Surgery OPD services, in partnership with the city-based United Medicity Hospital. The OPD services were launched in the presence of Dr Deep Goel, Principal Director & HOD - Surgical Gastroenterology, Advance Laparoscopic & Bariatric Surgery, Dr Deeksha Kapoor, Senior Consultant - Surgical Gastroenterology, Advance Laparoscopic & Bariatric Surgery from BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital and Dr. Varsha Hajgude, Professor and Head, Department of General Surgery, United Medicity Hospital Dr Deeksha Kapoor, from BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital will be available on the 3rd Saturday of every month from 12:00 PM- 2:00 PM for consultations at United Medicity Hospital, Prayagraj.

During the launch, Dr



Deep Goel, Principal Director & HOD - Surgical Gastroenterology, Advance Laparoscopic & Bariatric Surgery, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital said "We are delighted to expand our OPD services in Prayagraj with the addition of Gastro intestinal tumor treatment and Bariatric sugery. Our goal is to bring top-tier medical expertise and advanced diagnostic facilities closer to the residents of Prayagraj, enhancing their quality of life through accessible and comprehensive healthcare solutions. Through the launch of these OPD services, people from Prayagraj will not only be able to access the best-in-class services but also get aware about the disease will also enhance them for a better and healthy lifestyle. Minimally invasive GI surgeries have numerous advantages for patients in comparison to traditional surgeries including minimal scars, faster recovery, reduced pain, shorter duration of hospital stays, and fewer post-surgery complications."

Dr Deeksha Kapoor, Senior Consultant - Surgical Gastroenterology, Advance Laparoscopic & Bariatric Surgery, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital said "Recent technological advancements have expanded the range of abdominal conditions that can be treated with minimally invasive procedures, including weight loss surgeries, and even cancer if the GI Tract. Gastrointestinal cancers comprise a group of cancers that affect the GI tract and the digestive system including Oesophagus, liver, stomach, gallbladder, pancreas, small intestines, colon, rectum and anus. Through this opportunity, I would like to aware the public that with the latest advancements available in the healthcare industry. It is important to diagnose early for better outcomes, especially in cancers." Dr. Varsha Hajgude, Professor and Head, Department of General Surgery, United Medicity Hospital said "We are excited to have collaborated with one of the leading hospitals in the country. We endeavour to equip the common man with relevant information about GI-related issues and our OPDs will offer primary consultations and will encourage people to lead a healthy lifestyle. This OPD is going to be a valuable addition to the healthcare infrastructure of Prayagraj by providing best treatment solutions to patients in the city right at their doorsteps." By combining the expertise and skills along with the advanced technology and robotics, BLK-Max Super Speciality Hospital aims to improve patient outcomes, enhance the quality of care, and contribute to the well-being of the community.

IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club distributed sweaters to Deaf & Dumb children at School

Prayagraj: IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club distributed sweaters to Deaf & Dumb children at Deaf & Dumb School, George Town, Prayagraj. Apart from this, sweaters, blankets, shawls, rice etc. were distributed to the old men and women of Kusth Ashram, Kareli. IFFCO Mahila Chetna Club helps the poor, destitute and needy every year.Mahila Chetna Club President Vineeta Kudesia said that the rea purpose of human life is to help those who are needfull. He expressed his commitment that Mahila Chetna Club will always participate in public welfare works in future also.During this, Sarita Singh, Alka Gupta, Poonam Sharma, Ameeta Pandey, Anamika Mishra and Mamta Raj Singh were present.



HINDI-ENGLISH ROW

Australian media stoops to a new low

MELBOURNE (Agency): Australian media stooped to a new low today at the Melbourne Cricket Ground (MCG) as they accused Ravindra Jadeja of not answering the questions in English at an interaction. This comes at a time when Cricket Australia is yet to respond to TimesofIndia.com's request for an interview with Usman Khawaja in Hindi, a language he is very fluent and comfortable with.

Arranged by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) for travelling media, around a dozen Indian journalists gathered at the MCG today to speak to Jadeja after his practice and gym session. Not invited, some Australian media outlets, without the accreditation, decided to turn up at the event but they were still accommodated by the Indian cricket board's media team. All questions fired to Jadeja during the nearly 10-minute interaction were in Hindi and the all-rounder responded in the same language. The BCCI media manager continued to take questions and even lined up an Australian journalist but the team bus was about to leave and most Indian journalists, lined up, were not able to ask the question. The handful of local journalists decided to lose their cool at BCCI media manager and even directed a cameraman, stationed in the stands, to continue recording the entire conversation.



The entire conversation, which the BCCI media manager termed as "private" and even asked the cameraman to stop filming, was later aired on Australian channels. Not a long time back, the same set of channels did the same when Virat Kohli requested for privacy for his kids at the airport but the conversation was spun into a fiery exchange. Rohit Sharma nets session: Indian skipper prepares for Boxing Day Test Still not clear whether the journalists today were irked by no question or no response in English. If it was the latter, they could have well used a translation software to get their quotes in the language of their preference. They instead chose to spin a needless controversy. It now remains to be seen whether Cricket Australia agrees to our request for an interview with Khawaja in Hindi. The story will be updated moment we hear from the communications wing of the Australian cricket board.

Harshit 1st Chhattisgarh athlete to win badminton medal

Raipur (Agency): Harshit Thakur, sponsored by NTPC Korba, has etched his name into the history books by winning the bronze medal at the prestigious Yonex Sunrise 77th Inter-Zonal Senior National Badminton Championship 2024. In a remarkable achievement, he has become the first-ever athlete from Chhattisgarh to secure a medal at the Senior National Championship, marking a new chapter in the state's sports history.

Competing against the nation's top badminton players, Harshit's outstanding performance in the singles event earned him a spot on the podium, a feat that has made Chhattisgarh proud. This historic achievement is not only a personal triumph for Harshit but also a significant milestone for the development of badminton in the state and for aspiring athletes across the region.

Until now, Chhattisgarh had not seen a medalist at the Senior National Championship level in badminton. His victory has changed



that narrative, shining a spotlight on the untapped potential of sports talent in the state. His success is expected to inspire a new generation of athletes to pursue badminton and other sports with renewed enthusiasm and ambition.

Harshit expressed his gratitude towards NTPC Korba, the primary sponsor who has supported him throughout his journey: "I am beyond grateful to NTPC Korba and its IT department for their unwavering support. Their belief in me and the resources they provided made all the difference. Without their support, this achievement would not have been possible."

NTPC Korba has been a key enabler in Harshit's journey, offering both financial and infrastructural support. The company has long been committed to fostering sporting talent in the region, and Harshit's success is a reflection of their dedicated efforts to invest in local athletes. Shashank Chajjer from NTPC Korba commented, "We are extremely proud of Harshit's historic achievement. His dedication, hard work, and perseverance have made him a true ambassador of sports excellence. We will continue to support him and other talented athletes from the region in their quest for success."

20 sixes, 13 fours mayhem! Sameer Rizvi goes bonkers with record double ton

NEW DELHI (Agency): Delhi Capitals' new recruit Sameer Rizvi pulled off a mad show on Saturday, smashing a jaw-dropping 97-ball 201 not out in an Under-23 State A Trophy match.

The UP captain was at his unbelievable best, smoking the Tripura bowlers to all corners of the park.



With the help of 13 fours and 20 sixes, Rizvi lit up the Vadodara stadium as his side piled up a massive 405.

With the sensational effort, Rizvi recorded the fastest double ton in the history of men's U23 State A Trophy but it won't qualify as a List A record.

In List A cricket, New Zealand's Chad Bowes holds the record for fastest double ton which came off 103 balls against Otago during the Ford Trophy. After Rizvi came in to bat in the 23rd over, he took the Tripura bowlers to the cleaners in a sheer display of power-hitting.

The 21-year-old represented Chennai Super Kings in the 2024 season but managed only 51 runs in 8 outings.

After a flop show last season, he was not picked up by the franchise at the mega auction.

However, Delhi Capitals did get hold of him for Rs 95 lakh -- a significant decrease from his previous IPL price tag of Rs 8.4 crore.

The youngster has been in dazzling form recently.

In the last two clashes, Rizvi has scored 153 off 114 balls against Himachal Pradesh and an unbeaten 137 off 69 balls against Pondicherry.

'His new surname is Travis Head'ache'': Ravi Shastri on batter's dominance against India

NEW DELHI (Agency): Travis Head has been the only Australian batter to consistently defy the Indian bowlers in the ongoing Border-Gavaskar Trophy. This isn't the first time his batting has troubled India, he also played pivotal roles in their defeats during the ICC World Test Championship final and the ODI World Cup final last year.

After a modest start with a dismissal for just 11 in his first innings of the series, Head bounced back brilliantly, scoring 89, 140, and 152 in his next three innings. Considering Head's form, former India coach Ravi Shastri humorously gave him a new nickname.

"Because his new surname is Travis Head'ache'," Shastri said on the most recent episode of The ICC Review.



"They are looking for balms in India. For foot problems, ankle problems (and) even a headache they are looking for a balm. He is ideal for that."

Shastri highlighted the batter's improved short-ball technique as a key factor in his success.

"I think he is very smart. From what I saw of him three years ago, he has improved immensely. Especially with the way he plays the short ball. He prepared to leave it. He has learned to leave it well at times."

"It's not a big shot all the time off a short delivery angled at his armpits or something. He's prepared to either ride it or go for the big shots. And if it is middle, middle and off, then he hits it in front of square as well."

"He picks up length very well. That's one of his great strengths. And he has a flashing blade for the offside. So he's a hard man to contain. And he's in the form of his life," Shastri said.

Although Head has been dismissed by India's fast-bowling spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, he has also managed to score 83 off 91 balls while facing him. Shastri recalled a particular shot from Head against Bumrah early in one of his innings, which made him realise that the left-handed batter was in exceptional form.

"We all knew he was dangerous, but that first shot he played off Jasprit Bumrah, that cover drive, off the front foot. It was in many ways a little bit on the up, off a good delivery, decent delivery. It told me that this is a player in prime, prime form."

EPL: Alexander Isak's hat-trick powers Newcastle United to 4-0 victory over Ipswich Town

NEW DELHI (Agency): Alexander Isak scored a hat-trick for Newcastle United in their 4-0 Premier League victory over Ipswich Town on Saturday. Two of Isak's goals were the result of errors by the Ipswich defense.

Newcastle's Isak and Jacob Murphy dominated the first half, giving their team a 3-0 lead at the break. Ipswich showed no signs of a comeback, suffering their ninth loss in 17 games.

The win moved Newcastle up to seventh place in the league table with 26 points. Ipswich remains in 18th place with 12 points, two points behind Leicester City having played an extra game.

Isak's first goal came just 26 seconds into the match. Murphy's cross into the box was poorly cleared by Sam Morsy, landing at Isak's feet for a powerful finish in the 32nd minute. He received a pass from Anthony Gordon, took a touch inside the box, and fired a shot past Ipswich goalkeeper Arijanet Muric.



Ipswich's attempted clearance from their own penalty area in first-half stoppage time backfired. The ball fell to Isak, who calmly scored Newcastle's third goal.

Nine minutes into the second half, Isak completed his hat-trick. Murphy provided the assist with a skillful back-heel pass, setting up Isak for another clinical finish.

Newcastle had a late goal by Dan Burn disallowed for offside. The final score remained 4-0, marking a successful start to the festive season for Newcastle. This was Isak's first hat-trick for the club since joining in August 2022. "We've been playing so much better lately, and it has been showing in the results," a delighted Isak said. "It (the hat-trick) has been a long time coming for Newcastle, my first one here, I'm buzzing."

The 25-year-old has six goals in his last four league games. "Just scoring goals will give confidence and help me and the team. It doesn't matter if it's one, two or three," Isak added. "He (Murphy) is really helpful, a team player. I am obviously happy for him that he gets rewarded with points too."

I'm sure Harmanpreet will be fine for ODIs: Coach Amol Muzumdar

Vadodara (Agency): Indian women's cricket team head coach Amol Muzumdar on Saturday expressed hope that regular skipper Harmanpreet Kaur will recover from a knee niggle in time for the opening ODI against West Indies here on Sunday. Harmanpreet missed the last two T20Is of the three-match series against the Caribbean team in Navi Mumbai, which the hosts won 2-1. Vice-captain Smriti Mandhana led India in Harmanpreet's absence, making a strong impression by striking three fifties in a row. "Harmanpreet is going to bat today in the nets... a complete, full nets schedule. We'll take a call once the nets are over and I'm sure she'll be fine," said Muzumdar during a media conference here.

The coach conceded that young wicketkeeper-batter Yastika Bhatia's absence due to injury will be felt in the three-match ODI series, but added that the management will try to pick the best eleven from the 15-member squad. "Yes, we will feel the absence of some players. Yastika Bhatia is injured; she is doing rehab at NCA. Hopefully, she will be fit and fine very soon. So, we will try and pick the best XI from the 15-member squad here," he said. "The pitch...I've just had a look at it. It looks like a good pitch. We've come from DY Patil (Stadium in Navi Mumbai) where there was red-soil surface, a typical Mumbai pitch. Here it's a black soil surface, so looking forward to the game," he added. Rookie cricketers Pratika Rawal and Tanuja Kanwer have received maiden ODI call-ups, and Muzumdar's advice to them was to "go out and enjoy" in the middle. "There are couple of new entrants in the ODI lineup. (I say) just go out there and enjoy yourself and spend some time in the middle.

Shooting Nationals: Haryana teenager Suruchi stars with triple gold in women's air pistol

New Delhi (Agency): Haryana teenager Suruchi was the star of the day with a triple gold performance in the women's air pistol competitions in the ongoing 67th National Shooting Championship Competitions (NSCC) 2024 at the Dr. Karni Singh Shooting Range in the national capital on Friday.

The daughter of an army veteran from Jhajjar, who began shooting sports five years ago in the same range as double Olympic bronze medallist Manu Bhaker, won her first-ever senior national title, with a score of 243.1 in the women's 10m air pistol final, before going on to add the junior and youth crowns for a memorable nationals outing. In the process, she bettered the silver effort in women's air pistol, achieved in the previous nationals. Suruchi went into the eight-woman final as the in-form shooter, topping the qualifications with a solid 585. It was a field full of seasoned pros, among them Olympian Rhythm Sangwan, reigning Asian Games champion Palak, India international Divya T.S., and junior world champion Sainyam to name a few. The Haryana girl, however, shot confidently throughout the 24-shot final staying in contention from shot one.

ILT20 Gulf Cricket Championship 2024: Late drama dents Kuwait as UAE lift maiden title

NEW DELHI (Agency): UAE emerged victorious by just two runs in a nail-biting contest against Kuwait to claim their maiden ILT20 Gulf Cricket Championship title at the Dubai International Cricket Stadium on Saturday.

The closely contested final kept the fans on edge until the very last over as UAE defended 153 against a spirited Kuwait side.

Opting to bat first, UAE began cautiously as openers Muhammad Waseem and Tanish Suri struggled to find momentum. Waseem fell early for 1, but Alishan Sharafu's 28 off 17 balls, laced with three 4s and two 6s, provided the much-needed impetus.

Contributions from Tanish Suri (34 off 32) and Rahul Chopra (28 off 17) steadied the innings as the run rate gradually climbed.

However, Kuwait's bowlers struck back at crucial moments. Yasin Patel and Sayed Monib were the standouts, claiming three wickets apiece, supported by Meet Bhavsar's economical spell of 2/16.

In response, Kuwait endured an early collapse, losing two wickets within the opening two overs, courtesy of Junaid Siddique (1/42) and Dhruv Parashar (1/26).

Bhavsar, the only hope for Kuwait in the decisive hours, steadied the innings with a valiant 72 off 54, including six 4s and three 6s.

Despite losing partners regularly, Bhavsar, along with Yasin Patel (15 not out off 8), brought Kuwait tantalisingly close with a flurry of boundaries.



Patel's big hits off consecutive deliveries in the penultimate over reduced the equation to 8 runs off the final over. The last over, bowled by Muhammad Jawadullah, was a spectacle of cricketing drama. A wide ball followed by a boundary from Bhavsar set Kuwait within striking distance. However, Jawadullah kept his composure, dismissing Bhavsar as the batter fell for a slower delivery and ended up giving away an easy catch to Nilansh Keswani.

With three runs needed from four balls, Jawadullah bowled Mohamed Shafeeq off his very first delivery, sealing UAE's historic two-run victory.

While Meet Bhavsar's heroic knock earned widespread admiration, he could not take Kuwait over the line when it mattered the most.

On the other hand, Jawadullah (2/28) was instrumental in a nerve-wracking final sequence. The victory thus not only crowned UAE champions but also left their growing prominence in the Gulf cricketing arena, capping a tournament filled with excitement and high-quality cricket.



Seoul braces for heavy snow expected through Saturday

New Delhi (Agency): Authorities in Seoul remained on high alert Friday as the greater capital region braces for heavy snowfall expected later in the night and Saturday. The Seoul metropolitan government announced that approximately 5,300 workers, and 1,116 snow-clearing vehicles and equipment have been mobilized in preparation for the anticipated snowfall of 1 to 5 centimetres, which is expected to continue through early Saturday. Security cameras installed along the country's western coastal region are being used to monitor snow movement in advance, the city government said. The authorities emphasised the importance of maintaining a safe distance while driving during snowy conditions and advised pedestrians to exercise caution, Yonhap news agency reported. Last month, the heaviest snowfall for November in 117 years blanketed Seoul and the surrounding regions, causing injuries, disrupting traffic and cutting off power supplies. The new record of 18 cm on November 27 had coincided with the first snow of the season in Seoul. The previous record was 12.4 cm set on November 28, 1972, the state weather agency said. The city of Incheon, west of Seoul, also had record snowfall for November of 14.8 cm, beating the previous record of 8 cm set in 1972. Suwon, south of Seoul, had received 21 cm of snow, the largest ever for any November precipitation, according to the KMA. In Seoul's Songpa district, three people were injured and taken to nearby hospitals after a snow fence installed near a construction site collapsed due to snow. More than 170 households had also experienced a blackout in Seoul's Seongbuk district, as trees likely fell on telegraph poles and electric wires under the weight of heavy snow, according to the Korea Electric Power Corp. Dozens of other households in Eunpyeong-gu also experienced interruptions to power supplies, reported Yonhap news agency.

100% digitized ration cards under NFSA; 80 cr beneficiaries under ONOR

New Delhi (Agency): It has been a remarkable year for Department for Food and Public Distribution with the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKAY) extended for five years with this January 1, cent per cent digitised ration cards under National Food Security Act across India, 99.8 per cent fair price shops (FPSs) automated now using electronic point of sale and One Nation One Ration card enabled across the country covering 80 crore beneficiaries, among others.

Under the PMGKAY, the period for distribution for free of cost food grains under the PMGKAY has been extended for five years w.e.f. 1st January, 2024. The scheme would ensure effective and uniform implementation of the National Food Security Act (NFSA).

Under the One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC), which is a successful initiative of portability of ration card, any beneficiary can take delivery of food grains from any FPS at uniform NFSA entitlement and price across the country. The free food grains will concurrently ensure uniform implementation of portability under One Nation One Ration Card (ONORC) across the country and will further strengthen this choice-based platform.

At present, against the intended coverage of 81.35 crore persons, 80.67 crore persons are receiving food grains free of cost, according to the Ministry of Consumer Affairs,Food and Public Distribution.

The Prime Minister, Mr Narendra Modi, in his address on the 75th Independence Day (15th August, 2021) made an announcement providing nutrition by supplying fortified rice throughout the government schemes.

Pursuant to the announcement, the the government in order to achieve uniform nutritional impact



of fortified rice among the targeted population is supplying fortified rice throughout the Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS), Pradhan Mantri Poshan Shakti Nirman (PM POSHAN) Scheme, and Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) Scheme and in Other Welfare Schemes (OWS) in all States and Union Territories (UTs).

The initiative to supply fortified rice has been successfully implemented by March, 2024, achieving cent per cent lifting. Custom-milled rice has been replaced with fortified rice in every scheme of the Government. Initially funded by the Government of India as part of food subsidy until June 30, 2024, the initiative was reviewed for further continuation and future cost-sharing.

The Cabinet during a meeting held on 9th October, 2024 has approved to continue the supply of fortified rice under the Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Yojana (PMGKAY) and Other Welfare Schemes from July 2024 and upto December 2028.

This initiative will continue as a Central Sector Initiative, fully funded by the Government under the existing PMGKAY framework, utilizing the previously approved allocation of Rs. 11,79,859 crore for the PMGKAY scheme.

A cent per cent digitized ration cards/bene?ciaries' data under NFSA in all States/UTs. Details of almost 20.54 Crore ration Cards covering around 80 Crore beneficiaries are available on transparency portals of States/UTs. About 99.8 per cent (5.41 Lakh of total 5.43 Lakh) Fair Price Shops (FPSs) in the country are automated using electronic Point of Sale (ePoS) devices for transparent and ensured distribution of subsidized food grains to beneficiaries. Under distribution of food grains, more than 97 per cent of the transactions have been recorded biometrically/Aadhaar authenticated by States/UTs.

China urges US to stop illegally occupying Cuba's territory

New Delhi (Agency): The United States needs to immediately stop illegally occupying Cuba's territory, close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and pull out of the base at Guantanamo as soon as possible, a Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesperson said on Friday. Spokesperson Lin Jian made the remarks when asked to comment on a related query at a daily press briefing.

Lin said the United States has long unlawfully occupied part of Guantanamo Bay, and carried out arbitrary detention and used torture to extort confessions at the detention facility there. "What the United States has done severely violates international law and undermines Cuba's sovereignty and rights and interests."

It reported that the US Department of Defence recently announced the repatriation of a detainee from the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, and 29 detainees remain there. In recent years, successive US administrations have promised multiple times they would close the detention facility at Guantanamo Bay, but still haven't acted on it. Despite repeated protests from the Cuban government, the United States has unlawfully occupied part of Guantanamo Bay for over 120 years. The international community, including the UN, has more than once expressed concerns on this issue and asked the United States to close the detention facility there and treat the detainees justly as soon as possible, according to the spokesperson.

The repeated failure of the United States to keep its promise of closing this US-run "concentration camp" will only add another stain to the poor US track record on human rights and expose the emptiness of US commitment to human rights, said the spokesperson.

The detention facility at Guantanamo Bay is Cuba's protracted wound, and it is a living witness to more than a century of US illegal interference in Cuba, Lin said, adding that the United States, while running massive arbitrary detention at Guantanamo, keeps Cuba on the list of so-called "state sponsor of terrorism."

UN seeks 468 million USD to support refugees in South Sudan in 2025

New Delhi (Agency): The UN refugee agency along with 48 partners will require 468 million US dollars to support refugees and host communities in South Sudan in 2025, the agency said on Friday.

Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in South Sudan Marie-Helene Verney warned that the recent surge in arrivals in South Sudan is overwhelming services in border areas and funding for the humanitarian response remains insufficient. "The lack of funding threatens efforts to address this new emergency and to meaningfully support new arrivals and the communities hosting them," Verney said in a statement. According to the



UNHCR official, nearly one million people have arrived in South Sudan since the start of the Sudan conflict in April 2023. She said despite efforts to support this sudden influx, the humanitarian response remains woefully underfunded, with aid partners in South Sudan having received only 24 percent of what is needed to adequately meet people's needs this year. Verney said after more than 20 months, the conflict in Sudan shows no sign of slowing down, Xinhua news agency reported. "In less than three weeks, over 80,000 people have sought safety in South Sudan following the escalation of fighting in Sudan's White Nile, Sennar, and Blue Nile States — more than tripling the average number of daily arrivals compared to previous weeks," Verney said.

As part of the response to this new influx, UNHCR and its partners are scaling up protection and assistance, notably as some of the areas receiving new arrivals lack the presence of humanitarian partners. "Right now, we are concentrating on providing life-saving assistance, including providing water and basic health care," Verney said.

Unseasonal rain hinders paddy harvest in Odisha, compounds farmers' plight

Bhubaneswar (Agency): Unseasonal rain triggered by deep depression since the past 48 hours has dealt a blow to farmers, mostly in coastal and southern parts of Odisha as steady downpour has damaged the harvest-ready paddy crops.

The unseasonal rain has affected the harvest. Apprehension of ready-for-harvest standing crops withering away looms large. With croplands lying inundated, harvesting work by harvester machine is not possible unless the water recedes in the crop fields.

Prior to the rain forecast, farmers raced against time to save their produce by crop cutting. But shortage of skilled manpower hindered speedy harvesting work. Even when rain water drains off from fields, the harvester machines will turn ineffective to venture into the muddy crop fields. The machines which could hasten the reaping and harvesting process are bound to get stuck in crop areas which are mud-spattered due to recent unseasonal rain, said a cross section of farmers in Khordha district.

Though the Government had advised the farmers to shift the harvested paddy to safe places and properly stack under adequate cover to avoid any loss due to rain, the harvesting process still remained incomplete in the majority of coastal and southern districts. With this the standing crops which were ready for harvest bore the brunt of unseasonal rain.

Reports reaching in from several parts pointed out towards rain-induced crop loss as farmers had left the freshly cut crops out in their fields before threshing them. In some parts of the State, the paddy crop was not in the harvesting stage. Harvesting will take place next week. The farmers are worried a lot as there is every possibility that the ripe



paddy getting soaked due to rain will deteriorate qualitatively during the harvesting.

Our produce was ready for harvest. We stepped up the process of harvesting paddy on a war footing once IMD issued a weather warning. We managed to cut two/third of the ripe crop and shift it to the covered area while the remaining crop was exposed to rain. We hope the crop loss will be minimal due to the rain effect, said a farmer, Keshab Rout, from Anandpur in Keonjhar district. Another farmer from coastal Kendrapara district spoke on a different note saying that the crop was not harvest-ready and was exposed to the debilitating effect of rain . "I had planned to cut the crop in a week after the crop was matured for harvesting, Thus, I have little option left but to wait for the rain-filled field getting dried up for harvesting, The effect of rain will definitely hit the annual khariff yield", said Parikhit Samal, a farmer from Gandakia village in Kendrapara district.

Meanwhile the State Government on Saturday announced that it will assess the crop damage and compensate the loss of farmers. "The State Government will take up the issue of crop loss, if it is assessed by the district authorities. Besides, the paddy stacked up at the 'mandis' or paddy procurement centres are covered to avert damage to the produce", said the Co-operation Minister Pradeep Bal Samanta.

BJP leader challenges Priyanka Gandhi's Wayanad bypoll victory in Kerala HC

Kochi (Agency): BJP leader Navya Haridas has filed a petition in the Kerala High Court challenging Congress leader Priyanka Gandhi Vadra's victory from Wayanad Lok Sabha constituency in the November 13 bypoll. The petition, filed through advocate Hari Kumar G Nair, seeks to annul Priyanka Gandhi's victory, alleging that she concealed critical details during her nomination filing. According to Navya, Priyanka failed to disclose information regarding properties owned by her and her family, as well as pending legal cases. Additionally, the petition claims that Priyanka's nomination papers violated provisions under electronic laws and the Conduct of Election Rules. Navya Haridas, who contested as the BJP candidate from Wayanad, came in third, trailing behind CPI's Sathyan Mokery.

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