

BRIEF



Birds silhouetted against the setting sun on the eve of the New Year, at Sangam in Prayagraj, Sunday.

NY greetings

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu on Sunday greeted citizens on the eve of the new year and asked them to take a pledge to build a prosperous society and nation. The arrival of the new year is an occasion to move forward with new resolutions and goals, she said in a message. The president has sent her greetings to all fellow citizens on the eve of new year, according to a statement issued by the Rashtrapati Bhavan.

Heart attack

Khargone: A 22-year-old man suffered a heart attack while playing in a cricket match and died in a village in Madhya Pradesh's Khargone district, an official said on Sunday. Indal Singh Jadhav Banjara felt uneasiness while bowling in the match on Saturday evening at Katkoot village under Balwada police station limits of Khargone district, he said.

Security tightened

Jamshedpur: The East Singhbhum district administration has made adequate security arrangements for New Year celebrations, a police officer said. Senior superintendent of police Kishore Kaushal and superintendent of police (City) Mukesh Kumar Lunayat on Sunday conducted a foot patrolling at Bistupur, Golmuri, Telco, Sakchi and Sitaramdera police station areas to take stock of security preparedness.

New CS

Kolkata: The West Bengal government on Sunday appointed BP Gopalika as the new chief secretary of the state, an official notification said. He replaced HK Dwivedi, whose extended term ended on December 31. Unless given an extension like his predecessor, Gopalika, a 1989-batch IAS officer, would be holding the post for only five months as he is scheduled to retire on May 31 next year.

Weather
High 28 Low 14

3,000 more CAPF troops to fight Naxals in Chhattisgarh

■ **As part of plan to end Naxalism**

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Three battalions of the BSF comprising more than 3,000 personnel will move across the border from Odisha to Chhattisgarh and an equal number of ITBP units will further move into the Naxal stronghold of Abujhmad as part of a



File photo

strategy to intensify anti-Maoist operations in their last bastions, official

sources said. The new operational blueprint is part of a plan under which

Union Home Minister Amit Shah recently made a declaration that India was "on the verge of" eliminating Left Wing Extremism (LWE).

"The last strike against LWE by forces such as the BSF, the CRPF and the ITBP is in the process. We are determined to end Naxalism in the country," Shah said on December 1 in Hazaribag, Jharkhand while addressing BSF troops on their 59th rais-

ing day. These forces are called as central armed police force (CAPFs). Sources in the security establishment told PTI that the Border Security Force (BSF) has been directed to create six new COBs or company operating bases in Chhattisgarh's Narayanpur district by initially moving one of its battalion based in Odisha's Malkangiri, just across the inter-state border.

RAHUL ON VINESH RETURNING AWARDS

'Hurts to see such cruelty on PM's part'

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Sunday attacked Prime Minister Narendra Modi over wrestler Vinesh Phogat leaving her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award on national capital's Kartavya Path, saying the PM is the guardian of the nation and it hurts to see "such cruelty" on his part.

Gandhi's attack came a day after multiple World Championship medallist Phogat returned her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Award, keeping the two awards lying in the middle of Kartavya Path after the Delhi Police stopped her

from reaching the prime minister's office.

Phogat, along with Olympic medallists Sakshi Malik and Bajrang Punia, had protested against the election of Sanjay Singh, a close aide of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who had been accused of sexual harassment by the three well-known grapplers. Sharing a video of Phogat at the Kartavya Path, Gandhi said in a post in Hindi on X, "For every daughter of the country, self-respect comes first, any other medal or honor comes after that."

Ram temple donations: VHP warns against fraudsters

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

The Vishva Hindu Parishad on Sunday said "some people" have been seeking funds in the name of the Ayodhya Ram temple trust without any approval and a complaint has been made to Uttar Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and the Union home ministry requesting for immediate action against them.

In a post on X, Vishva Hindu Parishad (VHP) national spokesperson Vinod Bansal also cautioned people against falling into the trap of people "trying to dupe" them in the name of the temple trust - Sri Ram Janmabhoomi Teerth Kshetra.

Attacks in Arabian Sea: Navy chief directs action

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

The Indian Navy has significantly enhanced its surveillance apparatus in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden by deploying frontline destroyers and frigates in view of recent incidents of attacks on merchant vessels.

Liberian-flagged cargo vessel MV Chem Pluto, with 21 Indian crew members, was the target of a drone attack off India's west coast on December 23, triggering security concerns as the incident came amid Iran-backed Houthi militants launching strikes on several commercial ships. Another commercial crude oil tanker, MV Sai Baba, that was on the way to India came under a suspected drone strike in the Southern

Red Sea on the same day.

"The last few weeks have witnessed increased maritime security incidents on merchant vessels transiting through international shipping lanes in Red Sea, Gulf of Aden and Central/ North Arabian Sea," the Navy said.

It also referred to a recent piracy incident on merchant ship MV Ruen approximately 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast. "The piracy incident on MV Ruen, approximately 700 nautical miles from the Indian coast, and recent drone attack on MV Chem Pluto, approximately 220 nautical miles South West of Porbandar, indicate a shift in maritime incidents closer to Indian EEZ (Exclusive Economic Zone)," the Navy said in a statement.

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RECORD HOLDER

'India brimming with self-confidence, should maintain momentum in 2024'

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Asserting that India is brimming with self-confidence, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday said the country is imbued with the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat' and self-reliance, and urged people to maintain the momentum in 2024 as well. In the 108th episode of Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, Prime



Minister Modi also emphasised on physical and mental health and highlighted several unique efforts for 'Fit India'.

'Share creations on Ram Temple, Ayodhya on social media'

Noting that there is excitement in the country over the Ram Temple in Ayodhya, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday urged people to share their creations such as 'bhajans' relating to it on social media with the hashtag 'Shri Ram Bhajan', saying this compilation will turn into a flow of emotions and devotion in which everyone will be imbued with the ethos of Lord Ram. In his Mann Ki Baat radio broadcast, Prime Minister Modi also pointed out that there are many experienced as well as new emerging young artists who have composed heart-warming bhajans. "There is excitement and enthusiasm in the entire country in connection with the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya. People are expressing their feelings in a multitude of ways. You must have noticed that during the last few days, many new songs and new bhajans have been composed on Shri Ram and Ayodhya," Modi said.

TeH, once headed by Syed Ali Shah Geelani, banned by govt

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

In a decisive step, the government on Sunday declared pro-Pakistan separatist group Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (TeH), founded by late hardline separatist Syed Ali Shah Geelani, as a banned organisation for the next five years.

The action, announced by Union Home Minister Amit Shah, is a response to the group's involvement in fomenting terrorism

and spreading anti-India sentiment within the Union territory of Jammu and Kashmir.

Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's zero-tolerance policy against terrorism, Shah emphasised that any individual or organisation found engaged in anti-India activities would face strict measures. "The Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, J&K (TeH), has been declared an 'Unlawful Association' under the

Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act. The outfit is involved in forbidden activities to separate J&K from India and establish Islamic rule," Shah posted on X. The decision to ban the TeH was made under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, citing the group's propagation of anti-India messaging and its efforts to sustain terror activities, ultimately aiming to fuel secessionism in Jammu and Kashmir.

After setback in assy polls, Cong braces for a make-or-break 2024

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Fresh from the setbacks in the assembly elections of Hindi heartland states of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh, the Congress is bracing for a make-or-break 2024, the year of the 18th Lok Sabha election.

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi hopes to equal Jawaharlal Nehru's record of returning to the PMO thrice in a row, the new year is also being seen by many as one of the toughest periods for the

Congress in its 138-year journey. It will also mark 40 years since Congress scaled its electoral peak in 1984 winning a record 414 Lok Sabha seats. With just 48 seats in the Lower House of Parliament now, the party has experienced a steady decline in the last 10 years.

In 2024, as Congress hopes to arrest this slide, it will face multiple challenges, the topmost being finalizing seat-sharing deals with constituents of the anti-BJP INDIA bloc which is yet to make any electoral impact.

Three arrested for rape of IIT-BHU student

Varanasi (UP), Dec 31 (PTI):

Police here have arrested three accused in connection with the alleged rape of a female student of IIT on the BHU campus, a police official said on Sunday. SHO of Lanka police station Shivakant Mishra said that the accused have been identified as Kunal Pandey, Anand alias Abhishek Chauhan and Saksham Patel. The alleged incident of rape occurred on the night of November 1. According to the complainant, she had gone out of her hostel with a friend when three men on a motorcycle forcibly took her to a corner and gagged her after separating her from her friend near the Karman Baba temple.

WELCOMING NEW YEAR 2024



People celebrate the New Year 2024 on its eve, in Moradabad, Sunday.

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SSP inspects vehicle checking points

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: Senior Superintendent of Police (Durg) Ram Gopal Garg took stock of the vehicle checking points on various roads. He briefed all the forces engaged in road blockade on New Year duty and necessary guidelines. Strict instructions given to take action against people involved in drink and drive.

He instructed them to seize the bikes of those who create ruckus at night, do rash driving, modified silencers, etc and produce them before the court. In the checking drive, action was taken against a total of 195 drivers and 12 vehicles were seized.

On Saturday, Senior Superintendent of Police Ram Gopal Garg inspected



the traffic system and checking points of the city. He reached the blockade point being set up in front of the Bhilai Nagar Police Petrol Pump and gave necessary guidelines. Thereafter, he inspected

the Equipment Chowk, Chhawani Chowk, Jamul Chowk, Gurudwara Chowk, Nehru Nagar Chowk and interacted with the cops deployed there. He said that the checking campaign

should be conducted by deploying adequate force and stoppers in the checking points.

Trained staff should be deployed to conduct breath analyser tests. Instead of the main traffic

square, the checking should be done some meters before or after the square by making a zigzag stopper. Adequate lighting arrangement should be there at the checking point. The cops must wear a safety jacket at the checking point. Radium stickers should be there in the stoppers so that the stopper is visible from a distance.

He further instructed the cops to produce the drink and drive cases before the court and send such cases for license suspension. In the checking campaign on Saturday, action was taken against a total of 195 drivers, including 108 triple-seat, 04 drunken drivers, 08 drivers with pressure horns and 40 violators of traffic rules. 12 vehicles were seized.

Youth held with pistol and live cartridges

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: Mohan Nagar Police arrested a ruffian and recovered a pistol and live cartridges from his possession. Inspector Vijay Kumar Yadav informed that they received a tip off regarding a suspect Many alias Akshat, who was sitting near Dada Badi Garden in Deepak Nagar and possessed a pistol.

As per the instructions of the senior officers, a police team rushed to Dada Badi Garden in Deepak Nagar and rounded up the suspect Many alias Akshat Dubey (22) son of Vijay Shankar Dubey a resident of Kadambari Nagar, Durga Temple.

A country-made pistol



was recovered from him. MADE IN USA 1101 was printed on its barrel. 03 live cartridges were also found in the pocket of jeans. When questioned, he was unable to produce valid documents.

He admitted that he has no documents for possessing a pistol and cartridges. His act was a crime under Section 25 of Arms Act. The accused was duly ar-

rested and produced before the court. He was sent to jail on judicial remand.

Inspector Vijay Kumar Yadav (SHO, Mohan Nagar), Assistant Sub-Inspector Gupteshwar Yadav, Constables Kranti Sharma, Ritesh Agnihotri, Sanjay Soni, Murali Soni and Rajendra Banchor played a vital role in arresting the accused.

30 liters of raw Mahua liquor seized

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: Police seized 30 liters of Mahua liquor and 5 quintals of Lahan from Ranitarai Police Station area. It was a joint action of Anti Crime and Cyber Unit Durg and Police Stations Ranitarai, Anda and Patan.

SSP Ram Gopal Garg had instructed to conduct a campaign against illegal drug dealers in the district. Under the supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Anurag Jha and Deputy Superintendent of Police Rajeev Sharma, a joint team led by Inspector Naresh Patel (in-charge of ACCU), Inspector Anand



Shukla (SHO, Anda), Inspector Prakash Kant (SHO, Ranitarai) and Inspector Vineeta Panikar (I/c Mahila Police Station) was deployed for action.

The team continuously kept an eye on the drug dealers and a network of informers was activated.

Meanwhile, the police team received information from sources about production of illegal Mahua liquor.

Acting on this tip off, a joint team conducted a raid early in the morning in village Ghorari of Ranitarai police station

area. In village Ghorari, Ravi Gaikwad and his associates were making Mahua liquor illegally on the banks of the pond.

On spotting the cops, they escaped from the spot. Police recovered 30 liters of illegal Mahua liquor, liquor making material and about 05 quintals of Mahua Lahan from the spot.

These items were seized and a case has been lodged against the accused Ravi Gaikwad and his accomplices under the Excise Act. Officers and personnel of Anti Crime and Cyber Unit Durg and Police Stations Ranitarai, Anda, Patan and Mahila Police Station played a vital role.

Workshop on fingerprint collection held

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: As per the instructions of Senior Superintendent of Police (Durg) Ram Gopal Garg and supervision of Additional Superintendent of Police (City) Abhishek Jha, Additional Superintendent of Police (Crime) Dr Anurag Jha, a day-long workshop on fingerprint evidence collection was held at Police Lines.

The importance of fingerprints in the crimes committed with the use of new technology, crime investigation, fingerprint identification, matching the records of the wanted criminal etc were detailed



in the workshop. Rakesh Narvare, Range Fingerprint Expert, Raipur-Durg Division, conducted the training session.

He trained the concerned personnel posted in various police stations. He spoke about the details of the crime scene and the

correct methods of collecting and maintaining fingerprints found at the crime scene. He further spoke about the new technology - NAFIS (National Automated Fingerprint Identification System).

He said that a detailed training was given in all

the states regarding identification of criminals and action to be taken against them through connectivity. Reserve Inspector Neelkanth Verma, Inspector Navi Monica Pandey and a total of 70 trainees participated in the training.

Nutritious food kits distributed among pregnant women

Baby shower organized in VBSY Camp

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra (VBSY) Camps are being organized in Bhilai Corporation area. Pregnant mothers who have completed 6 months are being given nutritious food kits. Baby Shower programmes are also organized. Their families are being given information about the diet of children.

Apart from this, a large number of citizens are taking advantage of health facilities in the camp. Hundreds of people are getting their BP, sugar and blood group checked for free. They are also taking medicines as per the advice of doctors.

The 10th day of VBSY Camp in Municipal Corporation Bhilai area was organized at Khursipar Post Office Ground and Civic Center. Women and Child



Development Department's Project Officer Shilpa Tiwari and Supervisor Deepshikha said that in the camp organized since December 22, baby showers for 20 pregnant women have been organized so far and their families have been given complete information about care and food during pregnancy.

Ready to eat food packets, fruits and vegetables, ragi, jaggery, gram, etc were provided to them in the food kits. Other items of Suhaag were provided by the local public representatives. Ready-to-eat dishes are also

being prepared and distributed to the malnourished children.

A large number of citizens reached the camps organized at two places in Bhilai Municipal Corporation and took information from the stalls set up for the promotion of public welfare schemes like Ujjwala Yojana, Pradhan Mantri Awas, PM Vishwakarma Yojana. Many people filled the forms to avail the benefits of the scheme.

Health department has also set up stalls at the camps where the people are

getting their blood pressure, sugar and TB tests done. People are getting consultation and free medicines for common diseases like cold, cough, fever, stiffness, dizziness, pain in hands and legs, etc.

Corporator Sarita Devi, former BMC Speaker P Shyam Sundar Rao, Yogendra Singh, Tilak Raj, Rajnikant Pandey and Ashok Jain attend the camps. They lit the lamps to formally inaugurate the camps. The citizens pledged to participate in making India a developed and prosperous nation.

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: Maitri Baag Zoo, managed by the Horticulture Section of SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Town Services Department (TSD) will remain open for visitors on Monday, January 01, 2024. Every year Maitri Baag attracts a large number of visitors from Bhilai and nearby areas on New Year's Day.

Because of the increasing number of COVID-19 cases, the Entry Passes shall be issued to the visitors after making online payment through UPI Apps only. Therefore, all visitors are requested to download any valid UPI app on their mobiles and avoid unnecessary crowds on New Year's Day.

In view of the increasing number of cases of the newly-emerged strain of COVID-19 virus in the region, an appeal is being made to everyone to ad-

here to the precautionary measures for the prevention of COVID-19 infection. It is noteworthy that as many as 11 Corona Virus Cases have been reported in the recent past

in Durg-Bhilai.

Everyone should necessarily wear masks in crowded areas and hospitals, wash hands frequently or use sanitizers, and follow social distanc-

ing. Individuals having symptoms such as viral infection like cold, cough and fever, or difficulty in breathing, should immediately get tested for COVID-19.

INTUC demands mobile SIM and payment slips for all employees

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: A meeting of INTUC office bearers with the officials of the Industrial Relations Department was held the other day. INTUC union gave certain suggestions on what steps should be taken by the personnel department in the interest of the employees. The union demanded that payment slips should be given to all employees; Mitran Center should be reopened in the township as earlier; all employees should be provided mobile SIM facility; EL and HPL of employees should not lapse; they should be given the facility to take earned leave during medical treatment; formally inform the employees before discontinuing medical facilities of the children attaining the age of 25 years; table, chair and cupboard should be provided in the offices of all



Ispat Clubs. Raising the issue of seeking appointments in OPD, the union leaders said that if the appointment is not registered for any particular date, it should be given for the next date. The union leaders said that the employees have to waste time again and again to get an OPD appointment. Some measures must be taken to eliminate this problem. They further demanded that the provision of identification by an employee who has 5 years of service left while availing pension facility should be abolished;

it should be ensured that a complaint and suggestion register is maintained in the personal office and all notices should be posted by the personal office on the notice board of the shop floor. Deputy General Manager (Personnel) Vikas Chandra, Senior Manager Rohit Harit, Senior Manager Rama Rao, Manager Rahul Thote and INTUC leaders Vansh Bahadur Singh, Puran Verma, Shekhar Kumar Sharma, S Ravi, Jayant Barate and Shiv Shankar Singh were present in the meeting.

Power Supply to be affected in some areas of Township

Central Chronicle News

Bhilai, Dec 31: The Town Electrical Engineering Dept. (TEED) under SAIL-Bhilai Steel Plant's Town Services Department chalks out an annual preventive maintenance plan each year to minimize breakdowns and enhance the reliability of the system to ensure uninterrupted power supply in the township.

As per the Annual Maintenance Plan for 2023-24, there will be a planned shutdown for preventive maintenance of the HT system during the period from December 2023 to March 2024, to carry out several maintenance jobs and take corrective action.

As per the maintenance schedule, the power supply will be affected in the follow-

ing areas of the township every day from 10:00 hrs to 01:30 hrs from 01st to 06th January 2024.

The power supply shall be affected in Sector-04, on 01st January 2024, and at some parts of Maroda, on 02nd January 2024. At some parts of Sector-06, along with the Russian Complex and BMDC, the power supply shall be affected on 03rd January, while at Khursipar Zones 02&03 on 04th January 2024.

The power supply shall be affected in Camp-01, and Khursipar Zone-01 on 05th January, and at Risali Sector on 06th January 2024, from 10:00 AM to 01:30 PM respectively.

All the residents are requested to take note of the same. Electrical Engineering Dept. has appealed to residents to cooperate.

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Attends 6th annual convention of Manwa Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj Balodabazar Raj



Raipur, Dec 31: Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai today attended the sixth annual convention of Chhattisgarh Manwa Kurmi Kshatriya Samaj Balodabazar Raj held at Semhradhih in Balodabazar district. Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais was the chief guest. Chhattisgarh Sports and Youth Welfare and Revenue Disaster Management Minister Tank Ram Verma and MLA Vyas Kashyap were also present.

At the outset Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais and Chief Minister Sai paid tribute to the great personalities of the society by garlanding their oil paintings and lighting lamps. Chief Minister Sai announced the approval of sub-health center in Semhradhih on the demand of citizens in the programme. He also announced the approval of

financial assistance of Rs 25 thousand for the education of Deepak Verma, a financially weak student. Guests released booklets titled "Parinay Pushp" and "Arpa Chhattisgarh". On this occasion, two ideal marriages took place and the guests extended good wishes and blessings to the newly married couples for a happy life.

In his addressing Sai described Kurmi Samaj as a patriotic and hardworking society. He said that great men of this society also played their part in the freedom movement. Chief Minister Sai expressed his gratitude to the general public for trusting the guarantee of Prime Minister Shri Narendra

Modi and said that his government will fulfill every promise made to the general public in five years. In the cabinet meeting on the second day of swearing in, steps began to fulfill the guarantees of Modi ji with decision to benefit 18 lakh families from the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, he said. On the occasion of Good Governance Day on 25th December, the birthday of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Late Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee, an amount of Rs 3716 crore of two years' outstanding paddy bonus was transferred to the bank accounts of more than 12 lakh farmers of the state, he added. He said that as per Modi's guaran-

tee, married women will be given annual assistance of Rs 12,000 under Mahtari Vandana Yojana.

Maharashtra Governor Ramesh Bais while addressing the convention highlighted importance of women's education for the development of the society. Earlier, women were limited to household work, only men were involved in social activities, but under the constitutional provision, they are also getting the benefit of reservation and women are discharging their responsibilities even in important places, he said. Revenue Minister Tank Ram Verma, Chhova Ram Verma, Dharmendra Sarsaha also addressed the programme.

TOY TRAIN



A toy train has been started at city's Marine drive (Telibandha pond) as joy-ride for youngsters and youth, making a complete round-about of the entire pond and it has become centre of attraction among all.

RMC imposes fine of Rs 15000 against two film producers



For pasting film posters in the walls of Pachpedhi Naka over-bridge

Raipur, Dec 31: Two teams of Raipur Municipal Corporation had imposed fine of Rs 15000 against the two film

producers for pasting of posters on the Pachpedhi Naka overbridge and the posters were also removed with the help of the labourers.

The Town & Country Planning officer RMC Nishikant Verma informed that this action was taken as per instructions by the Municipal

Commissioner Mayank Chaturvedi. The combined team of RMC's head office and Zone-6 conducted this action. The RMC's HO team imposed fine of Rs 10000 on the film producers and Rs 5000 was fine imposed by Zone-6 office. The Municipal Commissioner has directed to take action on regular basis.

Brijmohan distributes cheques to beneficiaries

Raipur, Dec 31: Minister for School Education and Tourism & Culture Brijmohan Agrawal said that the PM Narendra Modi had launched 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' in order to make the poor, women and youth self-sufficient and for this variety of schemes have been formed to take them forward. It is in order to pass on the direct benefit of these schemes to people of the state that this Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra has been launched. The Yatra will move to cities and villages and give information about the schemes to the people, both in urban and rural areas. Set aside this it will also register the people who are interested in availing benefit of the schemes, he added.

Brijmohan Agrawal reached in the special camp organized under 'Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra' at Community centre in New Changorabhata here on Friday. During this Agrawal gave information in detailed about various schemes of under this Sankalp Yatra.

Addressing the people Brijmohan Agrawal said



that the person who wants to start their small work or trade can avail loan upto Rs 10000 under 'Swanidhi Yojana' and once the beneficiary refunds he loan amount, he will be eligible for another loan of Rs 20000 and on its repayment with loan amount of Rs 30000 and so on upto Rs 50000. Similarly under the 'Vishwakarma Yojana', the persons working as mason, carpenter, blacksmith and other such trades can get loan upto Rs 3.0 lakh without any guarantee.

Under the Ayushman Yojana, Brijmohan informed that the government is offering free of cost treatment upto Rs 5 lakh and for which the person who get Ayushman

Card made in such camps. The people can avail benefit under Ujjwala Yojana and under this LGP cylinder will be available free of cost for the first time and then at the rate of Rs 500 each on refill. Under 'Mudra Yojana' any person can avail loan upto Rs 50000 for starting any personal work or business.

Brijmohan informed that application can be made for availing 'pucca' houses under PM Awas Yojana (PMAY) and under Jal Jeevan Mission, applications can also be made. All the married household women will be paid Rs 1000 per month under 'Mahatari Vandana Yojana' and information can be availed about all these schemes in the

camp. In this programme Brijmohan also distributed cheques to the beneficiaries under 'Swanidhi Yojana' and in this programme LS MP Sunil Soni, Meena Choubey coparator and leader of Opposition RMC, coparator Mritunjay Dubey, Sarita Dubey, Mohan Verma, Yadram Sahu, Manish and party workers and RMC officials and employees were present in large number. In this programme stalls of Women & Child Development Dept; Health; laour; Nagr Palika, Banks were also installed and people were given information about schemes and their registration was also done.

Eight IAS officers given promotion, including 3 on central deputation

Raipur, Dec 31: Manoj Pingua, an IAS of 1994 batch has been given the gift of promotion just before the New Year. Working as Principal Secretary in the Forest Department, Pingua is also looking after Home, Jail and Residential Commissioner Chhattisgarh Bhavan and as Chairman CG Education Board and on completion of 30 years, he has been given promotion for Apex Scale to Pay Matrix Level-17 from 1 Jan 2024. In the same way, IAS Richa Sharma, Nidhi Chibber and Vikasheel on central deputation too

have been given proforma promotion under Pay Matrix-17 on joining as Chief Secretary payscale. All are IAS of 1994 batch. The other four IAS officers who have been given promotion on completion of 16 yrs of service and would be paid payscale at Pay Matrix Level -14 and that too on completion of Mid-Career Training (Phase-IV). The names of IAS are- Bhim Singh (IAS-2008) working as Labour Commissioner Chhattisgarh and with additional charge of CEO CG State Rural Development; Rajesh Singh Rana (IAS-2008)

batch working as Special Secretary School Education deptt, and Additional Charge of Director SCERT and Mission Director, State Literacy Mission has been promoted as Secretary with all the same department.

IAS Shikha Rajput working as Commissioner Suguja division, Ambikapur would continue to serve the same and IAS Satyanarayan Rathore working as Registrar Firms and Societies and having an additional charge of Director Local Fund Audit and OSD Food &

Civil Supplies Corporation and Consumer Protection would continue to serve in the same departments and IAS Mahadev Kanware working as Special Secretary (Independent charge) Housing and Environment deptt; and addl. Charge of Special Secy (Independent charge) of Commercial Tax, (Excise); Excise Commissioner Town & Country Planning and Director Chhattisgarh State Marketing Corporation has been promoted as Secretary for all the said department.

Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra camp held at Zone-6 Ward-63

More than 1080 eligible citizens directly benefited from Central Government schemes

Raipur, Dec 31: A one-day camp under Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra campaign of the Central Government was held in the first shift of the day in Hardevlala Temple in Tikrapara falling under Brigadier Usman Ward No. 63 of Raipur Municipal Corporation Zone No-6 in Raipur South Assembly Constituency. The camp was held with the aim of providing information about various public welfare schemes of the Central Government in-



cluding PM Swanidhi, PM Vishwakarma, Ayushman Card, PM Ujjwala, Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana and directly benefiting the eligible people from all such schemes.

Girl students gave a beautiful dance performance on the stage and gave a beautiful positive message to the people about

environmental protection in the interest of society. Raipur Lok Sabha MP Sunil Soni, Raipur South MLA representative Vijay Agrawal, Corporation Deputy Leader of Opposition Manoj Verma, Ward-63 Coparator Chandrapal Dhangar Guddu, former Leader of Opposition Subhash

Tiwari, former Coparator Ramkrishna Dhivar Bhunda, Additional Commissioner of Municipal Corporation Abhishek Agrawal, Zone 6 Commissioner Ramesh Jaiswal, Executive Engineer Atul Chopra along with officials of Municipal Corporation, Raipur, District Administration Raipur and various government departments, social workers, women and youth were present in large numbers. Raipur Lok Sabha MP Sunil Soni and Raipur South MLA representative Vijay Agrawal directly observed the administrative arrangements by visiting the stalls set up by various departments at the venue of the camp.

31st National Junior Fencing Competition begins with a spectacular march past



Raipur, Dec 31: The 31st National Junior Fencing Boys-Girls Competition got off to a great start today at Agrasen Dham in the capital Raipur. As many as 536 boys and girls from about 26 states of the country performed a spectacular march past on the melodious tune of the police band and greeted the chief guests of the program. Raipur Rural MLA Motilal Sahu, presided over the program. Rajiv Mehta (General Secretary, Indian Fencing Federation) and Rajpal Singh Tyagi, former IAS, participated in the

SPORTS ROUND-UP

program as special guests. In the welcome address, Organizing Secretary of State Fencing Association, Ajit Singh Patel said that 800 participants including players and officials are participating in this national event. Presiding over the program, Rajeev Mehta, appreciated the organization of State Fencing for better arrangements for the players in the state. Providing better facilities to the players will definitely improve their morale and performance along

with sports, he said, adding that development is also visible. In the opening ceremony of the program, Chhattisgarh's national player Rashman Kaur Dhiman administered the oath to the players. MLA of Raipur Rural, Motilal Sahu said in his address said that such events will definitely provide a platform and recognition to players from the entire state. He said that he will try to make arrangements for the players coming from different states to visit the tourist places of Chhattisgarh.

Three players from Chhattisgarh reach knock out round

Three players namely Yukti Dubey, Deepanshi Netam, Bhumika Sahu from Chhattisgarh performed brilliantly in the individual foil competition held today in women's category and entered the knock out round. In her opening match, Yukti Dubey defeated Trisha Tiwari of Uttar Pradesh 5-0, while Sonali Patel reached the knock-out round by defeating Odisha 5-0 and Gujarat 5-4. Similarly, Deepanshi Netam reached the knock out round by defeating Jharkhand, Odisha, Rajasthan, MP and Punjab. Bhumika Sahu reached the knock-out round by defeating Uttar Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh, and Bihar whereas Maya Sahu defeated Manipur. In the individual competition in the boys category, Chhattisgarh's Himanshu Netam, Ishan Jaiswal, Janardan Sahu entered the knock out round.

YC demonstrates to save Hasdev, demands a ban on deforestation



Raipur, Dec 31: Chhattisgarh Youth Congress staged a symbolic demonstration at Jaistambh Chowk under the leadership of Chhattisgarh Youth Congress State Secretary Abhishek Kasar against the indiscriminate cutting of forests in Hasdev

forest area. Abhishek Kasar told that as soon as the Bharatiya Janata Party government was formed in Chhattisgarh, Modi's corporate friends were cutting the forests of Hasdev under the patronage of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. Thousands of trees have

been cut, he said. Kasar said, the police were threatening and imprisoning the tribals who were agitating to save Hasdev and putting them in jail. Demanding immediate steps to check felling of Hasdev forests, he threatened to intensify agitation. Youth Congress State Secretaries Ruchir Dubey, Faheem Sheikh, Manharan Verma, Asif Khan, District Presidents Vinod Kashyap Bhakku, District General Secretary Sattar Chauhan and other office bearers and workers participated in demonstration.

RMC intensifies revenue collection drive

Raipur, Dec 31: The team of Revenue Department of Municipal Corporation Raipur has intensified revenue collection drive in all the 10 zones. It is conducting attachment warrant proceedings every day to recover outstanding revenue from major defaulters. Property tax payers Ashok Kumar Agrawal and Anil Kumar Aggarwal of Netaji Kanhaiya Lal Bazari Ward No. 15 of Zone 1 deposited the total outstanding amount of Rs 4,73,535 for their two private buildings on the spot itself immediately after they were issued attachment warrant.

St. Xavier's HS holds Christmas Fiesta2.0

Guest Lecture on Modern Success Mantra organised

Raipur, Dec 31:

Christmas Fiesta2.0 organized at St. Xavier's High School, Raipur in collaboration with the esteemed alumni of the school.

The event, held on 23rd December 2023, showcased the vibrant talents and spirit of unity within our school community. The evening began with mesmerizing dance performances by our talented students, spreading joy and festive cheer. The performances highlighted the dedication and enthusiasm of our students, contributing to the success of the event.

A unique feature of this year's Christmas



Fiesta was the active participation of students from the 11th and 12th grades, who set up entrepreneurial stalls. This initiative, inspired by the vision of our respected Chairman Sir

Dr. A.F. Pinto, aimed at instilling a sense of entrepreneurship among students. The young minds not only displayed creativity and innovation in their stalls but also learned valuable lessons

about business, teamwork, and responsibility.

The heartwarming part of the evening was the involvement of our esteemed alumni, who contributed to the festivities by singing prayer songs. Their presence added a nostalgic touch to the event, connecting past and present generations of our school. Alumni members not only shared their experiences but also actively engaged with the current students, fostering a sense of mentorship and community.

In conclusion, the Christmas Fiesta was a delightful blend of talent, entrepreneurship, and the spirit of giving.

At Chouksey Group of Colleges

Bilaspur, Dec 31:

Department of Management, Chouksey Engineering College and Chouksey College of Science And Commerce organised "Expert lecture on Modern Success Mantra". The program started with welcoming Managing Director, Dr. Ashish Jaiswal, O.S.D. Mr. Sharad Kaushik, Administrative Officer Dr. Nitin Jain, Principal Dr. Dheeraj Ahirwar, Principal Dr. Mantosh Sinha, HOD of Management and Commerce Mr. Amit Stieve Henry, Chief Guest- Dr. B.B. Pandey, who is an eminent



speaker and Associate Professor of Department of Management Studies, Guru Ghasidas Vishwavidyalaya. She delivered the session.

Dr. Bobby Pandey shared her views on different areas with relevant examples during the lecture. Students interacted with her and discussed lots of doubts. The program ended with refreshment and

mantra. Professors, supporting staff and students got benefitted by attending to the program, and got number of mantras how to be successful in their personal life as well as professional life.

Managing Director, Chouksey Group Dr. Ashish Jaiswal emphasized on how we can get successful in our life. Discipline is the basic

requirement. Principal Mantosh Sinha gave a warm welcome note and few tips.

Administrative Officer Dr. Nitin Jain welcomed students and appreciated them and encouraged to open and ask questions. At the end of the program, Amit Stieve Henry thanked the Guest for the valuable insights in the subject, informs a press release.

Adivasi Youth Introduction Conference held

Police crackdown on illegal liquor trade

Dy. CM welcomed in traditional style with 'Khumari'



Raipur, Dec 31: The Regional Gond Adivasi Samaj Tikrapara organized a Youth Introduction Conference on Sunday. The information was given by Bhavani Singh Markam, the Adivasi Congress Raipur City District President, and Jaggu Thakur, the President of Regional Gond Adivasi Samaj in a press release here. The conference saw significant participation from members of the

Adivasi community, with many families registering the names of their sons and daughters to be part of this special event. Bhavani Singh Markam highlighted that the conference drew attendees not only from Chhattisgarh but also from states like Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, and Orissa, demonstrating the widespread engagement and unity of the Adivasi community in the region.

Fingeswar, Dec 31:

The Fingeswar region, long plagued by illicit alcohol trade and corruption with the alleged support of the Excise Department, witnessed a substantial crackdown on unlawful liquor-selling centers. These centers were involved in the sale of illegal liquor, operating openly in broad daylight and late into the night, near Borid Chowk, situated downstream from the Sukhra River.

For an extended period, Borid Chowk had been marred by unregulated liquor sales, occurring at exorbitant rates around the clock, including holidays, and sometimes even with proper arrangements for serving. The scale of liquor availability at these locations raised suspicions about the quantity supplied to these liquor vendors. Residents described Borid Chowk as



having transformed into a hub for such activities. Initially, patrons would purchase alcohol from licensed liquor shops and consume it on-site. Gradually, this practice evolved, resulting in Borid Chowk becoming synonymous with unregulated liquor consumption. Business incentives led to the expansion of these activities, including arrangements for purchasing and consuming

alcohol in exchange for money.

Concerns about the adverse impact of such arbitrary illegal liquor trading on the environment gained momentum in recent days, sparking public discussions among villagers. With the advent of the new government, villagers anticipated improvements in the Borid Chowk area's environment. Following ongoing media coverage highlight-

ing environmental issues related to unregulated liquor trade, the police took swift action, registering a case against those involved.

According to information from police sources, Police Station In-charge Jitendra Vijaywar led a raid in Borid Chowk. During the operation, legal action was taken against individuals engaged in illegal liquor sales. Santram Nishad, aged 45, from Borid village; Dhan Shyam Yadav, aged 45, from Fingeswar; Ramsia Chakradhari, aged 58, from Fingeswar; and Himanshu Khute, aged 32, from Fingeswar faced charges under Section 36(c) of the Excise Act. The successful operation was executed with contributions from SI Prahlad Thakur, Head Constable Anil Yadav, Santosh Thakur, Dilip Sinha, and Constable Parmanand Sahu.

Dy Chief Minister Vijay Sharma was accorded warm welcome by forest people on his maiden arrival in remote villages of Siwnikhurd, Samnapur, Sheetalpani, Bahankhoda, Siwnikala Chilfi, Bokkarkhar. He was welcomed by presenting him with state's traditional

'Khumari'. On this occasion District Panchayat President Videshiram Ghurve, Santosh Patel, Kailash Chandravanshi, Maniram Sahu, Mantu Porte, Santram Ghurve, Nitesh Agrawal, Brijendra Tiwari, Ganesh Tiwari, Kranti Gupta, Dr TR Rana, Bhuneswar Patle, CL Bhagat and others were present.

Sarpanch denies information about misuse of School land

Three books by Madhuri Dadsena released

Kurud, Dec 31: The RTI worker Krishnakant Sahu brought into open the misutilisation of the temple of education in Gram Panchayat Goli by anti-social elements, then be it the sand mafia using it for storing heap of sand or those using it as open area for liquor consumption and other anti-social activities. The RTI was submitted right from Kurud Tehsil to SDM level and it was brought into open by Gram Panchayat Goli about the stark realities in the School in Gram Panchayat Goli. It is notable here that in the Gram Panchayat Goli under Kurud block headquarters is having a Government Primary school building and it over the period of few months have become den of anti-social elements. This news was prominently published in the local newspapers and attention of the district administration was brought on it. The administration took to heels and freed the school premises from all such elements. But in the last 9 months, so far no action has been taken against the accused involved and entire case is only limited to paper-work and show-cause notice.

RTI worker brought reality into open: RTI worker KK Sahu sought information from PIO of Teshildar under RTI from Sarpanch of Gram Panchayat Goli last in April 2023 about the premises rented to the sand mafia. On this the Head Master informed PIO Kurud tehsil that School building comes under Gram Panchayat and denied the information about sand illegally being stored by the sand mafia Sanjay Bihari and his associates in the School premises, based upon Patwari's report. On this checking all the facts and figures, SDM (Revenue) utilising the provisions envisaged to him under Panchayati Raj Act 1993 issued show-cause-notice to Sarpanch saying that being in the post of Sarpanch why it is being violated and citing about the report by Nayab tehsildar, detailed report was sought from him. The Sarpanch Goli in his reply to SDM Kurud informed that after the formation of school, there are no classes being held and due to which the condition of the building is in dilapidated state. Lots of wild bushes have grown in the premises

and there is no arrangement of light and water. So in order to make arrangements for lights, water etc, it has been handed over to sand contractor of Nari Sanjay Bihari and no agreement has been made for any revenue generation from it or availing any private benefits. Lots of contradiction in Sarpanch's words and ground reality! 1. A ground is always with wild grass and bushes and what else will grow on barren land? In case of denial of electricity in the School, the correspondent of paper has got the proof that there is power theft in the place and it is clearly recorded in the camera. 2. Second thing is that of water tank in the premises, which is still existing and contradicts the statement made by Sarpanch. 3. The School's building is being held in dilapidated condition and from the photos published in the newspapers, it shows how much it is? The building is in good shape and why it is being utilised or misutilised is for the administration to find out.

The first convocation programme of Bilasa Chand Mahalaya, an educational institution of Bilasa Sahitya was held last on Dec 25 at Vrindavan Hall in Raipur. The chief guest was 'Chandkar' Arun Nigam (Durg), Ranjan Yadav Sangeetacharya (ISKM, Khairagarh), Dr Ajay Mohan Sahai (Raipur).

In this programme the 'Chand Mahalay' was chaired by Dr Madhuri Dadsena R/o Mudita Nagar Panchayat Bhakhara by her three self-written books viz. 'Madhuri Martand', 'Mahagranth of Samporna Savaiyya', 'Madhuri Manduri' a collection of Chhattisgarh Gazal Sangrah- 'Madhuri Mohini- 'puratan Savaiyya Sangrah'.



Madhuri informed that she has been honoured with 'Magic book of world records' in Faridabad, New Delhi last on Dec 8, 2023. 'Madhuri Martand' is a novel collection of 1165 new 'Savaiyya' written by Dr Madhuri Dadsena. In this programme many 'Chand Sadhaks' from all over the country were present and became wit-

ness to the presentations made. In this all the 'chand Sadhak', 'patal guru' and 'Patal Pramukh' were honoured by presenting them with felicitation letter and memento. In this convocation ceremony, 'Chand Sadhaks' from different states of the country were present. This included Dr Madhu Shankhdhar,

Brijesh Shankhdhar, Priyanka Tripathi, Babita Mandhana, Sadhana Lakhnvi, Renu Mishra, Meenashri, Manjari Nidhi, Padakshi Shukla, Soudamani Khare, Tripta Shrivastava, Ashok Patsaria, Jai Hind, Chourasia 'Prama', Indrani Sahu 'Sanchi', Santosh Miri, Ramkrishna Sahu, Gargi

Asha Chatterjee, Dr Nirmala Sharma, Gajendra Hariharo 'Deep', Bhagwat Prasad Nishad, Omkar Sahu 'Mridul', Chandravati Sahu, Pallavi Jha, Sushma Patel, Padma Sahu 'Parvani', Nirmamani Sriwas 'Niyati', Geeta Vishwakarma 'Neh', Sageeta Verma and others. In this programme, the head of institute Dr Madhuri Dadsena 'Mudita' presented her 'Chand Mahalay'. Entire programme was conducted by Gajendra Hariharo Deep. The founder of the institution Dr Ramnath Sahu Nanki spoke about the protection and increase in 'Bharatiya Chands' on India. Chief guest Arun Nigam and Ranjan Yadav extended greetings to the institution for providing free of cost service by it.

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Chronicle

Provide benefits of PMJY to PVTG category people: CEO

Dy. CM attends Shrimad Bhagwat Katha

Korba, Dec 31: Chief Executive Officer District Panchayat Vishwadeep here held a meeting of various departmental officers for effective and timely implementation of Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana and gave instructions to speed up the implementation of the scheme. On this occasion, Forest Divisional Officer Korba PM Arvind, Additional Collector Pradeep Sahu, Dinesh Nag, Assistant Commissioner Tribal Development Department Shrikant Kaser, officials of Health, Education, PHE, Electricity Department and other departments were present. Giving detailed information regarding PM Janman Yojana, CEO Shri Vishwadeep said that this scheme is being



run to improve the social and economic condition of the special backward tribe community and under this, in coordination with various departments, in the settlements of such communities, drinking water, housing, roads, mobile medical units, construction of hostels, nutrition through Anganwadi centres, establishment of Van Dhan Kendra, availability of internet and mobile services and skill development for livelihood promotion etc. is being

done. Other activities will be implemented and for this, survey work is being done by the departments in PVTG settlements and apart from this, camps are also being organized to provide benefits of Aadhar Card, Ayushman Card, Ration Card, Jan Dhan Account, KCC, Forest Rights Certificate, Caste Certificate, E-Shram Card and other schemes to the deprived people of special backward tribes on priority basis. The CEO also instructed all the depart-

ment heads to provide 100 percent benefits of the scheme to the underprivileged people of PVTG category and for this, all the departments should establish mutual coordination and make meaningful efforts to provide benefits to the special backward tribe community, along with developing the district, they should also work to deliver the schemes of the Central and State Government in the inaccessible areas. He instructed all the officers to discharge their responsibilities responsibly and do regular monitoring and also asked the entire department heads to ensure the presence of their subordinate officers and employees in the camps regularly through field visits.

Dy. CM of State and MLA Kawardha Vijay Sharma attended the 'Bhagwat Katha' organised in Gram Neurgaon Khurd. He enjoyed discourse on Shrimad Bhagwat sitting along with the people of the village and devotees from nearby areas. Offering flower petals on 'Shrimad Bagwat Puraan', Dy. CM Sharma sought blessings for peace and prosperity of all in the state. Later Dy. CM and MLA Kawardha during his tour to forest village Gram Bokkarkhar took lunch sitting along



with the villagers. On this occasion former district panchayat President Videshiram Ghurve, Nitesh Agrawal, Brijendra Tiwari, Ganesh Tiwari, Kranti Gupta, Dr TR Rana, Bhuneswar Patle, CL Bhagat and other citizens were present.

'Peace accord with ULFA will expedite devp works in Assam'

Guwahati, Dec 31 (PTI):

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

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

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



Atul Bora

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

The ULFA's pro-talks faction on December 29 signed a peace accord with the Centre and the Assam

government, agreeing to shun violence, surrender all arms, disband the organisation and join the democratic process.

Talking about the coming year, the AGP chief said that the party will work towards strengthening its base in all 35 districts of the state.

"We will organise various programmes targeting the Lok Sabha elections and the panchayat polls. We do not have any member in Lok Sabha now, but we aim to send at least one after next year's elections," he added.

As part of this plan, the AGP will organise a series of booth-level meetings in Barpeta, Karimganj, Jorhat, Sonitpur and other districts over the next two months, Bora said.

Four start-ups to launch experiments on board ISRO's PSLV-C58 flight

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI): Four Indian space start-ups are set to launch their payloads to demonstrate microsatellite subsystems, thrusters or small engines that keep satellites in desired orbits, and radiation shield coating for satellites on board ISRO's PSLV-C58 mission on Monday.

Hyderabad-based Dhruva Space will validate the functionality and robustness of the P-30 nanosatellite platform and its various subsystems in-orbit as part of 'Launching Expeditions for Aspiring Payloads - Technology Demonstrator' (LEAP-TD) payload on the PSLV-C58 mission that will launch the XPoSatsatellite.

"The LEAP initiative of Dhruva Space marks a significant moment, under-

scoring our commitment to delivering full-stack and hosted payload solutions to our customers. This will be further enriched by new, upcoming pursuits in the fields of Earth Observation, IoT solutions, and more," Sanjay Nekkanti, Chief Executive Officer, Dhruva Space said.

The payloads of the space-tech start-ups and other research institutions will be housed on the fourth stage of the PSLV rocket that will be placed in a low earth orbit for carrying out various experiments.

ISRO's PSLV Orbital Experimental Module (POEM) allows in-orbit scientific experiments using the spent PS4 stage as an orbital platform.

Bengaluru-based Bellatrix Aerospace will test its Rudra 0.3 HPGP, a green monopropellant thruster and ARKA-200, a heaterless hollow cathode for Hall thrusters.

Mumbai-based IIT Bombay-incubated InspeCity Space Labs Private Limited, founded by Arindrajit Chowdhury, will test the Green Impulse Transmitter (GITA), a Green bipropellant CubeSat propulsion unit.

Hyderabad-based TakeMe2Space will test its Radiation Shielding Experimental Module (RSEM) that is designed to assess the effectiveness of Tantalum coating that would help increase the lifespan of a CubeSat. The POEM will also

have a Women Engineered Satellite (WESAT) developed by Thiruvananthapuram-based LBS Institute of Technology for Women, that aims to measure solar irradiance and UV Index.

Mumbai-based KJ Somaiya Institute of Technology will have an amateur radio satellite BeliefSat-0 onboard POEM. ISRO's Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre (VSSC) will have two payloads Fuel Cell Power System (FCPS) and Silicon-based High Energy Cell onboard POEM.

The Ahmedabad-based Physical Research Laboratory will have its Dust Experiment (DEX) designed to measure the interplanetary dust count. PTI SKU.

After SC nudge, India finally gets law to appoint CEC, ECs

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI): A legislation on the appointment of Election Commission members was the biggest highlight of 2023 for the Union law ministry which saw a change of guard this year as Arjun Ram Meghwal took over the reins from Kiren Rijiju. The year saw the Law Commission working on a formula to synchronise all assembly polls by extending or reducing the tenure so that all state elections can be held along with the Lok Sabha polls from 2029 onwards. Also, a high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind began examining the issue of holding simultaneous elections in the country. In March, the Supreme Court, while delivering its verdict on pleas seeking a collegium-like system for the appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC) and election commissioners, ruled that the appointments will be made by the president on the recommendation of a panel comprising the prime minister, the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and the chief justice of India.

'K'taka BJP MP accuses CM Siddaramaiah of 'targeting' his family'

Mysuru, Dec 31 (PTI):

BJP MP Pratap Simha on Sunday alleged that Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah is out to finish his family only to 'politically rehabilitate' his son Yathindra Siddaramaiah.

He claimed that the Chief Minister is targeting him to pave the way for his son to win the Lok Sabha elections next year.

Siddaramaiah dismissed the allegations, saying that only those who violate rules are arrested and not the innocent.

Pratap Simha was reacting to his brother Vikram Simha's arrest in connection with the felling of a large number of trees in a farm in Hassan to grow ginger. Vikram was arrested on Saturday evening



Pratap Simha

and taken to the hospital for a medical check-up today.

"My brother's name was not there in the FIR earlier. He wasn't even absconding. Yet, he was arrested," the Mysuru-Kodagu BJP MP told reporters here.

Simha further claimed that the CM will not stop

with the arrest.

"For your (Siddaramaiah) son's political future, you will make all the efforts to trample Pratap Simha. You will defame me and drag my family into this. You are trying to frame my brother," the MP alleged.

Simha charged that the Chief Minister is trying to rehabilitate his son Yathindra, who gave up the Varuna seat to enable his father contest the Assembly elections from the constituency in May this year.

"For his son's future, Siddaramaiah is out to finish my family. Please arrest my elderly mother and sister also but I want to tell you that the people of Mysuru-Kodagu are with me," the MP said.

ODISHA JUDICIAL EXAM EIGHTH RANKER

'Was shaken by Nirbhaya case, wanted to give justice to victims'

Berhampur (Odisha), Dec 31 (PTI): Twenty-six-year-old SR Toshali, who secured eighth rank in the Odisha Judicial Service (OJS) Examination, on Sunday said she was shaken by the 2012 Nirbhaya gangrape and it motivated her to pursue law to provide justice to women and children victims of such incidents. Toshali, who hails from Berhampur, cracked the OJS Exam, 2022 conducted by the Odisha Public Service Commission (OPSC). The result was declared on December 27 this year. Toshali, the daughter of a retired judicial officer, told PTI, "I was in class 11 when the Nirbhaya case shook the entire nation. Like other sensitive people, I was very saddened by the incident. It motivated me to join judicial service so that I could provide justice to victims of such heinous crimes." Toshali is currently pursuing her second-year master's degree in law at Lingaraj Law College here. A 23-year-old paramedic student was gang-raped inside a moving bus in Delhi on December 16, 2012. She later succumbed to her injuries at a hospital. After completing class 12 from Khallikote Junior College here, Toshali joined the University Law College of Utkal University to pursue BA. She cracked the prestigious judicial service examination in her second attempt. Last time, she had cleared the written test but failed the interview. "I worked harder than last year. This time, I was confident of clearing the examination but did not think that I would secure this position," she added.

VAISHNO DEVI PILGRIMS



Devotees on their way to Mata Vaishno Devi Bhawan on the last day of New Year, at Katra in Reasi district, Sunday.

Grand welcome to indigenous Amrit Bharat Exp

In Odisha and northern AP

Bhubaneswar, Dec 31:

Two Amrit Bharat Express including Malda Town-Bengaluru Amrit Bharat via Bhubaneswar and Visakhapatnam and Six Vande Bharat Express flagged off by Prime Minister on 30th December 2023 have been received grand welcome at various Stations. In Odisha and Northern AP, the Malda Town-Bengaluru Amrit Bharat Express welcomed with much fanfare amidst the rhythmic drum beats & traditional dance at Jaleswar, Balasore & Soro in South Eastern Railway jurisdiction and at Bhadrak, Cuttack, Bhubaneswar, Khurda Road, Brahmapur in Odisha. This train also wit-



nessed grand welcome at Srikakulam, Vizianagaram & Visakhapatnam Railway Stations in Northern Andhra Pradesh under ECoR jurisdiction. At Bhadrak Station, MP Mrs Manjulata Mandal, Ex. MLA Mukhtikant Mandal, Social worker Sisir Kumar Mishra &

Social Worker Ms Manasmita Khuntia graced the occasion. At Cuttack Railway Station, on Sunday morning, Passenger Amenities Committee Member Dillip Mallik & Social Worker Lalatendu Badu graced the function. At Bhubaneswar Railway Station, MP Mrs Aparajita Sarangi, MP Mrs

Sulata Deo and MP Muzibulla Khan graced the programme along with ECoR General Manager Manoj Sharma and Divisional Railway Manager H. S. Bajwa. Similarly, at Khurda Road Railway Station, MLA Suresh Kumar Routray & Social Worker Rashmi Ranjan Mahapatra graced the occasion. Apart from this, MP Chandrasekhar Sahoo & MLA Bikram Pandu took part in the programme and welcomed the train at Brahmapur Railway Station.

Public Representatives including MPs and MLAs had also joined the programme at Srikakulam, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam Railway Stations over ECoR jurisdiction to welcome the maiden run of indigenous built Amrit Bharat Express between Malda Town and Bengaluru.

'A tale of love entangled in lies'



Mumbai, Dec 31: As the curtains fall on a remarkable year of impactful launches, COLORS is all set to kick off the new year with another exciting love saga, 'Mera Balam

Thanedar'. With a rich history of celebrating love with extraordinary narratives that bring societal change, stir emotions, and immortalize onscreen romantic pairs, COLORS continues its tradition of offering diverse content with this one-of-a-kind love story of two individuals, with opposite ideologies. The show stars Shagun Pandey and Shruti Choudhary as Veer Pratap Singh and Bulbul Rajawat respectively and traces the love story of a couple whose marriage is based on a lie that threatens to crumble the foundation of their relationship. Produced by Shashi Sumeet Productions, 'Mera Balam Thanedar' premieres on 3rd of January and airs every Monday to Friday at 9:30 pm only on COLORS. Top of Form Set in picturesque locations of Rajasthan, 'Mera Balam Thanedar' unfolds the journey of Bulbul and Veer who are as disparate as day and night but have intertwined destinies.

<p>बैंक ऑफ महाराष्ट्र Bank of Maharashtra</p> <p>Branch: Kawardha Address: Ramnagar, Naveen Market, Kawardha (C.G.), Ph: 910521795, e-mail: bom1795@mahabank.co.in, 1501, SHIVAJI NAGAR, PUNE-5</p>	<p>MANAPPURAM FINANCE LTD. Registered Office: W-4/53A, Manappuram House, P.O. Vaipad, Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, India</p> <p>GOLD AUCTION NOTICE</p> <p>The pledges, in specific and the public, in general, are hereby notified that public auction of the gold ornaments pledged in the below accounts is proposed to be conducted at the following branches on 16/01/2024 from 10.00 am onwards. We are auctioning gold ornaments defaulted customers who have failed to make payment of his/her loan amount despite being notified by registered letters. Unauctioned items shall be auctioned on any other days without further notice. Changes in venue or date (if any) will be displayed at auction centre and on website without any further notice.</p> <p>List of pledges:- DHAMTARI, BASTAR ROAD, DHAMTARI, 134150730013197, DURG, CHARODA SQUARE, BHILAI, 134110700017700, 134110730024091, CHOUHAN ESTATE, 115880730028153, 8714, 8730, GURUDWARA STATION ROAD, 112310730039328, KRISHNA THEATER ROAD, 125930700022927, 3003, MAHARAJA CHOWK, 116770730015805, MALVIYA NAGAR SQUARE, 116610730029729, NEHRU NAGAR BHILAI, 125780700019945, 125780700020010, POWER HOUSE CHOWK, BHILAI, 134030700033414, 134030730033271, 3437, 3463, 3464, 4157, SANTRABADI, 112610700017752, RAIPUR, BANPURI, 114590700026635, BUDHAPARA, RAIPUR, 124430700027680, 7728, 7732, KATORA TALAB, RAIPUR, 131700700015040, 131700730012368, MOWA RAIPUR, 129340730021385, SADAR BAZAR BHATAPARA, 134460730007811, SANTHOSHI NAGAR RAIPUR, 131480700018996, 9425, TELIBANDHA, RAIPUR, 123840700025731, 123840730021813, RAJNANDGAON, LALBAGH, RAJNANDGAON, 133880700017198,</p> <p>Persons wishing to participate in the above auction shall comply with the following:- Interested Bidders should submit Rs. 10,000/- as EMD (refundable to unsuccessful bidders) by way of Cash on the same day of auction. Bidders should carry valid ID card/PAN card. For more details please contact 8089292353.</p> <p>Authorised Officer For Manappuram Finance Ltd</p>
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Kavi Sammelan held on Good Governance Day

Khairagarh, Dec 31:

The birth anniversary of former Prime Minister Bharat Ratna Atal Bihari Vajpayee was celebrated as Good Governance Day, in which District Panchayat Vice President Vikrant Singh was present as the chief guest, and District Panchayat Chairman Ghamman Sahu, Councillor and City Board President Vinay Dewangan, former Municipal Corporation Vice President Ramadhar Rajak, former Board President Vikesh Gupta and former Councillor Kamlesh Kothle were present as special guests. Chief Guest Vikrant Singh said that Ex-PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee will be remembered in every era because of his ideal personality



and popular leadership and his ideal life will continue to inspire us in every era.

The invited poets were honored by the guests who included litterateurs Vinay Sharan Singh, Prashant Jha, Natthu Tode, Sankalp Pahitia, Anurag Shanti Ture and Balram Yadav. During this, a large number of

BJP leaders including senior BNP leaders Chandrashekhar Yadav, Rupendra Rajak, Rekha Gupta, Monica Rajak, Triveni Dewangan, Sanjay Sharma, Shashank Tamrakar, Kanta Yadav, Rajesh Dewangan, Preeti Yadav, Pushpa Sindoor, Kirti Verma, Gorelal Verma and others were present. Poet Balram

Yadav recited the composition 'Atal Hai' dedicated to Atal ji and young Anurag Shanti Ture, taking the ideal personality of Atal ji and defining the duplicity in today's politics and the current problems of the country, narrated a composition that embodies the feeling of people's rule for the people.

Sankalp Yadu highlighted the disparities of the country through the poem titled Ravana and senior poet Vinay Sharan Singh presented different mukhtas on Lord Ram defining good governance, which was highly appreciated. In the competition, student Chiteshwar Verma stood first, Divesh Kumar Verma stood second and Kusati Sahu stood third. A large number of employees and officials were present.

Sai's govt is of village's women and youth: Sharma

Kawardha, Dec 31:

After becoming the Deputy Chief Minister, Kawardha MLA Vijay Sharma visited the remote forest villages of Kawardha assembly constituency for the first time here on Friday. He was given a historic welcome in Vananchal village Loharidih, Bhelwatola, village Khamaria, following the Indian tradition and the youth also took out a rally.

Addressing the villagers, Sharma said that Vishnudev Sai of Chhattisgarh is a government of villages, poor, farmers, women and youth. The Deputy Chief Minister also announced to give Rs 1 lakh for the repair of Anganwadi in village Loharidih of Vananchal and Rs 10 lakh



for the community hall of Sarva Samaj. He announced the construction of two hand pumps in Ward 5 and 6 and also announced to give Rs 10 lakh for the construction of a

community building of Sarva Samaj and to dig a hand pump for drinking water. Farmers of village Khamhariya demanded construction of diversion in the local drain for irri-

gation, and while giving his in-principle consent to the demands of the farmers, directed the officials of the concerned department to conduct tests and prepare estimates related to the construction and submit the report. He announced to give Rs 10 lakh for Sarva Community Building and Rs 2 lakh for construction of cultural stage also. On this occasion, former MLA Ashok Sahu, former District Panchayat President Santosh Patel, District Panchayat member Ramkumar Bhatt, Anil Thakur, Mangalaram Porte, Hemchand Chandravanshi along with regional public representatives and local Panch-Sarpanch and a large number of rural women, farmers and youth were present.

MLA distributes certificates to trainees of Skill Development Centre



Rajim, Dec 31:

The post-training certificates were distributed to the trainees of the Skill Development Center located near Radhakrishna Temple of Nagar Panchayat Rajim, by Rohit Sahu, MLA Rajim. President of Nagar Panchayat Rajim Rekha Sonkar, special guest BJP Mandal President Kamal

Sinha attended the certificate distribution program as the chief guest. On this occasion, chief guest MLA Sahu said that certificates have been distributed to the candidates after receiving training under skill development and many employment opportunities will also be available through this certificate. Skill development centres will have a special contribution in real-

izing the vision of a self-reliant India envisioned by the country's illustrious Prime Minister Narendra Modi and new self-employment opportunities are being created under the Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana. Director of the organization Saurabh Singh and Pallavi Singh provided detailed information about the skill development program.

CIMS doctors performs state's first Orthomorphing Surgery

Bilaspur, Dec 31:

CIMS, the largest hospital of the division, has achieved another big achievement, as the state's first orthomorphing surgery was performed by the doctors of CIMS's dentistry department, in which they were successful. According to the information received from CIMS, the 22 year old patient (Kavita, name changed), resident of Durjanpur of Bilha block, after 12 years of childhood, due to closure of the left side jaw, the development gradually stopped and the lower and upper jaw started becoming crooked. And the arrangement of teeth had also deteriorated, due to which the face had become unbalanced and due to this the patient started suffering from inferiority complex. After all the necessary tests and X-rays and 3D CT scan of the face, it



was concluded that the girl's left upper and lower jaw and chin are underdeveloped and she has TMJ ankylosis. Keeping the girl's problem in mind, a plan for multi-level distraction osteogenesis was made, in which a 3D printing model of the face was made using modern technology and a 1-2 hour operation was performed and

the first phase operation was done in June 2023 by installing a device called Intra Oral Distractor in the upper and lower jaw. After five months, the second phase of 8-9 hours operation has been done by the dentistry department of CIMS in the month of December 2023, in which the intra-oral distractor device which was installed

during the first phase of operation was also removed.

By doing inter positional orthoplasty, left temporal muscle was inserted in it, then the girl's underdeveloped chin was operated by doing genioplasty and the height was further increased, which is called orthomorphing surgery. This is the first orthomorphing

surgery in the state in which the length and height of the underdeveloped jaw was increased. The contribution of this successful operation was made by Dr. Sandeep Prakash (Oral and Maxillofacial Surgeon), Head of Dentistry, CIMS and all the doctors of his team, Dr. Jandel Singh Thakur, Dr. Bhupendra Kashyap, Dr. Hemlata Rajmani, Dr. Prakash Khare, Dr. Sonal Patel, and other staff. Sister Gracy, Lab Attendant Umesh Sahu, Ward Boy Omkar Nath Yadav and Head of the Department of Anesthesia, Dr. Rakesh Nigam and his entire team also played pivotal role. In the last year 2019 and 2020 also, CIMS's Dentistry Department successfully operated on two other patients suffering from a similar disease, Jaw Dermophytosis and patients have been benefited by treatment.

Beneficiaries tell stories in VBSY camp

Anwari, Dec 31:

Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra was organized in Bhaishod on 26th December with the aim of taking the public welfare schemes of the Central Government to the last person and to have face to face communication with the beneficiaries taking benefits from them. Under this, people are being made aware of departmental schemes and eligible beneficiaries are being benefited and besides these cultural programs on the theme of Dharti Kahe Pukar, perennial songs, Panthi, Suva, Karma, Dadriya, Akhada, Raut Nacha, and patriotic songs were presented by the school children.

Harish Sahu and Ganesh Ram Dhamar, beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana, thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi for their permanent house built under the scheme and said that their dream



of having a permanent house has come true and they can live in their house with their family without any worries. It may be noted that people were also made aware of departmental schemes in the resolution camp, besides,

Ayushman card was provided by the health department and free medicines were given to the patients.

The Agriculture Department informed the farmers about Prime Minister Crop Insurance

Scheme, Kisan Credit Card, Soil Health Card, Aadhar Updation, KCC Horticulture, Animal Husbandry etc. Apart from this, the women of Bihaan Group, Ramheen Sahu and Kumari Bai told about the benefits of Bihaan Group and Ravikumar Sahu and Chandrasahu explained the benefits of taps in houses installed under Jal Jeevan Mission. Meena Sahu and Tikeshwari explained the benefits of Ayushman Card and farmers Gopi Ram Sahu and Shiv Kumar, who benefited from the Pradhan Mantri Samman Nidhi Yojana, told everyone about the Pradhan Mantri Samman Nidhi Yojana. On this occasion, Mineshwari Dilip Sahu Sarpanch Gram Panchayat Bhaishod, Sunil Gaikwad District Member Kurud, Lekhram Sahu officials of all departments including workers, teachers and all villagers including teachers were present in large numbers.

Sankalp Yatra reaches Gunderdehi

Beneficiaries get gas stove and cylinder

Dongargaon, Dec 31:

Under the Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra, the Gram Panchayat of Churiya Block of Khuji Assembly Constituency was held in Gunderdehi and during this; District BJP Kisan Morcha President Hirendra Kumar Sahu was present as the chief guest. In his address, he informed the public about all the schemes of the government and said that the country has been recognized in the world because of the successful Prime Minister of the country, Narendra Modi.

He also said that the government will provide support to every section of the society, and schemes



have been made for farmers, labourers, youth and women and the public is being benefited. During the program, gas stoves and cylinders were distributed to women beneficiaries of Pradhan Mantri Ujjwala Yojana. On this occasion, former District

Panchayat member Hirde Ram Chandravanshi, Village Sarpanch Ramesh Pisdra, Radhelal Joshi, Raju Giri Goswami, Yupesh Sahu along with administrative officers, employees and villagers were present in large numbers.

Relocate and replant trees in the pattern of Durg: Dr. Panigrahi

Pithora, Dec 31:

Pithora Nagar Panchayat is starting the construction work of Gaurav Path from Murai Dhova Nala to Lahrod stop and in the first phase, the work of cutting of green trees has started. In the same sequence, Green Care Society India has taken cognizance of it and registered a protest.

Environment Dr. Vishwanath Panigrahi, President of Activists Green Care, spoke to Chief Municipality Officer Mahendra Gupta and demanded to stop this immediately, uprooting the trees along with their roots and replanti-



ng them elsewhere. During the conversation, Dr. Panigrahi said that the process of replanting has been done successfully in Durg, Bhilai, Kumhari. Recently, the work of sifting 25 healthy trees coming under the overbridge at Belsonda Railway Crossing in Mahasamund has started, therefore, the same can be implicated here, he said. If there is a need in Pithora also, I am ready to provide selfless free service of my knowledge, experience and training and our only objective is that the environment should not be harmed, he added.

VBSY: Central and state schemes bring transformation to villages

Health camps, education, and welfare initiatives uplift lives

Mahasamund, Dec 31:

The Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra continues to make a positive impact as it reaches various gram panchayats in the district. This remarkable journey aims to deliver the benefits of numerous centrally sponsored schemes to deserving beneficiaries, particularly those who have been historically marginalized. The ultimate goal is to raise awareness about these initiatives and ensure that they reach the underprivileged.



Today, the program unfolded in Gram Panchayat Kaundkera, within the Mahasamund development block, with Vimal Chopra, former MLA and convener of Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra, appointed by the Central Government, gracing the occasion as the chief guest. He emphasized that the primary objective of this yatra is to extend the advantages of both

Central and State Government schemes to all eligible beneficiaries and uplift the lives of the most vulnerable individuals in society.

Chopra highlighted the yatra's alignment with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for India in 2047, which includes a commitment to empower every individual to become self-reliant. He urged citizens to engage with their

local Gram Panchayats to maximize the benefits of government schemes, emphasizing that many public welfare initiatives are currently available.

During the event, LED displays on an IEC van provided information about various government welfare schemes. Beneficiaries who had previously availed of these programs shared their life-changing experiences under the "Meri Kahani Meri Zubani" initiative. The event also featured cultural performances by school students.

In addition to these activities, health camps were organized as part of the Viksit Bharat Sankalp Yatra. The Health Department and AYUSH

Department conducted free health check-ups for villagers, providing necessary consultations and treatments. The camp also facilitated applications for Ayushman Cards and Abha IDs. Notably, 20 people were screened for TB, 82 for sickle cell, and 89 beneficiaries received Ayushman cards.

Furthermore, the Agriculture Department conducted soil health testing, and Women and Child Development honored Dilip Nishad and Bhuneshwari Yadav. Nutrition kits were provided to three pregnant women during their baby showers, highlighting the comprehensive support and welfare activities integral to this inspiring yatra.

NEW YEAR CELEBRATION



Fireworks explode over Sydney Harbour as New Year's Eve celebrations get underway in Sydney, Sunday, Dec. 31.

British PM Rishi Sunak keen to clinch FTA with India by April

London, Dec 31 (PTI):

British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is keen to clinch a free trade agreement (FTA) with India in time for Easter, which falls at the end of March 2024, according to a UK media report.



Express' newspaper updated on Saturday.

"It is hoped a deal can be signed and sealed before India's general elections begin on April 1," it claims.

The newspaper quoted a source close to the trade talks on the UK side to say that a lot of progress has been made, but some of the "hardest" aspects remain pending.

"We have made a lot of progress, but the last stuff to do is the hardest. We

have negotiators out there most weeks going through the details, and we have a deadline of their elections," the source told the newspaper.

"Both Rishi Sunak and Modi remain keen, so it's just a case of seeing if we can get it over the line," the source added.

The UK hopes an FTA will open up its trade in Scotch whisky and cars to India, as well as services and investment opportunities. Meanwhile, India would seek better access to its manufactured goods and services and a deal on professional visas.

With both India and the UK heading into a general election year in 2024, signing off on a trade agreement has taken on particular urgency before leaders

on both sides get into campaign mode.

A joint outcome statement released last week by the UK Department for Business and Trade (DBT) said: "The thirteenth round of negotiations for the UK-India Free Trade Agreement took place from 18 September to 15 December. The round included sessions, both in person, in London and Delhi, and virtual talks.

"As with round 12, these negotiations focused on complex issues, including goods, services, and investment. The UK and India will continue to negotiate towards a comprehensive and ambitious Free Trade Agreement. The fourteenth round of negotiations will take place in January 2024," the statement said.

Russia launches fresh drone strikes on Ukraine

Kyiv, Dec 31 (AP):

Russia launched a fresh drone assault on Ukraine on Saturday night, after promising that strikes on the Russian border city of Belgorod earlier in the day "would not go unpunished".

The Ukrainian Air Force said Sunday that it had shot down 21 of 49 drones launched by Russian forces overnight.

Twenty-eight people were wounded in an attack on the eastern city of Kharkiv, regional Gov. Oleh Syniehubov said Sunday. A central hotel, apartment buildings, kindergarten, shops and administrative buildings sustained damage, according to the regional prosecutor's office.

In the Kyiv region that

surrounds the capital, a Russian drone attack caused a fire to break out at a critical infrastructure facility, local officials said. They did not identify the facility further.

The Russian attacks came after shelling in the center of the Russian border city of Belgorod Saturday killed 24 people, including three children.

A further 108 people were wounded in the strike, regional governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said Sunday, making it one of the deadliest attacks on Russian soil since the start of Moscow's invasion of Ukraine 22 months ago.

Russian authorities accused Kyiv of carrying out the attack, which took place the day after an 18-hour Russian aerial bombardment across Ukraine

killed at least 41 civilians.

Russia's Defense Ministry said it identified the ammunition used in the strike as Czech-made Vampire rockets and Olkha missiles fitted with cluster-munition warheads. It provided no additional information, and The Associated Press was unable to verify its claims.

"This crime will not go unpunished," the ministry said in a statement on social media.

In an emergency meeting at the UN Security Council demanded by Russia Saturday night, envoy Vasily Nebenzya accused Kyiv of a "terrorist attack." In comments carried by Russian state media, Nebenzya claimed Ukraine had launched "a deliberate act of terrorism directed against civilians."

North Korea's Kim vows to launch 3 more spy satellites

- Produce more nuclear materials in 2024

Seoul, Dec 31 (AP):

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un vowed to launch three additional military spy satellites, produce more nuclear materials and introduce modern attack drones in 2024, as he called for "overwhelming" war readiness to cope with US-led confrontational moves, state media reported Sunday.

Kim's comments, made during a key ruling Workers' Party meeting to set state goals for next year, suggest he'll intensify a run of weapons tests ahead of the US presidential elections in November. Observers say Kim believes a boosted nuclear capability would give



him another chance to launch high-stakes summit diplomacy with the US to win sanctions relief if former President Donald Trump returns to the White House.

During the five-day meeting that ended Saturday, Kim said anti-North Korea moves by the United States and its followers have been unprece-

ded this year, pushing the Korean Peninsula to the brink of a nuclear war, according to the official Korean Central News Agency. Kim cited the expansion of US-South Korean military exercises and the temporary deployment of powerful US military assets such as bombers and a nuclear-armed subma-

rine in South Korea - steps the allies have taken in response to the North's weapons testing spree since last year.

"The grave situation requires us to accelerate works to acquire overwhelming war response capabilities and thorough and perfect military readiness to suppress any types of provocations by the enemies at a stroke," Kim said, according to KCNA.

Kim set forth plans to launch three more military spy satellites next year in addition to the country's first reconnaissance satellite launched in November. He underscored the need to establish "a reliable foundation" to build more nuclear weapons, an apparent reference to facilities to produce fissile materials like weapons-grade plutonium and highly enriched urani-

um. Kim also ordered authorities to enhance submarine capabilities and develop various types of modern unmanned combat equipment such as armed drones, according to KCNA.

"Pyongyang might be waiting out the US presidential election to see what its provocations can buy it with the next administration," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul. "The Kim regime has closed the political door on denuclearization negotiations but could offer rhetorical restraint and a testing freeze in exchange for sanctions relief," Easley said.

"Although North Korea has no intention of giving up nuclear weapons, it might try to extract payment for acting like a so-called responsible nuclear power."

China calls Taiwan presidential frontrunner destroyer of peace

Taipei, Dec 31 (AP):

China has slammed Taiwan presidential front-runner William Lai as a "destroyer of peace" following a televised debate on Saturday in which he defended Taiwan's right to rule itself as a democracy.

Chen Binhua, spokesman for China's Taiwan Affairs Office, said Lai's discourse at the debate was "full of confrontational thinking." He said Lai, who currently serves as Taiwan's vice president with the governing Democratic People's Party, is "the instigator of a potential dangerous war in the Taiwan Strait."

Taiwan split from China amid civil war in 1949, but Beijing continues to regard the island of 23 million with its high-tech economy as Chinese territory and has been ramping up its threat to achieve that by military force if necessary.

Lai on Saturday said he was open to holding talks with Beijing "as long as there is equality and dignity on both sides of the Taiwan Strait." He said Taiwan is not subordinate to China.

While Lai doesn't describe himself as seeking independence from Beijing, he generally maintains Taiwan is already an independent country.

Pakistan and Afghan Taliban to make renewed efforts to ease tensions over TTP

Islamabad, Dec 31 (PTI):

A senior Afghan Taliban leader is expected to arrive in Islamabad early next month, while a leading Pakistani cleric is set to visit Kabul in a fresh bid to reduce bilateral tensions over the outlawed terror group TTP, media reports said on Sunday.

Pakistan has consistently called for Afghanistan's Taliban government to take decisive action against the Tehreek-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP) and related militant groups operating from Afghan soil, including extraditing leaders responsible for attacks in Pakistan.

The Taliban govern-

ment, however, has been hesitant to comply because of historical alliances and ideological ties.

The visits are part of efforts to reduce tensions between Kabul and Islamabad concerning the outlawed TTP, which intensified attacks against the security forces in Pakistan in the wake of the Taliban taking over Afghanistan more than two years ago.

Mullah Sherin Akhund, a senior Afghan Taliban figure and governor of Kandahar province, is expected in Islamabad early next month.

The interactions of Sherin will include meet-

ings with intelligence and Foreign Office officials in Islamabad.

Meanwhile, Maulana Fazlur Rehman, a Pakistani politician who is the president of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islama (JUI-F), will interact with senior Taliban leaders in Kabul.

Mullah Sherin has played various roles in the group's military and political spheres, the Dawn newspaper reported.

His close ties to the senior leadership and involvement in significant Taliban activities make him a prominent and influential member of the Afghan rulers' leadership structure. He has previ-

ously engaged with Pakistan and is known to have liaised with the TTP on behalf of the Taliban administration. The exact date of his visit is not yet known.

Fazl is set to travel to Kabul on January 3 with a delegation of religious scholars, a source told The Express Tribune newspaper. In a telephonic conversation, the source told the newspaper that the Ministry of Interior and the Foreign Office finalised the arrangements for various meetings, focusing primarily on addressing the TTP issue and resolving tensions between Kabul and Islamabad.

Security forces killed dozens of Tajiks, Pakistanis involved in attacks: Taliban

Islamabad, Dec 31 (AP):

Security forces in Afghanistan killed a number of Tajik and Pakistani nationals and arrested scores others involved in attacks against religious clerics, the public, and mosques, a senior Taliban official said on Sunday.

Mohammad Yaqoob Mujahid, Taliban's appointed defense minister, during a press conference in the capital, Kabul, said dozens of Tajiks and more than 20 Pakistanis were killed in the past 12 months "in operations by security forces." He said scores of Tajiks and hundreds of Pakistanis involved in various incidents were also arrested during that period.

Mujahid called on neighbouring and regional countries to strictly monitor their borders.

Tensions between Kabul and Islamabad spiked as hundreds of thousands of Afghans left Pakistan after authorities started pursuing foreigners they said were in the country illegally, going door-to-door to check migrants' documentation, following an October 31 deadline.

Mujahid also said there has been a 90 per cent decrease in attacks by an Islamic State group affiliate in the past year.

The militant group has carried out major assaults on schools, hospitals, and mosques, and has also attacked Shiite areas across the country.

Faysal Quraishi calls for release of Indian films in Pakistan

Karachi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Faysal Quraishi, one of Pakistan's top actors and producers, has advocated for the release of Indian films in the country to revive the local cinema exhibition sector.

Quraishi, who has starred in several hit serials and also produced many blockbuster series, said Pakistan needed to lift the ban on screening of Indian films to survive and grow.

"Being a Pakistani, I'm very patriotic. But if you have to run Pakistani cinemas, it's important that you exhibit Indian films. I'm being very selfish.

"But I know the audience in Pakistan wants to watch Indian films. You can't enforce your will on them. (Let us) Work to improve relations," he said in an interview with a local channel.

There has been a complete ban on screening of

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

If there was no ban on Indian films in Pakistan, Quraishi said the Pakistan film drama industry would have been earning around Rs 6,000 to 7,000 million annually from the entertainment business, including screening of Pakistani content on Indian streaming portals and some channels.

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

China to ease visa requirements for US travellers in latest bid to boost tourism

Washington, Dec 31 (AP):

China will ease visa restrictions for people visiting from the United States, the country's latest effort to attract foreign travellers since reopening its borders earlier this year.

Starting January 1, American tourists will no longer need to submit round-trip air tickets, proof of hotel reservations, itineraries or invitations to China, according to a notice posted online Friday by the Chinese Embassy in Washington.

The simplified application process is intended to "further facilitate people-to-people exchanges between China and the United States," the notice said. The move comes as China has struggled to rejuvenate its tourism sector after three years of strict pandemic measures, which included mandatory quarantines for all arrivals. While those restrictions were lifted earlier this year, international trav-

ellers have been slow to return.

In the first half of this year, China recorded 8.4 million entries and exits by foreigners, down from 977 million for all of 2019, the last year before the pandemic, according to immigration statistics.

In another bid to boost tourism, China announced last month that it would allow visa-free entry for citizens of France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and Malaysia for up to 15 days.

The one-year trial program signalled China's "high-level opening up to the outside world," Foreign Ministry spokesperson Mao Ning said at a daily briefing.

But China's efforts to entice American tourists may face other headwinds. International flights between the two countries, which are set by a bilateral agreement, remain well below pandemic levels, though they have slowly increased in recent months.

STORM HITS CALIFORNIA



A very large wave breaks near the Ventura pier in Ventura, Calif. Similar waves overran beaches elsewhere Thursday on the California coast, flooding parking lots, streets and triggering evacuation warnings for low-lying areas.ave energy across coastal waters.



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India's Pursuit of 'Viksit Bharat'

A Resolute Path Towards Self-Reliance

As Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation in the 108th episode of 'Mann ki Baat,' he emphasized the enduring spirit of 'Viksit Bharat' and self-reliance that courses through the veins of our great nation. In a momentous radio broadcast, he not only underscored the importance of physical and mental well-being but also celebrated India's remarkable strides towards 'Fit India.' In his candid remarks, Prime Minister Modi exuded confidence in India's unwavering self-belief and the spirit of 'Viksit Bharat'—a vision of a developed India that resonates with every citizen. He aptly articulated that this spirit and momentum must endure as we step into 2024. It is a call to harness our collective potential and continue the journey towards progress and self-sufficiency. Modi also celebrated India's transformation into an 'innovation hub,' signifying that our aspirations have no bounds. The nation has achieved significant milestones this year, exemplified by the passage of the women's reservation Bill. These accomplishments are not mere milestones but stepping stones towards a brighter future. The Prime Minister's words resonate with a country that is infused with anticipation for the grand Ram temple in Ayodhya. The temple holds a special place in the hearts of millions, and people are expressing their emotions in diverse ways. Songs, bhajans, poems, and artistic expressions have flooded the public sphere, capturing the essence of this historic moment. The call for a common hashtag, #SHRIRAMBHAJAN, reflects Modi's vision of unity and shared celebrations. It invites every Indian, irrespective of age, creed, or background, to participate in this profound moment of reverence and cultural resurgence. It is a testament to the idea that art, culture, and spirituality transcend boundaries and bring us closer as a nation. Modi's mention of physical and mental health underscores the importance of holistic well-being. In a rapidly changing world, where the pace of life can be relentless, it is vital that we prioritize our health—both physical and mental. 'Fit India' is not just a campaign; it is a way of life that can lead to a healthier and happier India. During this broadcast, the esteemed personalities like Sadhguru, Harmanpreet Kaur, Vishwanathan Anand, and Akshay Kumar, who shared their insights on fitness. 'Viksit Bharat' is not just a Modi's vision; it is a shared dream that each one of us can contribute to. So every Indian should celebrate our achievements, and look forward to a future where every Indian, regardless of their circumstances, can thrive. 'Viksit Bharat' is not an endpoint but a journey—one that we embark upon with determination, unity, and an unwavering belief in the spirit of India. Together, we can make 2024 a year of progress, resilience, and self-reliance.

Global Family Day

Embracing Unity, Diversity, and Progress

Dr Krishna Kumar Vepakomma

Global Family Day, also known as World Peace Day, is a significant occasion that originated from the United Nations Millennium celebration, "One Day In Peace," held in 2000. This day, observed on January 1st each year, holds immense importance as it underscores the pivotal role of families in shaping societies, values, and addressing contemporary challenges like poverty and inequality. It serves as a powerful reminder of our global interconnectedness and inspires positive changes on both individual and global scales. Families are the bedrock of our societies. They provide a sense of belonging, shape our values, and offer support during times of need. Global Family Day celebrates the idea that we are all part of a larger, interconnected human family. It promotes multiculturalism, peaceful coexistence, and underscores the significance of prioritizing humanity above all else. In a world that often emphasizes divisions and differences, Global Family Day encourages us to embrace unity, diversity, and progress. This celebration gained further prominence during India's G20 Presidency, where the theme "Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam" or "One Earth One Family One Future" was introduced. This theme, championed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, reflects India's commitment to equitable growth and draws inspiration from Sanskrit scriptures. It emphasizes the idea of global unity, highlighting that we are all part of one large family sharing a common future on this planet. As we approach 2024, Global Family Day takes on even greater significance in a world facing complex challenges. Families serve as pillars of support, resilience, and love. This day encourages us to reconnect with our loved ones, celebrate our differences, promote inclusivity, and work together to build a brighter future. It empowers families to overcome obstacles and foster unity and understanding across diverse nations and cultures. It is crucial to instill the message of peace and unity in the younger generation. By celebrating Global Family Day annually, we ensure that this message becomes an integral part of their upbringing. It encourages them to appreciate the values of tolerance, empathy, and cooperation, fostering a world where diversity is celebrated, and differences are embraced. In every corner of the globe, families are coming together to celebrate their unique connections. They remind us that the human spirit thrives on belonging and love. Global Family Day encourages us all to take a moment to reflect on the importance of family, both our immediate families and the larger human family to which we all belong. On this International Family Day, let's celebrate by promoting brotherhood, peace, and sharing. Let's work together to make the world a better place for everyone, where unity and diversity co-exist harmoniously, and progress is shared by all. Global Family Day serves as a beacon of hope, reminding us that we are all part of one global family, working towards a brighter future together.

(Writer is Professor & Principal (Rtd) and newspaper columnist.)

Central Chronicle invites articles, write-ups, and comments on a wide range of issues for our editorial page. Submissions should be between 800-900 words in length. In addition, we welcome letters to the editor for this page. While letters may be edited for clarity, we aim to preserve the integrity of the original message, and ask that they be kept to around 50-60 words. Submissions can be sent via emailto:editorcentralchronicle@gmail.com.

RAM JANMABHOOMI NYAS KARYASHALA



A devotee poses with a 'Jai Shri Ram' brick at Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas 'karyashala', in Ayodhya.

Recapping 2023 and Paving the Way for 2024

**YASH PAL RALHAN**

The year 2023 has come to a close, prompting citizens across India to engage in a time-honoured tradition—reflecting on the past year's events while looking ahead to what the future holds. This practice becomes even more pertinent as the nation prepares for upcoming parliamentary elections that will shape India's destiny. As the clock ticks down to the final moments of the year, the entire country is gearing up for a grand celebration in Ayodhya, with numerous programs planned in connection with the inauguration of the Ram Temple on January 22. For every citizen, adopting a balanced approach of "looking back and looking ahead" is not just a tradition but a necessity. It is heartening to read about the many successes of our nation. One such moment of pride was the successful completion of Chandrayaan 3's mission, showcasing our country's remarkable progress in the field of technology and space exploration.

While we celebrate our achievements, it is equally essential to address pressing issues. The question arises as to why a significant number of Indians are willing to spend enormous sums of money and take desperate risks to migrate illegally to more affluent countries. This issue deserves our attention and calls for comprehensive solutions.

The government's decision to extend the free food grain program for 800 million people by another five years reflects its commitment to ensuring food security for the vulnerable sections of our society. This initiative,

along with other welfare programs, underscores the government's dedication to improving the lives of its citizens.

The current government has made substantial investments in the country's infrastructure and digital economy, enhancing India's prestige on the global stage. However, there are concerns raised by opposition forces regarding media intimidation, pressure on civil society, and legal actions against leaders from opposing parties, which have led to debates about democratic backsliding.

It is worth noting that no Indian leader has won a third term at the polls since Jawaharlal Nehru in 1962. While the ruling party has a stronghold in the country's poorer, populous northern states, it faces challenges in wealthier southern states. As we move forward, minority rights may come into focus, depending on the ruling party's pursuit of a majoritarian agenda.

Looking ahead requires us to acknowledge the country's contradictions and work diligently to address problem areas. It is crucial to focus on improving the quality of life for every Indian, ensuring that progress is inclusive and not limited to a select few.

Recent headlines in the global media have highlighted India's emergence as a stock market superpower and a significant player on the world stage, especially in the digital realm. India boasts the largest number of users on platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube, opening new avenues for global engagement.

The Unified Payments Interface

(UPI) has played a pivotal role in driving India's digital payments revolution. UPI transactions have surged remarkably, reaching an astonishing 8,572 crore by December 11, 2023. However, India also ranks among the countries with the highest number of Internet shutdowns, emphasizing the existence of a digital divide.

India's connectivity has grown substantially, but disparities persist. Challenges include inadequate infrastructure, affordability issues, and low digital literacy. Additionally, a global comparison reveals that the percentage of female Internet users in India lags behind other regions.

Currently, India holds the position of the world's fifth-largest economy, with aspirations to become the third-largest by 2030, according to S&P Global Ratings. As we navigate an election year and beyond, we must shift our focus to per capita income and the quality of life for every Indian citizen.

While impressive economic statistics may be touted, it is essential to address the daily challenges faced by those who experience discrimination and indignities. Our nation's progress should be measured not only by GDP but also by the well-being of its citizens.

In the philosophical context, life is a tapestry of ups and downs, happiness and sorrow, peace and conflict. As Prime Minister Modi wisely stated, "it is no time for war," yet conflicts persist globally, including the ongoing crises in Ukraine and Gaza.

Turning to brighter aspects, India hosted an immensely successful G-20 Summit in Delhi, where world leaders reached a consensus statement despite differing opinions on the Ukrainian war. Indian leadership was praised for its diplomatic skills, showcasing our nation's prowess on the global stage.

This year, India achieved the status of the world's fifth-largest economy, a significant milestone considering our historical growth challenges. However, our per capita GDP remains among the lowest in the G-20.

Simultaneously, India has become the world's most populous country,

surpassing China. This demographic advantage can be a boon if harnessed intelligently for our nation's development.

Caution is warranted as the US Commission on International Religious Freedom (USCIRF) has identified India as one of the countries of particular concern due to concerns about religious freedom. It is imperative to address issues related to religious tolerance and accommodation, which are integral to India's identity as a secular nation.

India's rankings in democracy assessments by organizations such as Freedom House, V-Dem, and Economist Intelligence Unit have raised concerns. While there may be debates about the methodologies used, any shortcomings in India's political and societal landscape should not be disregarded lightly.

The World Happiness Report 2023 ranks India 126th out of 137 countries, highlighting the need for attention to the well-being and happiness of our citizens. As we step into 2024 and beyond, these concerns should be addressed with the same vigor as our economic achievements.

In recent years, Indian diplomacy has demonstrated its strength, as seen in the successful commutation of death sentences to jail terms in Qatar due to the Indian government's pressure. This showcases India's influence on the global stage.

As India looks ahead to 2024 and beyond, it must strike a balance between celebrating its achievements and addressing its challenges. Economic growth and global recognition are commendable, but they should not overshadow the pressing issues within the nation. In the coming years, India must work tirelessly to bridge socio-economic disparities, uphold democratic values, and ensure the well-being of all its citizens. A nation's greatness is not solely measured by economic indicators but by the quality of life it provides to each of its people. As the calendar turns, India's journey continues, guided by its principles of democracy, secularism, and inclusive progress.

Dr Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

2023 A Bit Sour, A Bit Sweet

Compared to the last few years, the year 2023 was good for trade and business. In the last year, festivals, weddings and other celebrations were held in our country free from Corona rules, which led to a boom in business in the country. From an economic point of view, there were a bit sour and a bit sweet thing for the country because the central government's 'Make in India' policy has proven fruitful. Industries from other countries in the world are leaving China and coming to our country, and secondly, the improvement in the stock market also shows the good economic condition of the country. There has been growth in the country's GDP in the last few months, but this year also the trend of rupee falling below the US dollar continued and inflation also troubled the common people. Natural disasters also caused great economic loss to the country. This time heavy rains wreaked havoc in Himachal Pradesh. The success of Chandrayaan 3 told the world that our country is also developing in the field of science. Women scientists played an important role in this.

N Ashraf, Mumbai

Sleep deprived children

The Maharashtra government has proposed to change the school hours for children upto 2nd standard by starting schools at 9 am instead of the present 7 am. Though some academics have expressed their disapproval to the suggestion, there are many who have given their nod of approval. Children upto 2nd standard are too small to understand the intricacies of timings, but parents have to take care to ensure their children flower into mature and happy adults. There is no disputing the fact that cognition stands to be augmented by a sound sleep, and overall physical health and immunity are said to stabilise. On the contrary, both physical health and mental faculties stand to be jeopardized by sleep deprivation. Obesity in later life, and a host of associated disorders linked to the same, could be major health issues. Humiliation is bound to follow absenteeism due to early school timings.

Dr Ganapathi Bhat, Akola

Steadfast partner

French President Emmanuel Macron's acceptance of the Republic Day parade invitation underscores the robust and enduring relationship between India and France, especially when compared to the fluctuating nature of Indo-US ties. Macron's presence at the Republic Day parade provides an opportunity for both nations to underscore their friendship and assert their independent stance in global power politics. Macron's participation becomes a symbolic affirmation of the friendship and mutual strategic interests between New Delhi and Paris on the global stage.

Karan Singh, Chennai

India in Review: A Look Back at 2023



Bidyut Kumar Chatterjee

As we step into a new year, it's only fitting to reflect on the events and milestones that defined India in 2023. This year was a roller-coaster ride for the nation, marked by significant political, sports, and entertainment moments. From triumphs in space exploration to heartbreaks on the cricket field, 2023 was a year that left an indelible mark on India.

The year began on a rocky note as Indian wrestlers came forward with allegations of sexual misconduct against Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP and Wrestling Federation of India chief Brij

Bhushan Sharan Singh. The scandal led to the suspension of the Wrestling Federation of India by the United World Wrestling (UWW). Despite these challenges, the central government pledged to investigate the allegations and ensure the safety of female athletes. However, Sanjay Singh's return to power, a Brij Bhushan loyalist, left many protesting wrestlers disillusioned. This prompted Bajrang Punia, a renowned Indian wrestler, to return the Padma Shri.

Amidst these challenges, India had its share of celebrations. In May, India inaugurated a new Parliament building, a symbol of the nation's culture and pride. Situated adjacent to the existing Parliament House, this architectural marvel can accommodate a larger number of parliamentarians, reflecting India's growing democracy.

The nation rejoiced in July with the launch of Chandrayaan-3, India's moon mission. The real moment of glory came in August when Chandrayaan-3 achieved a historic lunar landing, making India the first and only country to successfully achieve a 'soft landing' on the Moon's south pole.

On the demographic front, India officially overtook China as the world's most populous country, with a population of 142.86 crores, surpassing

China's 142.57 crores. This shift holds significant implications for India's future.

India took center stage as the host of the G20 Summit in New Delhi in September. The summit witnessed India's diplomatic prowess as it welcomed representatives from member and guest nations. Notably, the African Union (AU) was granted permanent membership in the G20 during this event.

The Indian stock market witnessed a remarkable revival in 2023, driven by domestic demand, a resurging capex cycle, and expectations of rate cuts. Both the Nifty and the Sensex reached record highs, with retail investors playing a pivotal role in bolstering the Indian market.

In October, the Supreme Court rejected pleas to legalize same-sex marriage in India, a decision that sparked debates across the nation.

Politically, India experienced the emergence of the INDIA bloc, a record number of MP suspensions, and Assembly polls in nine states. One of the prominent headlines of the year was the disqualification of senior Congress leader Rahul Gandhi from the Lok Sabha in March. However, there was a turn of events in August when the Supreme Court stayed his

conviction in a 2019 criminal defamation case, allowing Rahul Gandhi to make a return to Parliament.

The year was not without its challenges. Violence erupted in Manipur following a 'Tribal Solidarity March,' leading to unrest and demands for separate administrations in tribal regions. This turmoil also had repercussions within the ruling BJP.

In December, the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance secured significant victories in Madhya Pradesh while overturning Congress-led governments in Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh. On the other hand, the Congress celebrated a victory in Telangana, solidifying its presence in the southern region.

The Winter Session of Parliament, held at the new Parliament complex, witnessed a security breach by four individuals. This led to protests by the Opposition, resulting in the suspension of 143 Parliamentarians. The incident raised questions about security and decorum in the parliamentary proceedings.

A tragic train collision in Odisha, caused by an electronic signaling error, resulted in the loss of 275 lives and left 1,175 others injured, making it India's biggest rail tragedy. The incident raised concerns about railway safety and infrastructure.

In November, India united in hope as a monumental rescue mission successfully extricated 41 workers trapped inside a collapsed tunnel in Uttarakhand. The operation, lasting over 400 hours, showcased the determination and resilience of rescue teams.

The year also witnessed significant developments related to Khalistani separatists, both in India and overseas. The arrest of preacher Amritpal Singh and international accusations against Indian government agents brought this issue to the forefront.

Despite a strong start, India's dreams of winning the ODI World Cup were dashed in November. After a series of victories, the team faced a disappointing defeat, leaving the nation in collective heartbreak.

As the year drew to a close, Mohun Bagan, a renowned national club, faced a hat-trick of defeats in the ISL, leaving its fans disheartened. In retrospect, 2023 was a year filled with highs and lows, triumphs and tribulations. It showcased India's resilience, determination, and capacity for growth. As we look ahead to the new year, let us remember the lessons learned and the challenges overcome, shaping a brighter future for our nation.

BRIEF

Indian Overseas Bank

Chennai: Public sector undertaking Indian Overseas Bank has introduced savings account portability online, an initiative aimed at catering to customers who move to different locations for their career or education and find it cumbersome to relocate their home bank accounts to their current location. The facility, being available online, helps customers avoid the laborious process of filling up endless forms manually and cuts short the days of waiting for the account transfer to take place.

RINL

Visakhapatnam: The Rashtriya Ispat Nigam Ltd (RINL), which is also known as Vizag Steel Plant, on Saturday restarted its Blast Furnace-3 (BF-3) to raise hot metal production by 2 million tonne per annum. The added capacity will also enable the steel plant to clock increased sales turnover of Rs 500 crore per month. "The RINL has shown the world how to produce the best quality steel in spite of raw material crunch. This day is a historic day in the history of RINL as we have lit up the BF-3," said its chairman and managing director, Atul Bhatt, in a press release.

FinMin

New Delhi: The finance ministry has sought expenditure proposals for the second and final batch of Supplementary Demands for Grants from various ministries and departments ahead of the Budget session likely to commence in the last week of January. This would be the last session of the 17th Lok Sabha before the general elections and the government would seek expenditure approvals of Parliament for four months till July 2024 through a vote on account.

Horticulture

Shimla (HP): The Himachal Pradesh government will offer quality horticulture equipment, fertilisers and pesticides at affordable rates to apple growers through HPMC from January 1, Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu said on Sunday. In a statement issued here, he said the Himachal Pradesh Horticulture Produce Marketing and Processing Corporation (HPMC) has reduced its margin from 15 per cent to 9 per cent, enabling apple growers to access quality products at more economical prices.

Retik Finance

New Delhi: Retik Finance (RETIK), a beacon of innovation in the rapidly changing decentralized finance space, attracts interest and capital at a rate never seen before. The presale saw a phenomenal surge in support from investors, hitting \$450k in less than 72 hours and reaching an astounding total of over \$2.2 million in less than 3 weeks. This highlights the compelling utility that Retik provides inside its ecosystem.

FM asks PSBs to come out with attractive deposit schemes to mobilise funds

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman asked state-owned banks to come out with innovative and attractive schemes to mobilise deposits from the public as this will enable them to extend more credit.

The minister was addressing MDs and CEOs of public sector banks (PSBs) at a meeting to review the performance of lenders.

In her address, the minister also underlined the need to take strict administrative action against conniving officials who enable fraud and wilful defaults.

During the review meeting, an official statement said, the minister "emphasised the importance of mobilising deposits, urging public sector banks to innovate and offer attractive deposit schemes to enhance their deposit base, which will also enable



Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman chairs a meeting to review performance of Public Sector Banks, in New Delhi

them to extend more credit".

Deposit growth has not been keeping pace with credit growth for the last many months, compelling banks to increase their fixed deposit rates to maintain a balance between their assets and liabilities. The gap between credit and deposit growth is still 3-4 per cent despite some banks increasing interest rates.

Recently, some public sector banks -- including State Bank of India and

Bank of Baroda -- have already increased their deposit rates up to 125 basis points to attract funds.

While expressing satisfaction at the improved performance of public sector banks, she cautioned the lenders that bank frauds pose a critical threat to the security of individual customers and financial institutions themselves, which can lead to financial losses and reduced public trust in the banking system. On the performance front, PSU banks

have earned a net profit of about Rs 68,500 crore during the first six months of the current financial year.

The gross non-performing assets (GNPA) ratio of scheduled commercial banks (SCBs) fell to a decade-low of 3.9 per cent at the end of March 2023 and further to 3.2 per cent in September.

She asked banks to concentrate fraud prevention activities on large corporate frauds and wilful defaults as well as on actions that defraud individual customers.

The minister, therefore, instructed the banks to adopt advanced fraud prevention and detection mechanisms and ensure that the customers are further educated about safe banking practices.

On the cases of wilful default, she said, they not only strain the banks' financial health but also hamper the flow of credit in the economy.

Govt appoints Arvind Panagariya as 16th Finance Commission Chairman

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

The government on Sunday appointed former Niti Aayog vice chairman Arvind Panagariya as the Chairman of the 16th Finance Commission.

Joint Secretary in the finance ministry Ritvik Ranjanan Pandey will be the secretary to the commission, the government said in a notification.

"The President is pleased to constitute a Finance Commission with Dr Arvind Panagariya, former Vice-Chairman, NITI Aayog and Professor, Columbia University, as the Chairman. Members of the Commission will be notified separately," it said.



The commission will submit its report for the five-year period (2026-27 to 2030-31) to the President by October 31, 2025.

The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, last month approved the Terms of Reference (ToR) of the 16th Finance Commission.

Besides suggesting tax devolution between the Centre and states and revenue augmentation measures, the commission would review the present arrangements for financing disaster management initiatives with reference to the funds constituted under the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

The Finance Commission is a constitutional body that gives suggestions on centre-state financial relations.

The erstwhile 15th Finance Commission under NK Singh had recommended that states be given 41 per cent of the divisible tax pool of the Centre during the five-year period 2021-22 to 2025-26, which is at the same level as was recommended by the 14th Finance Commission.

Adani raises \$15 bn in equity, debt in comeback strategy after Hindenburg rout

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Billionaire Gautam Adani's sprawling conglomerate has raised over USD 5 billion (Rs 41,500 crore) in equity and a double of that in debt this year as the apples-to-airport group made a comeback since being hit by a bombshell short seller report.

Adani, who was the world's second-richest man at the start of the year, saw almost USD 60 billion of his personal wealth erased after Hindenburg Research in a January 24 report accused his group of market manipulation and accounting fraud. The group denied all allegations and reworked its strategy, fueling a comeback that now

has the tycoon some USD 36 billion short of where he started the year and two notch and USD 12 billion shy of rival billionaire Mukesh Ambani.

Star investor GQG Partners bought stakes worth almost USD 4.3 billion in five group companies between March and August while Qatar Investment Authority (QIA) and French energy giant TotalEnergies poured in USD 770 million in renewable energy firm Adani Green Energy Ltd, according to company filings and stock exchange data.

Parallely, the promoters infused USD 4.6 billion in repaying loans against shares, servicing loans taken for cement

acquisitions and supporting green investments.

While the equity raise helped shore up investor confidence, the group re-established its bankability with USD 6.4 billion of loans raised across five companies and refinancing of USD 3.5 billion debt taken to fund the 2022 acquisition of ACC and Ambuja Cement.

Alongside, it continued with its M&A, acquiring Sanghi cement for USD 431 million, 49.38 per cent in Indian Oil Tanking for USD 128 million, Karaikal port for USD 181 million and Coastal Energen for USD 420 million, filing and stock exchange data showed. These together with scrapping of a USD 850

million coal plant purchase, reining in of expenses, and repayment of some debt were part of attempt to claw back the narrative by showcasing that equity can be raised not just from promoters but also global investors and that the group was a responsible borrower with prepayments and on-time payments of debt.

The group now prefers slow and steady growth over the breakneck, mostly debt-fueled, expansion spree of recent years. The Adani Group has rapidly diversified from its ports and coal-based businesses to airports, green energy, data centres, cement, digital services and media.

Gold likely to touch Rs 70,000 in 2024, say experts

Mumbai, Dec 31 (PTI):

Continuing to glitter in 2024 as well, gold price is likely to touch Rs 70,000 per 10 grams in the domestic market on the back of a stable rupee, geopolitical uncertainties and slowing global economic growth, according to experts.

Currently, the yellow metal price is hovering at Rs 63,060 per 10 grams on the commodity stock exchange MCX and around USD 2,058 an ounce in the international market at a time when the rupee is trading above 83 against the US dollar.

In early December, prices skyrocketed again on global tensions in the Middle East, and emerging market participants anticipated that the rate hike cycle has more or less



ended. While the gold price remained volatile this year, it reached a new high of Rs 61,845 per 10 grams on May 4 in the domestic market and USD 2,083 an ounce in the global markets. Later, the yellow metal touched a record high of Rs 61,914 per 10 grams on November 16, Commtrendz Research Director Gnanasekar Thiagarajan told PTI.

In a reflection of its safe-haven appeal, he said, gold touched an all-time high of Rs 64,063 per 10 grams and USD 2,140 an ounce on December 4.

"We expect an eventual rise to USD 2,400 in 2024, and if the rupee is to be stable, gold is likely to reach around Rs 70,000 levels. As India faces elections, the rupee could weaken as Foreign

Institutional Investors (FIIs) are expected to lighten up their portfolios, which could further bolster domestic prices for gold," he said.

Kotak Securities Vice President - Head Commodity Research Ravindra Rao said retail jewellery buying might face headwinds from higher domestic prices in India and China while central banks' demand might exceed last year's record if the current momentum continues.

Rao noted that robust central bank buying alongside solid bar and coin demand helped gold prices amid surging bond yields and a strong US dollar throughout the year, as the US Federal Reserve raised the interest rates to a 22-year high.

2024: Equity market set for eventful journey on LS polls

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

With tailwinds of a remarkable year and handsome investor returns, Indian equities are set for an eventful journey in 2024, with a slew of local and global cues -- varying from interest rates to Lok Sabha polls to geopolitical happenings. Analysts are of the view that the bull run in the domestic equity market will continue, and over the next 3-6 months, the benchmark indices -- Sensex and Nifty -- could climb up to 7 per cent.

In 2023, the 30-share BSE Sensex jumped 11,399.52 points or 18.73 per cent, and the NSE Nifty climbed 3,626.1 points or 20 per cent. Lok Sabha elections, the US Presidential polls, the trajectory of interest rates, particularly

in the US and India, inflation trends and geopolitical situation will be the key factors for the stock market, analysts opined. Experts said the return of the BJP government with a majority in the 2024 general elections is a pivotal factor on the market's wishlist for the new year.

As political stability plays a significant role in shaping market dynamics, the market's optimism hinges on a smooth and decisive outcome in the upcoming elections, fostering an environment conducive to sustained economic growth and prosperity in 2024, an expert said. A note by Motilal Oswal Broking and Distribution said that Lok Sabha elections and the first budget post-election would be most important on the domestic front. "We

expect market sentiment to strengthen further as the ongoing pre-election rally is likely to continue. Any rate cut would provide an additional boost to the market," it said.

Dalal Street investors added a whopping Rs 81.90 lakh crore to their wealth in 2023 amid a raft of positive factors, including strong domestic macroeconomic fundamentals, political stability owing to the BJP's success in recent elections, optimistic corporate earnings outlook, signals from the US Federal Reserve about three prospective rate cuts next year and heavy retail investors participation. "India continues to be the fastest growing economy in the world, and BJP's win in recently-held state elections has further boosted investors' sentiment.

FPIs inject Rs 1.7 lakh crore into Indian equities in 2023

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

In a remarkable comeback, foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) have pumped Rs 1.7 lakh crore into the Indian equity markets in 2023, propelled by confidence in the country's robust economic fundamentals amid a challenging global landscape.

The year 2023 has witnessed massive investment by FPIs, thanks to the sharp uptick in inflows of Rs 66,134 crore in December. Going forward, FPI flows are expected to be robust. However, their allocation is likely to be selective, said Kishlay Upadhyay - smallcase Manager and founder of Fidel Folio. Anticipating a continued decrease in the

US interest rates throughout 2024, it is likely that FPIs are likely to increase their purchases, especially in the early months of the New Year in the run-up to the general elections, VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said. In 2023, FPIs made a net investment of Rs 1.71 lakh crore in equities and Rs 68,663 crore in the debt markets. Together, they infused Rs 2.4 lakh crore into the capital market, as per the data available with the depositories.

The latest flow came after Indian equities witnessed a worst net outflow of Rs 1.21 lakh crore by FPIs in 2022 on aggressive rate hikes by the central banks globally. Before the

outflow, FPIs invested money in the last three years.

FPIs made a net infusion of Rs 25,752 crore in equities in 2021, Rs 1.7 lakh crore in 2020, and Rs 1.01 lakh crore in 2019.

"India's robust economic outlook, resilience to geopolitical issues, and strong domestic consumption story make it an attractive investment destination," said Abhishek Jain, Head of Research at Arianth Capital.

Of Rs 1.71 lakh crore inflow this year, more than Rs 66,000 crore has been invested in December, following the enhanced political stability, owing to the BJP's success in recent elections across three significant states.

India to remain fastest-growing major economy in 2024

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

India decisively withstood global headwinds in 2023 and is likely to remain as the world's fastest-growing major economy on the back of growing demand, moderate inflation, stable interest rate regime and robust foreign exchange reserves.

Despite widespread pessimism witnessed among the developed nations and the worsening geopolitical situation, India recorded a gross domestic product (GDP) expansion of 6.1 per cent in the March quarter. The growth moved up to 7.8 per cent in the June quarter and was 7.6 per cent in the September quarter.

For the first six months of this fiscal, the growth was 7.7 per cent. The growth momentum



is expected to sustain in the December quarter, making India the fastest-growing major economy in the world much ahead of China. According to the latest growth projections of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), which appear conservative, India will record a growth of 6.3 per cent in 2023, ahead of China and

Brazil at 5.2 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

For 2024, the OECD expects India to grow at 6.1 per cent and China at 4.7 per cent.

On the other hand, major economies, including the US, UK and Japan, are likely to witness either deceleration or very nominal increase in economic growth rates in the coming year.

India's performance on the economic front in 2023 appears even better when viewed from a global perspective.

As per the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) World Economic Outlook, global growth is estimated to decelerate from 3.5 per cent in 2022 to 3 per cent in 2023 and further to 2.9 per cent in 2024.

Ashima Goyal, Member of the Reserve Bank of India's Monetary Policy Committee (MPC), said India's growth has "shown great resilience despite many external shocks. This is due to increasing economic diversity and the role of policy in smoothing shocks".

Equipping people with better skills and assets, she said, "will add up to give India good growth in 2024 and beyond".

PMJY brings prosperity to Baiga Tribal settlements

Chaupal camps provide vital govt information to Baiga Communities

Central Chronicle News

Khairagarh, Dec 31: The administration is making significant strides in improving the lives of the Baiga Special Backward Tribe (PVTG) through the Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana. In a concerted effort to uplift these communities, Chaupal camps have been established in remote Baiga settlements in the Chhuikhadan development block of KCG district.

Under the dedicated guidance of Collector Gopal Verma, district and block level officers, block nodal, and gram panchayat members are working together to conduct surveys and verify eligibility for various government schemes. Recently, a Chaupal camp was set up



in Kopro village, in a remote forest area in Chhuikhadan.

This initiative aims to empower Baiga families by providing them with detailed information about government programs, and

eligible beneficiaries are receiving necessary documents promptly through the relevant departments.

The Janman Yojana intends to identify and address the basic needs of Baiga-inhabited forest vil-

lages, ensuring access to permanent housing, clean drinking water, well-paved roads, Anganwadi centers, Mobile Primary Care (MPC) units, electricity connections, and essential cards such as Ayushman,

Kisan Credit, Aadhar, and Kisan Samman Nidhi. This comprehensive plan also includes the Baiga Grant, promising a brighter future for Baiga families by offering permanent housing, allowing them to establish a secure and permanent residence.

The district-level officers, dedicated employees, Sarpanch, Secretary, Employment Assistant, and Gram Panchayat Body members are tirelessly working on verifying eligibility to expedite the process and ensure that these vital improvements are delivered within the stipulated time frame. This collaborative effort brings a ray of hope and prosperity to the Baiga tribes, marking a significant milestone in their development journey.

CIMS hospital prepares for New Year's safety

- With posting of specialist doctors
- 24/7 Medical support ensures immediate care during festivities

Central Chronicle News

Bilaspur, Dec 31: In anticipation of New Year celebrations, SIMS Hospital is taking proactive measures to ensure the safety and well-being of the community. A team of eight senior doctors has been assigned special duty by the hospital administration on December 31st and January 1st. These dedicated specialists will be on call 24 hours a day, ready to respond to any unforeseen medical incidents that may arise during the festivities.

In addition to the hospital's regular services, this exceptional initiative reflects CIMS



Dewangan from the Department of Medicine. The team also includes Assistant Professor Dr. Vivekananda Mishra, Associate Professor Dr. Amit Thakur, Dr. Deepika Singh, an Associate Professor in the Gynecology Department, Dr. Rachna Jain, and Pediatrician Dr. Salim Khalkho.

Hospital's commitment to preparedness and swift action in the face of potential emergencies. The hospital administration has meticulously planned for any untoward incidents that may occur during the New Year's celebrations, guaranteeing immediate medical attention and monitoring for patients in need.

Among the esteemed doctors available on call duty are Dr. Sanjay Ghille (Associate Professor of Orthopedics), Dr. Rajendra Kumar Singh (Assistant Professor of Surgery), and Dr. Komal Prasad

In the event of any medical incident or complaint, SIMS Hospital can be reached at the mobile phone number 75874/85907 for immediate assistance. Furthermore, today, Dean Dr. KK Sahare conducted a surprise inspection of the hospital's Medical Ward 1, TB Ward, and NCD Ward at 6 pm. He engaged with patients, inquiring about their medications and meals, and the patients expressed satisfaction with the hospital's care and preparedness during this festive season.

One-day Baiga children's fair celebrates culture and education

- Aastha Samiti empowers Baiga children with knowledge and culture

Central Chronicle News

Pandariya, Dec 31: Aastha Samiti hosted a one-day Baiga Children's Festival on Thursday in the Chhindidih village of the remote Vananchal region, within the Maikhal mountain range. This event aimed to enrich Baiga children's lives with lessons on environmental awareness, cleanliness, health, child protection, and the promotion of their unique culture.

The program witnessed esteemed guests, including Gayatri Singh from Director Aarohan Samaj Sevi Samiti Durg, Renu Shrikhande, Shobha Yadav, Shubhra Bala, and Ragini Agarwal from



Sampoorna Mahila Samiti Bihilai, Gurumet Kaur Dhanayi from Durg, and Rajeev Awasthi and Sandeep from Nature Seva Samiti Bilaspur.

The event was graced by the presence of community leaders such as Daulat Ram Kashyap, Kshama Kashyap, Umashankar Kashyap, Rajesh Goyal, Sampooran Verma, Ashish Kumar, Semlal Baiga, Dhansingh Baiga, Sukarsingh Baiga, Bati Bai, and Rajkumar Baiga. The program featured

informative sessions on various topics.

Gayatri Singh provided detailed information about government health schemes and home remedies for common ailments. Rajeev Awasthi, Chairman of the Nature Conservation Committee, shared insights into environmental protection, kitchen gardening, and local livelihoods. Renu Shrikhande focused on empowering women through education and livelihood opportunities.

Daulat Ram Kashyap, President of Aastha Committee, shed light on the organization's activities and the livelihood, cleanliness, health, and culture of the special backward tribe, the Baiga community. Umashankar Kashyap, a social worker, imparted knowledge about child protection, child rights, the Juvenile Justice Act, and the POCSO Act, along with government schemes for children.

The event also featured Baiga dance performances and a local exhibition organized by the Baiga community, which was visited and appreciated by the guests. To further support the rural Baigas of Chhindidih, Sapurna Mahila Samiti distributed essential items like cloth, while fostering cultural pride and knowledge in a celebration of unity and education.

Successful conclusion of Jeevan Vidya Camp

- At Kabir Teerth Mandraud
- Empowering children with life's fundamental wisdom and playfulness

Central Chronicle News

Kurud (Mandraud), Dec 31: The Chetana Vikas Mulya Shiksha Shivir, a five-day Jeevan Vidya Camp, reached a successful conclusion under the auspices of the Manav Seva Sansthan at Kabir Teerth Mandraud. This residential camp witnessed active participation from 45 parents, teachers, and approximately 110 children hailing from various districts of Chhattisgarh, including Dhamtari, Raipur, Mahasamund, Durg, and Bastar.



The camp's dedicated facilitators, Poonam and Basant from Abhyudaya Sansthan in Achoti (Durg), provided children with profound wisdom in the most straightforward and enjoyable manner. In this camp, while imparting the most fundamental knowledge to children, including the understanding of life, self-realization, human behaviour, why to live, how to live, who am I, and more, in the simplest

and most playful manner, children were provided with practical wisdom. At the same time, parents and teachers were given extensive guidance on how to enhance their utility in themselves, in the family, in society, and in the nation.

The camp, held from December 24 to 28 at Megha Ghat Mandraud, was made possible through the efforts of Yadaram Sahu Giraud,

Purushottam Sahu Giraud, the staff of Samadhaan Vidyalaya Mandraud, and the support of Saint Shri Ghanshyam Saheb and Ravindra Sahu.

The invaluable contributions of numerous individuals, including Bhuneshwar Sahu, Rupeshwar Sahu Katalbod, Shankar Acharya from Saraswati Shishu Mandir Bodra, Oommen Sahu, Toman Sahu, Pritam Lal Sahu Bodra, Chudamani Sahu from Samadhan Academy Kareli Badi, Chetan Lal Sahu, Khilishwar Prasad Sahu, Devnath Sahu, Roshan Sahu Banagar, Jitendra Sahu, Rekhraj Sahu Kapal Fodi, Rohit Sahu Supela, and Mojiram Sahu Mandraud, played a vital role in making this camp a success.

Every Baiga family to receive permanent houses: Sharma

Deputy CM's generosity boosts Vananchal development initiatives

Central Chronicle News

Kawardha, Dec 31: Chhattisgarh's Deputy Chief Minister and Kawardha MLA, Vijay Sharma, embarked on an extensive tour of the Vananchal area for the second consecutive day on Saturday. Beginning his tour at 8 am, Sharma visited villages spanning from Rengakh forest in the remote forest regions to Chiffi along the main road.

During his journey, he engaged in direct conversations with the indigenous Baiga tribe families, farmers, villagers, women, and youth. Vijay Sharma assured that permanent houses will be built for every family of the Special Backward Tribe Baiga.

Sharma announced a series of initiatives aimed at uplifting the entire community. These initiatives include the establishment of a community center, cultural platform, and essential amenities, addressing

the long-standing demands of the local population.

His tour included meetings with residents of Sivanikhurd, Samanapur, Sheetalpani, Bahakhodara, Sivanikala Chiffi, and Bokkarkhar in Vananchal. At various locations, Sharma received warm welcomes with flower garlands, traditional Raut dances, and heartfelt applause.

Sharma made several significant announcements during his visit to the Vananchal area. He pledged a financial commitment of 7 lakh rupees for the construction of a boundary wall in Gram Samanapur, 2 lakh rupees for a cultural platform, 5 lakh rupees for the relocation of elec-



tricity poles in Gram Barbaspur, and 2.5 lakh rupees for toilet construction. Additionally, he declared contributions of 10 lakh rupees each for the construction of community halls in Gram Teetari and Gram Sivanikhurd. He also committed 10 lakh rupees for the establishment of a boys' hostel in Gram Sonwahi. Furthermore, he assured the

community of his efforts to establish a bus stand in Jhalmala. He announced 2 lakh rupees for the construction of separate cultural platforms in Gram Shitalpani, 7 lakh rupees for Saraswati Shishu Mandir in Gram Chiffi, and 10 lakh rupees for a community building in Gram Benda. Additionally, Sharma inaugurated a Tendupatta fund in Amapani of

Gram Bokkarkhar and allocated 3 lakh rupees each for the construction of stages in Gram Bokkarkhar and Gram Shambhuppear. Responding to the demand for improved access roads, he advocated for the inclusion of the road from Bahapani to Barhapani and Mahali Ghat in the upcoming budget.

Reflecting on the government's commitment to its promises, Sharma highlighted the fulfillment of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guarantees under the leadership of Chief Minister Vishnu Deo Sai. This includes providing permanent housing to 18 lakh families in Chhattisgarh, offering two years paddy bonuses to farmers, and the purchase of 21 quintals of paddy. Sharma assured that the government would meet its promise of a support price of Rs 3100 per quintal for paddy, emphasizing the dedication to the state's farmers' well-being.

Rampant illegal liquor sales in Bhakhara Nagar

- Residents demand action as authorities maintain silence

Central Chronicle News

Anwari, Dec 31: Bhakhara Nagar has been addressing the issue of open illegal liquor sales, which was a matter of concern during the previous Congress government's tenure.

The BJP, while in opposition, had openly accused the Congress government of permitting liquor sales in nearly every corner of the town, a factor believed to have contributed to the Congress party's electoral defeat this year.

With the recent assem-

bly election results favouring the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), the public had high expectations that the open sale of illegal liquor in the streets, towns, and small communities would come to an end. However, recent reports suggest that the sale of illicit liquor is on the rise in various wards of Bhakhara Nagar, causing tension in the area.

Residents have taken action by demanding the installation of CCTV cameras in Ward Number 3 of the Nagar Panchayat. Reports indicate that the sale of illegal liquor is taking place from 4:00 AM to around 10:00 PM on roads leading from Naveen Primary School towards Koliyari in Guru

Ghasidas Mohalla, Ward Number 3 of Nagar Panchayat.

This concerning issue involves individuals from different socio-economic backgrounds, including labourers and even government employees. Despite multiple raids by the excise and police departments on the homes of these illegal liquor sellers, not a single bottle of liquor has been discovered.

The ability of these sellers to evade police actions raises questions about potential informers within the police station, adding complexity to the situation. Efforts to curb the sale of illegal liquor are now gaining momentum, as the community seeks a solution to this ongoing challenge.

Accused with false promise in police custody

- Had promised to marry a girl

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Dec 31: A girl residing under CSEB post area had lodged a report in the police post CSEB that in 2021, during a wedding programme at the victim's house, she met Sunil Kumar Sahu, a youth working as a decorator, with his father Ram Kripal Sahu, resident of Pump House Colony, District Korba.

Since then, the said young man had been continuously raping the victim by luring her into his love trap and having



physical relations with her on the pretext of marrying her.

When the victim asked the accused youth to marry him, he clearly refused to marry her. In this case, based on the report of the victim, crime

number 571/2023 section 376 (2), (N), 506 IPC was registered against the accused Sunil Kumar Sahu.

After completing the legal action by outpost in-charge CSEB sub-inspector Naveen Patel along with his staff, the accused involved in the case, Sunil Kumar Sahu, S/o Ram Kripal Sahu, age 27 years, R/o Pump House, behind Sai Mandir, outpost CSEB District Korba, was duly arrested in the case and given judicial remand.

He was produced in the court and due to the jail warrant being issued, the accused has been admitted to the district jail Korba.

Central Chronicle News

Korba, Dec 31: In a commendable effort to uplift the lives of the Special Backward Tribes, the district administration in Korba, under the guidance of Collector Saurabh Kumar and the supervision of District Panchayat CEO Vishwadeep, is actively implementing the Prime Minister's Janman Yojana. This initiative aims to extend the benefits of various public welfare schemes from both the Central and State Governments to the deprived populations within the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTG) settlements.

As part of this initiative, a camp was organized today to extend the benefits of the Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana to various villages. These included Chhatasara, Makhurpani, Patrapali,



Garhpura, and Devpahari in the Korba development block of the district. Additionally, villages such as Katoringoi, Malda, Banjhipara, and Gudrumuda (Manjhipara) in the Podi Uprora development block were covered. Similar camps were meticulously organized in other districts, including Donganala in the Pali district. The camp attendees, predominantly villagers from Special Backward Tribe communities, received

comprehensive information from dedicated departmental officers and employees. They were informed about the extensive work carried out under the Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana for the upliftment of these communities. Key initiatives within the program encompass crucial aspects such as ensuring access to clean drinking water, providing housing, constructing roads, ensuring nutrition through Anganwadi centers,

and implementing skill development programs to promote sustainable livelihoods. Moreover, attendees belonging to the Special Backward Tribe category derived additional benefits from various other government schemes. These included the issuance of Aadhar Cards, Ayushman Cards, Ration Cards, Jan Dhan Accounts, Kisan Credit Cards (KCC), Caste Certificates, Forest Rights Letters, and Job Cards.

The camp also offered essential health check-ups, including blood pressure, sugar level, eye examinations, and overall health assessments. Attendees received necessary medical consultations and medications as part of this holistic approach to community development.

Women employees and self-help groups play a pivotal role in mobilizing members of the Special Backward Tribes for these camps. Additionally, district and block-level nodal officers oversee the camps, ensuring the presence and coordination of relevant government departments. The holistic approach of the Pradhan Mantri Janman Yojana is transforming the lives of the Special Backward Tribes in Korba district and other regions, promising a brighter and more prosperous future for these communities.

FIH Hockey5s World Cup

Simranjeet to lead India men; Rajni to captain women's side



New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Simranjeet Singh and Rajni Etimarpu will lead the men's and women's sides respectively as Hockey India on Sunday named the Indian teams for the upcoming FIH Hockey5s World Cup to be held in Muscat, Oman.

While the Hockey5s Women's World Cup will be held between January 24 and 27, the men's event is slated from January 28 to January 31.

Experienced goalkeeper Rajni will have defender Mahima Chaudhary as her deputy, while Mandeep Mor will be the vice-captain of the men's team.

The women's team also

comprises Bansari Solanki as the second goalkeeper, with Akshata Abaso Dhekale and Jyoti Chhatra as defenders.

Among midfielders, Mariana Kujur and Mumtaz Khan have been named while Ajmina Kujur, Rutaja Dadaso Pisal and Deepika Soreng have been named as forwards.

The Indian Women are grouped in Pool C along with Namibia, Poland and the United States.

A total of 16 teams will participate in the Hockey5s Women's World Cup which includes Fiji, Malaysia, the Netherlands and hosts Oman in Pool A, while Australia, South Africa,



Ukraine and Zambia are in Pool B and Pool D features New Zealand, Paraguay, Thailand and Uruguay.

"The team comprises young players with enough international experience and understanding of the challenges of playing a prestigious event such as the Hockey 5's World Cup," coach Soundarya said in a HI release.

"We are well prepared and are ahead of the tournament."

The Indian men's team, led by Olympic bronze medallist Simranjeet, includes goalkeepers Suraj Karkera and Prashant Kumar Chauhan.

Mandeep Mor will be

joined by Manjeet in defence, while midfield features Mohd Raheel Mouseen and Maninder Singh and forward-line comprises Pawan Rajbhar, Gurjot Singh and Uttam Singh along with captain Simranjeet.

Grouped in Pool B, India will play against Egypt, Jamaica and Switzerland to make the knockout rounds.

The other teams in the fray include the Netherlands, Nigeria, Pakistan and Poland in Pool A and Pool C features Australia, Kenya, New Zealand, Trinidad and Tobago while Pool D includes Fiji, Malaysia, Oman and the United States.

Kiwis beats Bangladesh by 17 runs in 3rd T20, shares series 1-1

Mount Maunganui, Dec 31 (AP):

Mitchell Santner and Jimmy Neesham combined in a 46-run partnership which steered New Zealand to a 17 run win over Bangladesh under the Duckworth-Lewis system in the third Twenty20 international on Sunday, dashing the Tigers' hopes of their first series win in New Zealand.

Captain Santner and Neesham provided the cool heads New Zealand needed to overcome another top-order collapse and chase down Bangladesh's inadequate total of only 110 in a race against encroaching dark clouds and rain.

New Zealand was in desperate trouble at 49-5 in the ninth over, trailing under the Duckworth-Lewis system when Neesham and Santner came together. They stayed together and guided New Zealand to 95-5 in the 15th over when the forecast rain arrived torrentially and brought the match to an abrupt end.

"I think we always knew there was going to be a bit of rain around whether it came at the end of halfway through that second innings," Santner said. "The bowlers did the job up front and it was good to get across the line in a pretty



New Zealand's James Neesham plays a shot during the third Twenty20 cricket match between New Zealand and Bangladesh at Bay Oval in Mount Maunganui on December 31.

hard-fought series." In extraordinary scenes, spectators dashed for the exits of Bay Oval as the rain pelted down, driven by strong

winds. New Zealand needed 78 runs to be ahead on the Duckworth-Lewis calculation.

Sunday's win leveled the

three-match series at 1-1 after Bangladesh won the first match by five wickets and after the second match at Bay Oval was washed out after 11 overs.

But New Zealand can no longer turn a blind eye to the failings of its top order in the ongoing absence of Kane Williamson and Devon Conway.

Bangladesh may have lost the three-match one-day international series and shared the T20 series, but it achieved its first wins in New Zealand in both formats.

In the third ODI, New Zealand was reduced to 70-6 and in the first T20 it was 50-5 as its top batters failed to master the Bangladesh attack. The latest collapse seemed both inevitable and at times comical.

Santner excelled as New Zealand bowled out Bangladesh for only 110 in 19.2 overs after winning the toss. Bangladesh lost three wickets for 45 runs in the power play then was bogged down in the middle overs, scoring only 32 between the seventh and 16th overs. Najmul Hossain Shanto's 17 from 15 balls was the top score. Four other batsmen reached double figures, including Towhid Hridoy who made 16 from 18 balls.

Shubman Gill is playing too aggressively in Test cricket: Sunil Gavaskar



New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Legendary Sunil Gavaskar has asked Shubman Gill to curb his aggressive intentions while batting in Tests after the young batsman failed to produce a substantial outing in the first Test against South Africa at Centurion.

Gill made two and 26 at the SuperSport Park and fell to pacers Nandre Burger and Marco Jansen in the first and second innings respectively as India

lost the opening Test by an innings and 32 runs.

Gavaskar advised Gill to take in the different needs of Test cricket as compared to white ball formats.

"I think he is playing a bit too aggressively in Test cricket. There is a slight difference when you play Test cricket when compared to T20I and ODI cricket. The difference is in the ball.

"The red ball moves a little more than the white ball in the air and off the pitch as well. It bounces a little more too. He should keep that in mind," Gavaskar told Star Sports.

While Gill had a fine run in the limited over versions, he has managed to score only one fifty-plus score in the traditional format in 10 innings in 2023, a hundred against Australia at home in March.

His nine other outings produced scores of: 21, 5, 13, 18, 6, 10, 29 not out, 2, 26.

Gavaskar hoped that Gill would find his range sooner than later.

We respect all but fear none, says Jhingan ahead of Asian Cup

Doha, Dec 31 (PTI):

They might be up against formidable and higher-ranked opponents such as Australia in the upcoming Asian Cup but star Indian stopper Sandesh Jhingan on Sunday said "we respect all but fear none".

India are clubbed with continental heavyweights and World Cup regulars Australia, strong central Asian side Uzbekistan and tricky Syria -- all above Stimac's team in the FIFA rankings -- in the group stage of the Asian Cup from January 13 onwards.

Jhingan, one of head coach Igor Stimac's key players bracing up to appear in the Croat's toughest test of his coaching tenure, remained unperturbed by the task that awaits his team in the coming days.

Jhingan, upon his arrival at the airport here, said, "No group in the Asian Cup is easy. Of course, we've got Australia, and they need no introduction. But what we have learned in the last few years is that we must never



fear any opposition. "Believe in the work you do, believe in your group, and the sky's the limit for this batch. We must stay humble, keep improving, and hopefully do something special." At the Hamad International Airport, the players were greeted by more than a hundred Indian fans. While this will be India's fifth appearance in the AFC Asian Cup, the Blue Tigers have never made it past the group stage

after finishing runners-up in 1964, which was played in a round-robin format.

Jhingan looked at the positives of the recent past.

He said, "We have been getting some great support at home, and we've had a great year, which shows how fast we are improving. Now it's all about putting in our best effort here and seeing where we can land up."

Representatives from the Indian embassy in Qatar also came down to the air-

port and the hotel to greet the members of the national team.

Stimac had arrived a day earlier in Doha and was there at the team hotel to greet every player.

Drawn in Group B, India will begin their campaign against Australia on January 13 followed by matches against Uzbekistan on January 18 and Syria on January 23.

The Blue Tigers have had a great year so far, winning three trophies (Tri-Nation Cup, Intercontinental Cup, and the SAFF Championship) at home, before putting in commendable performances away from home in the King's Cup in Thailand, Merdeka Tournament in Malaysia and in the FIFA World Cup Qualifiers away game against Kuwait (1-0).

Stimac's boys will undergo a camp in Qatar's capital to prepare for the tournament, where the top two teams in each group, along with the four best (out of six) third-placed teams will qualify for the Round of 16.

Indian pacers' creativity will be tested in Cape Town: Allan Donald

Cape Town, Dec 31 (PTI):

The Indian pace bowlers were not patient on a good bowling surface during the opening Test against South Africa, a virtue they will need in abundance on a batting paradise at Newlands, where spinners will have little role to play, reckoned legendary Allan Donald.

India lost the first Test by an innings and 32 runs after conceding 408 in the first innings on a spicy Centurion track that offered steep bounce and enough lateral movement.

"I know South Africa probably got the better of the conditions, no questions about that. They pitched the ball in a 5 and 5.5 meter area and gave it a chance to do something off the deck. But what they did better than India they were more patient in that area and even they used the short ball a little bit more in the second innings," Donald, a fearsome pacer of his generation, decoded India's defeat in an exclusive interview to PTI. The



57-year-old, who took 330 wickets in just 72 Tests, feels Indians were waiting for things to happen. "For India, there was one debutant (Prasidh Krishna). I thought (Jasprit) Bumrah, but Indian bowlers searched too much for things to happen. They quickly reverted to shorter balls and then lost their length a bit on the shorter side and then got opened up on either side square leg, off side and SA batters capitalized." "Come Cape Town, it will be hard work and there will be a lot more energy from both teams. Cape Town will be hard work and it will bring honesty out of both the attacks," the White Lightning said.

Raducanu feeling reborn as she starts 2024 season in Auckland

Wellington, Dec 31 (AP):

Former U.S. Open champion Emma Raducanu says she feels "reborn" as she prepares to play her first match of 2024 at the Auckland tennis classic.

The 21-year-old Raducanu has been out of action since April after wrist and knee operations and says she feels reinvigorated at the start of a new season.

"I feel reborn in a way, I feel fresh," the 2021 major winner told reporters. "I feel ready, I feel happy, I feel excited."

"So overall I'm feeling positive and lighter. For two years after the U.S. Open I felt maybe a bit more like with a weight on my shoulders, but now I feel completely fresh."

Raducanu suffered an ankle injury in Auckland last year but played through the pain at the Australian Open. By April she had come to realize she had to take time out



for surgery. "I was having wrist pains for five months before I came to Auckland so I was managing it, keeping it going and under

wraps as much as I could," Raducanu said. "I knew it was inevitable if I wanted to fix the problem but I wanted to keep going through the season."

"I'm feeling a lot better now, I'm feeling stronger. I feel fitter, more positive and refreshed so I'm really looking forward to this year." Raducanu will play a qualifier in the first round of the Auckland tournament on Monday or Tuesday.

Meanwhile, the 2023 U.S. Open champ Coco Gauff is drawn to play American compatriot Claire Liu in the first round as she begins her 2024 season and defense of the Auckland singles title.

Caroline Wozniacki will play Ukraine's Elina Svitolina in round one as she plays at the Auckland tournament for the eighth time. The 33-year-old made a strong comeback in 2023 after taking three years away from tennis to start a family.

Anahat wins U-19 girls' title at Scottish Junior Open squash

New Delhi, Dec 31 (PTI):

Talented Indian teenager Anahat Singh produced a dominant performance, bagging the girls' under-19 title at the 2023 Scottish Junior Open squash held in Edinburgh.

Anahat claimed a 11-6, 11-1, 11-5 victory over home favourite Robyn McAlpine in the final on Saturday. It capped off a spectacular year for Delhi's Anahat, who recorded the under-19 and senior National championship double and won the mixed doubles bronze along with Abhay Singh in both at the Asian Games and in the inaugural Asian Mixed Doubles Championships. Meanwhile, India's Subhash Choudhary rallied to beat compatriot Shiven Agarwal 5-11, 11-4, 6-11, 11-8, 11-5 in the boys' under-15 final, while Shreshth Iyer beat Shreyansh Jah 11-8, 11-8, 3-



11, 11-8 in an all-Indian boys' under-13 final. Top-seeded Indian Aadya Budhia displayed resilience in beating Malaysia's Niew Chew 9-11, 11-8, 8-11, 11-8, 11-9 in the girls' under-13 final, while top seed Prabhav Bajoria beat second seed Aadiya Shah 5-11, 9-11, 11-5, 11-8, 11-6 in an all-Indian boys' under-11 final. Divyanshi Jain finished runner-up in the girls' under-11 category. Almost 200 players from over 30 countries took part in the event.

Fernandez leads Canada to United Cup win over Chile

Sydney, Dec 31 (AP):

Former U.S. Open finalist Leylah Fernandez led Canada to a 2-1 victory over Chile in its opening United Cup match on Sunday.

Fernandez defeated Daniela Seguel 6-3, 6-2 before Nicolas Jarry leveled the Group B tie for Chile by beating Steven Diez in straight sets in Sydney.

Diez had replaced Felix Auger-Aliassime who was rested with a minor knee issue.

Fernandez and Diez then clinched the deciding mixed doubles against Seguel and Tomas Barrios Vera 7-5, 4-6, 10-8 to seal the tie for the Canadians.

"I'm extremely happy with the way I played," world No. 35 Fernandez said after her 73 minute win over Seguel. "It wasn't the greatest match because it is my first match of the season, the nerves, but I'm extremely happy with the way that I was able to man-



Canada's Steven Diez and Leylah Fernandez play a point against Chile's Tomas Barrios Vera and Daniela Seguel during their mixed-doubles match at the United Cup tennis tournament on Ken Rosewall Arena in Sydney on December 31.

age it." In Perth, Great Britain's Katie Boulter stunned fifth-ranked Jessica Pegula in Group C rallying from a set down to win 5-7, 6-4, 6-4 in nearly three hours. The Americans drew level when 10th-ranked Taylor

Fritz defeated Cameron Norrie 7-6 (5), 6-4 to force a deciding mixed doubles match. Pegula and Fritz then combined for victory over Boulter and Neal Skupski 1-6, 7-6 (4), 10-7 that sealed the tie for the defending champions.

Shimla records 50-60 pc occupancy on NY's Eve

ISRO to launch dedicated scientific satellite to study black holes

Lowest in 40 years

Shimla (HP), Dec 31 (PTI):

Prediction of weekend snow and the chief minister's directions not to be harsh with drunk revelers on New Year failed to woo tourists to Shimla which recorded 50-60 per cent occupancy, "the lowest in the last 40 years".

Last year, Shimla had recorded more than 80 per cent occupancy on New Year. The hotel and allied industries were pinning hopes on 'white New Year' but chances of snowfall appear very bleak.

While, the Mall Road and The Ridge in the heart of the city are abuzz with tourists as winter carnival turned the place into a fair



Tourists celebrate New Year 2024, at Ridge in Shimla, Sunday.

with lights and cultural bonanza being organised but tourist footfall has not converted in room occupancy in hotels, said Shimla Hotel and Tourism Stakeholders Association president M K Seth.

The occupancy is about

50-60 per cent which is the lowest in the last 40 years and even during the Covid-19 pandemic, the tourist rush on New Year was more than this time, he told the PTI. Himachal Pradesh Chief Minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu had directed

to follow the slogan of 'Atithi Devo Bhava', facilitate the tourists and make adequate arrangements and proper plans in all districts for smooth flow of traffic.

Besides allowing food joints and pan shops to remain open 24x7, he had said that drunk tourists would not be arrested, but would be facilitated by the police to their hotels to ensure that their New Year experience is not spoiled.

The unregistered tourism units are eating into the sales of registered hotels, home stays and other such accommodations, said Seth adding that the tourists coming by train and luxury buses are "captured" by touts which take them to unregistered accommodations.

Sriharikota (AP), Dec 31 (PTI):

ISRO is set to welcome the new year with the launch of its first X-Ray Polarimeter Satellite that would offer insights into celestial objects like black holes, onboard a Polar Satellite Launch Vehicle rocket on Monday.

The launch comes after the success of its Gaganyaan Test Vehicle D1 mission in October.

The PSLV-C58 rocket, in its 60th mission, would carry primary payload XPoSat and 10 other satellites to be deployed in low earth orbits.

The 25-hour countdown commenced on Sunday for the lift-off scheduled at 9.10 am from the first launch pad at this spaceport, located about 135 kms east of Chennai, on



Preparations underway for the launch of ISRO's PSLV-C58 carrying X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat), at the Satish Dhawan Space Station, in Sriharikota.

January 1.

"The countdown commenced for PSLV-C58 at 8.10 am today," ISRO

sources said.

The X-ray Polarimeter Satellite (XPoSat) is aimed to investigate the polarisation of intense X-ray sources in space.

According to ISRO, it is the first dedicated scientific satellite from ISRO to carry out research in space-based polarisation measurements of X-ray emission from celestial sources.

Besides ISRO, the US-based National Aeronautics and Space Agency (NASA) conducted a similar study — the Imaging X-Ray Polarimetry Explorer mission in December 2021 on the remnants of supernova explosions, the particle streams emitted by black holes and other cosmic events.

While space-based X-

ray astronomy has been established in India focusing on imaging, and time domain studies, Monday's mission marks a major value-addition to the scientific fraternity, the space agency said.

The objective of the PSLV-C58 mission includes measuring polarisation of X-rays in the energy band 8-30 keV emanating from about 50 potential cosmic sources, to carry out long term spectral and temporal studies of cosmic x-ray sources.

The X-Ray polarisation serves as a crucial diagnostic tool for examining the radiation mechanism and geometry of celestial sources.

SHOCKING TRUTH

Dalit woman thrown into hot cauldron

For protesting against molestation

Baghpat (UP), Dec 31 (PTI):

A young Dalit woman was allegedly thrown into a hot cauldron of a jaggery-making unit for protesting against molestation in the Budaun district, police said on Sunday. The 18-year-old woman, who sustained serious burn injuries, is undergoing treatment at the GTB Hospital in Delhi, police said, adding that three accused, including the cauldron owner, have been ar-

rested. Inspector in-charge of the Binauli police station M P Singh said that the woman, a resident of Muzaffarnagar, worked at Pramod's cauldron in a village. Lodging a complaint at the Binauli police station on Saturday, the woman's brother said that on Wednesday, she was working at the cauldron when Pramod, Raju and Sandeep allegedly molested and misbehaved with his sister. When she protested, the accused allegedly threw her into the hot cauldron with the intention of killing her, and also hurled "casteist

words" towards her. After this, the three accused fled.

Singh said that on the complaint of her brother, police have registered a case against accused Pramod, Raju and Sandeep under sections 354 (assault or criminal force to woman with intent to outrage her modesty), 504 (intentional insult with intent to provoke breach of the peace), 307 (attempt to murder) of the IPC and under the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (Prevention of Atrocities) Act, and arrested all three accused.

4 years since SC verdict, Karsevakpuram remains a curiosity corner of Ayodhya



Workers clean carved stones at Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas 'karyashala', in Ayodhya.

Ayodhya, Dec 31 (PTI):

Ayodhya native Aarti religiously polishes a block of

ornately carved stone weathered over the years as curious visitors walk around at a workshop run-

ning in the holy city for more than 30 years. "These stones will be sent to the site of construction of the Ram temple being built in Ayodhya. We feel good that we are contributing to it," Aarti told PTI while working.

She is among a group of women who perform this job every day from 8 am to 5 pm with an hour-long lunch break in between at Ram Janmabhoomi Nyas-run 'karyashala' in Ayodhya's Karsevakpuram.

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