

Congress leader Shashi Tharoor hinted that the 2024 Lok Sabha elections might conclude his political journey in the Thiruvananthapuram constituency.



Russian President Putin has extended an invitation to PM Modi, requesting his visit to Russia. During a joint media appearance, EAM Jaishankar expressed confidence.



Renowned tennis player Novak Djokovic has declared his intention to play beyond the age of 40, mirroring the career longevity of NFL legend Tom Brady.



Actor and DMDK chief Vijayakanth died at a Chennai hospital on Thursday, December 28. He was on ventilator support after testing positive for Covid-19.



The 27 Indians who stayed back in France seeking asylum have now been freed, news agency PTI quoted local French media.....

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Credo Brands Marketing (Mufti Menswear) had a subdued debut on December 27, as its shares were listed at Rs 282.35 on the National Stock....

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North Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and others, are experiencing cold waves and dense fog, prompting authorities to announce winter....

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Lee Sun-kyun, who played a pivotal role in the Oscar-award winning film, 'Parasite', was found dead on Wednesday.....

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Wolverhampton Wanderers delivered a festive shock to Chelsea, overcoming injury concerns to secure a 2-1 victory in the Premier League on.....

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India formally asks Pakistan to extradite 26/11 mastermind Hafiz Saeed

The Indian government has officially requested Pakistan to extradite Hafiz Saeed, the founder of Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and mastermind behind the 26/11 Mumbai attacks, sources said.

Sources confirmed that the Ministry of External Affairs has sent a formal request to the Pakistani government, urging them to initiate the legal process for Saeed's extradition.

Saeed has been listed as one of India's most wanted terrorists and carries a \$10 million bounty placed by the US for his alleged involvement in the 2008 Mumbai attacks.

India has repeatedly demanded Saeed's

extradition to face trial for the Mumbai attacks, but the absence of an extradition treaty between India and Pakistan complicates the process.

Despite his claims of innocence and denial of leadership within LeT, Saeed has faced various legal challenges over the years. He was first arrested in July 2019 and received an 11-year sentence just months before Pakistan's review by the Financial Action Task Force.

In April last year, documents showed that a Pakistani court sentenced Saeed to 31 years in prison in connection with terrorism financing. However, it is unclear



whether he is in jail, with some reports claiming that he remains a free man after being released from house arrest in 2017. Saeed has been arrested and released several times over the past decade.

Last year, India declared Hafiz Saeed's son, Talha Saeed, a terrorist under the

Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA). Now, Talha Saeed is preparing to contest the upcoming general elections in Pakistan under the banner of the Pakistan Markazi Muslim League (PMML), a political party floated by his father.

Congress rejects Uddhav Sena's 23-seat demand in Maharashtra

Congress has rejected ally Shiv Sena (UBT)'s demand for 23 seats in Maharashtra for the Lok Sabha elections next year. The development came after leaders met to discuss seat sharing among the Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi partners -- Shiv Sena (UBT), Congress and NCP -- for the Lok Sabha polls.

The Shiv Sena, split into two factions, laid claim to 23 of the 48 seats in Maharashtra, despite the majority of its members siding with Eknath Shinde. Uddhav Thackeray's faction of the Shiv Sena faces a significant challenge as it lacks sufficient candidates due to the party's division, said Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam.

Congress representatives at the meeting made it clear that the grand old party appears to be the only one with a stable vote share in the state, following splits in the Shiv Sena and Sharad Pawar's NCP.

Former Chief Minister and



senior Maharashtra Congress leader Ashok Chavan said there was a need for adjustment among the parties. "While every party desires a larger share of seats, the demand for 23 seats by the Shiv Sena was excessive given the current circumstances," he said.

Sanjay Nirupam said leaders should avoid conflicts on winning seats. "Shiv Sena may demand 23 seats, but what will they do with them? Shiv Sena's leaders have left, causing a crisis. Lack of candidates is a problem for Shiv Sena." Raut did not say anything about the number of seats the Congress and NCP would contest.

'Declare Mayawati PM candidate': BSP leader's condition for entry in INDIA bloc

Mayawati's Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) has demanded she be made the prime ministerial face for the upcoming 2024 Lok Sabha elections. Speaking to Aaj Tak/India Today's sister channel Good News Today, BSP MP Malook Nagar on Thursday said. "Mayawati Ji should be declared as Prime Ministerial candidate". The remarks were being viewed as a condition by Mayawati's party to join the opposition INDIA bloc. Speaking in reference to Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge's name put forth by West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee and Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal, Nagar said, "Congress must apologise to Mayawati Ji for taking away some of our MLAs and declare her as a prime ministerial candidate, then only INDIA alliance can stop the BJP in 2024." "No one can be better than

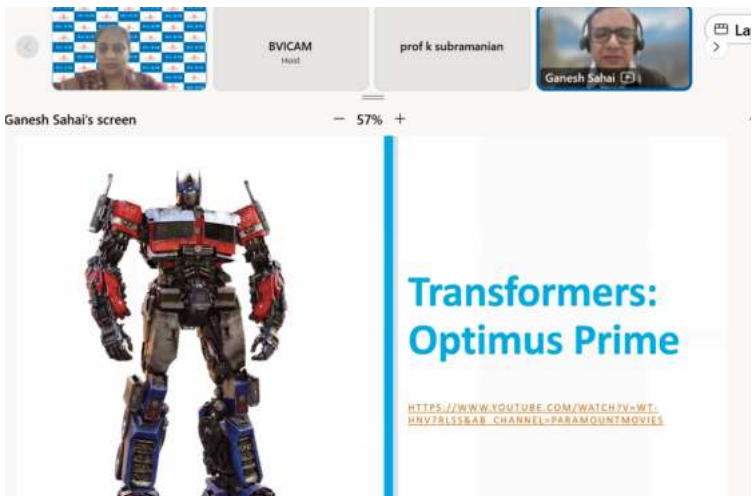


Mayawati Ji if Congress wants a Dalit face for the PM's post," he said, adding, "Mayawati ji will certainly think with a positive attitude if Congress agrees to our terms." This comes as the BSP has preferred to maintain a policy of keeping away from the INDIA alliance and the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). "We have 13.5 percent vote share in Uttar Pradesh and whichever way it swings, we will have an edge. We can win more than 60 seats if Mayawati is declared as the prime ministerial face," Nagar said.

Campus News

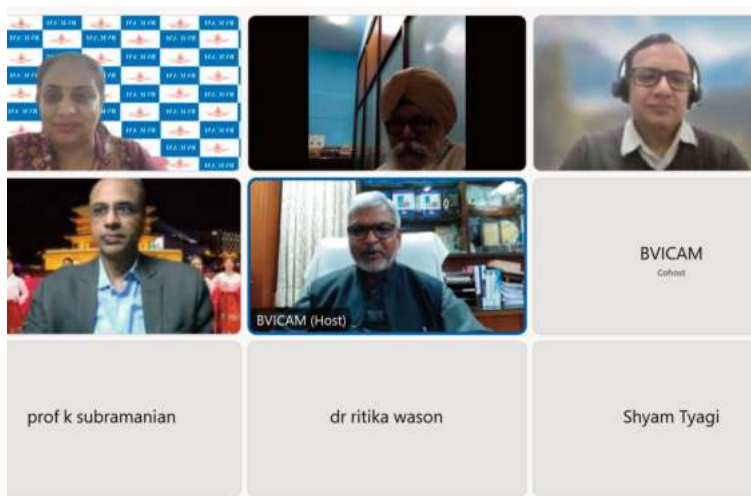
BVICAM Unveils the Future: Exploring the Transformative 'Rise of Robots' in Exclusive Webinar

BVICAM organized a webinar on “Rise of Robots”. The Webinar, being organized as part of celebrations of 75th Anniversary of glorious independence of India, was held in the benign presence of senior dignitaries from all collaborating societies and chapters. The webinar was aimed to give a comprehensive view of “Rise of Robots”. Professor M. N. Hoda, Director, BVICAM and Executive Vice Chairperson, IEEE Delhi Section, welcomed the dignitaries and the participants. He emphasized and motivated the participants to keep learning continuously regardless of disruptions, all around us. He introduced the topic and focused on how with 4G and 5G the digital world was altering our lifestyle while



moving us towards a smarter world. Mr. Ganesh Sahai, Global CTO, Nagarro was the lead speaker for the webinar. He highlighted how robots had transformed from fiction series to reality in the present times. He discussed how humans have evolved over the decades. However, along with it the commercial aspects have also increased. With Industry 4.0 cyber-physical systems have come up in a

big way giving rise to the robotic genre. He started with explaining how a robot was defined and also discussed number of real-life use cases applying robotics. The session concluded with a Question & Answer session where participants willingly asked their queries. Prof. M. N. Hoda gave his heartfelt appreciation to Mr. Ganesh Sahai for his valuable



session. He also thanked all the participants and panelist for giving their precious time in attending this webinar and making all the webinars hosted by BVICAM, a huge success. Dr. Ritika Wason, Deputy Director, BVICAM, New Delhi and Ms. Ayushi Chopra, Associate Professor, BVICAM, were the conveners of the webinar and has coordinated the entire webinar. The other

faculty members of BVICAM; Ms. Preeti was working at the backend to make it successful and present it, in a seamless manner, to the participants. The webinar attracted huge participation from across the world and Bharati Vidyapeeth's Institute of Computer Applications and Management (BVICAM), New Delhi, proved itself, once again, as a perfect host.

BVICAM Students Embrace Futuristic Careers as Customer Solutions Engineers in Utlipa's Campus Placement Drive

Utlipa, a cutting-edge real-time graph XAI & database company, empowering smart enterprises with graph augmented intelligence, organized a campus placement drive at Bharati Vidyapeeth's Institute of Computer Applications and Management (BVICAM) for the role of Customer Solutions Engineer offering a competitive stipend of 25,000 INR for the initial 3-month internship. The placement process commenced with an initial screening round, where students were shortlisted based on their resumes and development experience. Only 3 students successfully made it through this stage. Following the screening, on 24th November, 2023, a crucial introduction meeting was held, providing the



shortlisted students with an opportunity to meet the Utlipa team. During this session, the team provided insights into Utlipa, its products, and solutions. Additionally, the students were assigned the task of reading Utlipa's portal documents, which encompassed detailed information about the company's tools, platforms, query language (UQL), algorithms, and more. This assignment aimed to prepare the students for subsequent interview rounds by

enhancing their understanding of Utlipa's offerings. On 6th December 2023, the one-to-one interview rounds were conducted. The interviews focused on assessing the candidates' knowledge of graph algorithms, proficiency in Utlipa Query Language (UQL), and their overall suitability for the role of Customer Solutions Engineer. The interviews delved into the technical aspects as well as the candidates' problem-solving



abilities and communication skills. Following the rigorous selection process, Utlipa selected Sanchit Ahuja as the standout candidate on 11th December 2023. In conclusion, Utlipa's

placement drive at BVICAM was a successful event that provided students with a unique opportunity to interact with the Utlipa team, showcase their skills, and secure a promising career with the company.

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NEWS

Enforcement Directorate alleges attempts to prevent corruption probes in Tamil Nadu

The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has claimed that attempts were made to prevent the agency from conducting "lawful investigations" into corruption cases registered in Tamil Nadu and involving "powerful persons" of the state.

The central probe agency raised this allegation in its reply to a notice issued by the state police, asking the ED's Assistant Director to appear for an enquiry.

"We have grievance that such kind of repeated illegal acts and abuse of provisions of CrPC is being done with the sole motive to prevent this office from conducting lawful investigations into cases of corruption

registered in the State and by the powerful persons of the State," Atul Gupta, ED Assistant Director of the Madurai Sub Zonal office, said referring to the earlier police raid at agency's office.

"Multiple unknown and unauthorised persons broke open this office and accessed/stole sensitive and confidential investigation records of this office," he said on the raid after the arrest of the ED officer Ankit Tiwari in a bribery case, Gupta said.

The Tamil Nadu Police has issued a notice to Gupta in connection with a recently registered case, alleging that he obstructed Directorate of Vigilance and Anti-Corruption

officials from discharging their duties in the probe against Tiwari.

However, the anti-money laundering agency claims that the notice was issued without providing reasons for the enquiry or specifying the subject of the enquiry. In his response to the state police, Gupta also contends that the notice was received after the appointment date had lapsed.

The Assistant Director also stated that the Madurai Sub-Zonal office has been handling various high-profile cases, including illegal mining, high-profile corruption cases, bank frauds, and public investment fraud cases. The ED further asserted that the notice lacks



an office stamp or seal and fails to disclose the name and identity of the person who issued it. However, the agency assured that they are willing to provide the relevant material required for the enquiry, contingent upon being informed about the enquiry and ensuring that the enquiry remains "unbiased and professional".

Uttar Pradesh issues directives for buses

As dense fog engulfed several cities in North India amid decreasing temperatures and the onset of the chilly season, the Uttar Pradesh transport department has issued directives for buses travelling on highways and expressways. The state transportation department has issued specific guidelines for different zones in response to the prevailing weather conditions. The instructions specify that due to the dangers of fog, roadway buses should only stop at petrol pumps or police stations adjacent to expressways. The directive emphasises that buses should not operate until the fog clears. An additional order states that buses should not be taken to dhabas (local eateries) in opposite directions.

Anti-Human Trafficking Cell to probe grounding of plane with Indians in France



The Anti-Human Trafficking Cell, in collaboration with Mumbai Police, will take up the investigation into the plane which was grounded at a French airport over suspicion of a human trafficking scheme.

The officials have sought a detailed report of airport security personnel's interrogation of Indian passengers who returned on the said flight during the early hours of Tuesday.

An Airbus A340 plane carrying over 300 passengers, mostly Indians, had been bound for Nicaragua, when it was detained on December 21 at Vatry airport, 150 kilometres east of Paris, where it was due for refuelling. The aircraft had arrived from the UAE and was halted by French authorities after an anonymous tip-off that the plane was carrying potential victims of

human trafficking.

At the time of landing in France, the flight carried 303 Indian passengers, with 11 unaccompanied minors. Of the original 303 people on the passenger list, 276 were on the plane that arrived in Mumbai before dawn on Tuesday.

Now that those passengers have returned, the Anti-Human Trafficking Cell has called for a detailed enquiry into the matter. In a letter addressed to Central Industrial Security Force (CISF), Maharashtra anti-human trafficking unit head Deepak Pandey sought details of the CISF-led brief interrogation of returnees upon their arrival at Mumbai airport on Tuesday.

The letter states that upon disembarking from the plane, passengers were subjected to questioning by the CISF and requested a report on the same.

27 Indians from grounded plane seeking asylum in France freed on 'formal grounds'

The 27 Indians who stayed back in France seeking asylum have now been freed, news agency PTI quoted local French media reports. The batch of Indians did not take the flight carrying 276 mostly Indian passengers which took off for Mumbai on Monday afternoon, after four days of being held at Chalons-Vatry airport near Paris on suspicion of human trafficking. According to the report, a newspaper quoted prosecutors as saying that a local judge had ordered the release of all Indians on "formal grounds". The judge

reportedly also observed that the head of the border police at France's main Charles De Gaulle airport "had not referred the case to him" within the timeframe stipulated by law. "They are therefore free to do as they please, even if they are in an irregular situation on French territory," the Bobigny public prosecutor's office told the French newspaper. The 27 passengers were reportedly freed on Tuesday and five of them were taken into care of child welfare services, being minors. They were among the 303 passengers who had



boarded a plane operated by Romanian company Legend Airlines in Dubai last week. They were bound for Nicaragua but a refuelling stopover at Vatry airport in northeastern France on December 21 resulted in the plane being grounded for four days after an anonymous tip-off.

Ayodhya Railway Station renamed to 'Ayodhya Dham' ahead of Ram Temple inauguration

Ahead of the Ram temple inauguration on January 22, the city's railway station has been renamed to Ayodhya Dham.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, along with more than 6,000 people are expected to attend the 'Pran Pratistha', or the consecration ceremony of the Ram Lalla idol.

Ahead of the January 22 consecration ceremony, PM Modi is scheduled to hold a roadshow and address a public meeting after

inaugurating an airport in the temple town of Ayodhya on December 30, officials told news agency PTI. The same day, the Prime Minister will also inaugurate the new building of the railway station which stands next to the old building.

According to the agency, the redeveloped Ayodhya railway station is a state-of-the-art facility having modern "airport-like" amenities, while its facade is inspired by traditional temple architecture. On Wednesday, officials



from various agencies took stock of the preparations ahead of the Prime Minister's visit, while a posse of security personnel kept guard as construction workers rushed to finish work.

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NATIONAL/INTERNATIONAL

Age limit for Uttar Pradesh Constable Recruitment eased following public protest

The Uttar Pradesh constable recruitment announcement sparked discontentment, especially surrounding the age criteria. Multiple legislators, including Union Minister Sanjeev Balyan and BJP MP Virendra Singh Mast, voiced concerns by petitioning Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath. This was echoed by figures like Samajwadi Party National President Akhilesh Yadav and Rashtriya Lok Dal National President Chaudhary Jayant Singh, who sought relaxation in the age limit. Subsequently, a legal petition regarding this matter was filed in the High Court.

The focal point of contention centered on the age limit set by the Police Recruitment and Promotion Board, specifically for the general category, pegged between 18 to 22 years. Prospective candidates aspiring to join the police force argued that this limited window, considering the approximately 60 thousand



vacancies projected five years post the 2018 recruitment, would unfairly exclude many. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath intervened, addressing the concerns by ordering a revision in the age limit for general category applicants. The revised eligibility now extends to individuals above 18 but below 25 years, while women within 28 years and candidates from other categories within 30 years are also deemed eligible. This decision directly responds to the plea of the candidates, acknowledging the delayed recruitment process, which caused

numerous aspirants to surpass the initial age restriction. In 2018, a total of 49,568 constable positions were filled, encompassing 31,360 civil police roles and 18,208 PAC positions. Yogi Adityanath highlighted the government's steadfast dedication to the youth's interests and their promising prospects. The decision to relax the age limit across categories signifies the administration's commitment to ensuring equitable opportunities in the ongoing constable recruitment drive for the Reserve Civil Police within the Uttar Pradesh Police force.

Putin Extends well wishes for success to our friends in the Lok Sabha Elections

Russian President Vladimir Putin expressed his well wishes for India's upcoming Lok Sabha election, emphasizing the enduring and amicable ties between Moscow and New Delhi, irrespective of shifting political landscapes. During a meeting with External Affairs Minister Dr. S Jaishankar, Putin extended an invitation to Prime Minister Narendra Modi to visit Russia and highlighted their ongoing discussions on the situation in Ukraine. Putin underscored the consistent progress in the Indo-Russian relationship amid global uncertainties. He expressed eagerness for PM Modi's visit to Russia, envisioning discussions on pertinent bilateral issues and the future prospects of their relationship. While acknowledging India's busy political calendar due to the upcoming parliamentary elections, Putin conveyed his optimism that the strong, friendly bonds

between both nations would persist, regardless of the political changes following the elections. In the context of the Ukraine conflict, India has advocated for dialogue as the pathway to resolution. Maintaining dialogue with both Putin and Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, Prime Minister Modi assured India's commitment to contributing toward a peaceful resolution. India's stance has been one of non-alignment with any camp against Moscow, notably continuing to procure Russian oil despite global criticism and sanctions against Russia. External Affairs Minister Dr. Jaishankar highlighted India's commitment to its citizens' welfare, echoing PM Modi's directive to prioritize India's interests while engaging with the world. He emphasized India's stance on securing beneficial deals for its people amidst energy price fluctuations and questioned the disparity in ex-



pectations between Europe's energy needs and India's actions. The minister reiterated that every nation pursues deals favoring its citizens, and India's actions aligned with this principle. This stance reinforced India's insistence on safeguarding its people's interests while engaging in global relations. Overall, Putin's positive sentiments toward India's electoral process, coupled with India's stance on resolving conflicts through dialogue and prioritizing its national interests, underscore the evolving dynamics of India's international relationships and its commitment to maintaining sovereignty in decision-making.

AAP claims the Centre's rejection of Delhi's Republic Day tableau is a political maneuver



The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) leveled allegations against the BJP-led Centre, asserting that it deliberately obstructed the Delhi government's intention to present its healthcare and education models at the Republic Day parade. Priyanka Kakkar, the party's chief national spokesperson, emphasized that the exclusion of Delhi's tableau lacked justification, deeming it a politically motivated decision. Kakkar emphasized the absence of clarity regarding the rejection, claiming that the Centre's move was primarily driven by political agendas. She highlighted the desire of the Delhi government to showcase its strides in education and healthcare, contrasting it with the continuous inclusion of BJP-governed states like Assam, Gujarat, and

Uttar Pradesh in the parade over the past five years. Additionally, Punjab's Chief Minister, Bhagwant Mann, condemned the BJP for omitting the state's tableau from the Republic Day parade. Mann went on to express his concern, suggesting that this exclusion could be a step toward erasing the mention of 'Punjab' from the national anthem, portraying it as a deliberate attempt to undermine the state's representation and significance. In summary, both the AAP and Punjab's Chief Minister criticized the BJP-led Centre for what they perceive as a deliberate omission of Delhi and Punjab's representations from the Republic Day parade, viewing it as a political maneuver aimed at sidelining certain states' contributions and identities.

FLOOD

Floods in Argentina sweep away new bridge, causing panic among villagers

Massive flooding in northern Argentina led to a dramatic scene where torrential waters washed away an entire bridge, causing panic among local residents. In Catamarca province, video footage captured the surging



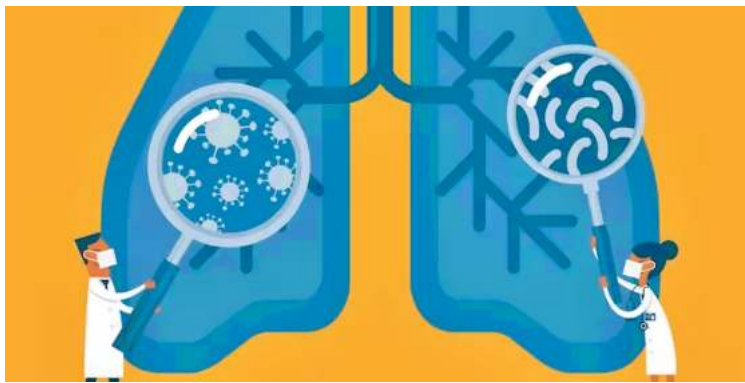
Rincon River after days of relentless rainfall. Suddenly, a forceful wave of water, mud, and rocks collided with the town's only bridge, lifting it off the road and into the river. Onlookers reacted with horror as the bridge vanished into the deluge, leaving less than 600 inhabitants of Rincon cut off from neighboring areas.

This bridge, inaugurated just over a month prior, was crucial for connectivity. Government officials confirmed the loss of another bridge due to the flooding, prompting the mobilization of the Civil Defense Force to aid affected residents in Rincon and surrounding areas. Fortunately, no casualties have been reported so far.



Indian researchers identify gene that helps TB bacterium survive in human body

Researchers at the Indian Institute of Science (IISc) have made a significant discovery in the fight against tuberculosis (TB). They have identified a gene that plays a crucial role in the survival and persistence of *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* (Mtb) within the human host. This finding, published in *Science Advances*, could lead to new strategies for combating the disease that remains one of the top 10 causes of death worldwide. The research team, led by Amit Singh, Associate Professor at the Department of Microbiology and Cell Biology, focused on understanding how Mtb can remain dormant in the body for extended periods. Mayashree Das, a PhD student involved in the study, explained that while the immune system can often de-



tect and eliminate Mtb, the bacterium has developed ways to hide and persist in oxygen-poor regions of the lungs, evading both the immune response and TB medications. Singh's group cultivated Mtb in a Bio Safety Level-3 facility at IISc's Center for Infectious Disease Research, examining the bacterium's reliance on iron-sulphur clusters. These clusters are vital for various cellular processes, including respiration and energy production, which enable Mtb to survive the hostile environment of the

lungs and cause infection.

The researchers discovered that the production of these iron-sulphur clusters is primarily controlled by a single gene known as *IscS* under normal and low-oxygen conditions. However, when the bacterium is under oxidative stress, another set of genes, the *SUF* operon, is activated to meet the increased demand for new clusters. With continued research, the insights gained from the IISc study could eventually lead to the elimination of TB as a global health threat.

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

The Antarctic region, home to a diverse array of wildlife, is facing an imminent threat as experts warn that the highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), also known as bird flu, is poised to spread further, potentially wreaking havoc on species unexposed to the virus. The H5 strain, responsible for the deaths of hundreds of millions of birds globally, was first detected on October 8 in a brown skua on Bird Island, signaling the virus's arrival in the southernmost reaches of the planet. This alarming development was reported by OFFLU, an expert group from the World Organisation of Animal Health and the U.N. Food and Agriculture Organisation. The same strain was concurrently found in fulmars and



albatrosses in the Falkland Islands, raising the alarm for the 48 bird species and 26 marine mammals residing in Antarctica. The dense colonies of these animals, including thousands of pinnipeds and hundreds of thousands of birds, create an environment ripe for rapid virus transmission and potentially high mortality rates. The situation is particularly dire for elephant seals in South Georgia, which may have contracted the virus from their counterparts in South America, where significant die-offs have occurred.

Climate Change

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



After enduring a December that marked one of the coldest in its recorded history, China is now facing the prospect of another extreme shift in weather patterns. According to senior climate experts, the nation should prepare for a significant increase in both temperatures and extreme weather events in 2024, a direct consequence of the El Nino phenomenon. Zhou Bing, the chief expert at China's National Climate Center, has indicated that the upcoming year could surpass previous heat records, with extreme weather becoming more frequent and intense. "2024 may be hotter and it could also be a year when extreme weather may become more frequent and powerful," Zhou stated in a report broadcasted by CCTV.

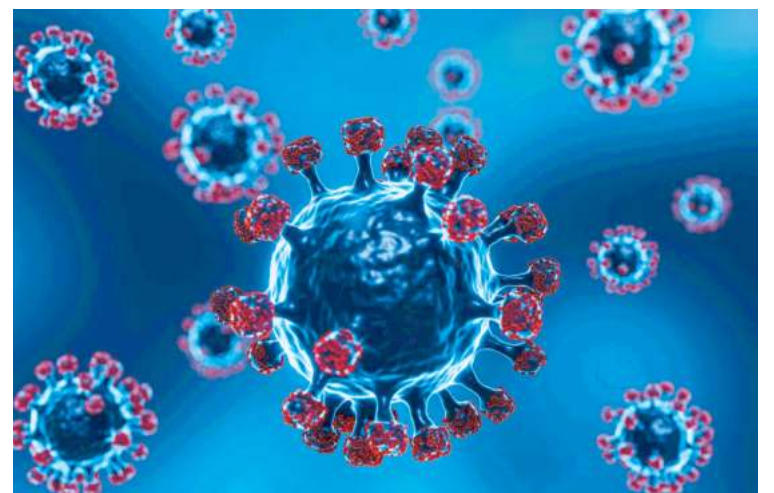
The past summer was a testament to the changing climate, with Beijing experiencing unprecedented heatwaves, while a township in China's northwest recorded a scorching 52 degrees Celsius (126 Fahrenheit), the highest temperature ever documented in the country. Additionally, typhoons have led to record-breaking rainfall in northern regions, resulting in severe flooding and widespread damage. El Nino, a climate cycle occurring every two to seven years, is characterized by the warming of ocean waters in the central and eastern tropical Pacific. As China grapples with these climatic challenges, the focus on enhancing climate resilience and preparing for more frequent and severe weather events has never been more critical.

JN.1 Covid variant more transmissible but not causing severe infections: Expert

The new coronavirus sub-variant, JN.1, is more transmissible and is spreading rapidly but is not causing severe infections, said former AIIMS director Randeep Guleria on Saturday. He also said that the new Covid variant is becoming more dominant. "It is more transmissible, it is spreading more rapidly, it is gradually becoming a dominant variant as far as Covid-19 is concerned, in the US, Europe, and we are seeing more cases in India as well," the senior pulmonologist told news agency ANI. However, he also said that the data suggests that the new variant is not causing severe infections and hospitalisation.

SYMPTOMS AND PREVENTION

Talking about ways to remain healthy and prevent catching the new sub-variant, Dr Guleria urged people to indulge in Covid-appropriate behaviour. "Wash your hands regularly. Cough into your armpit or into a tissue so you can avoid spreading the infection to others. Avoid going to crowded places,



especially if you have a fever, cough and cold," the health expert said. He also asked people with comorbidities like diabetes and chronic respiratory diseases, and those in the older age group, to wear face masks when out in public. Talking about the symptoms, Guleria said, "Most of the symptoms are predominantly of the upper airways like fever, cough, cold, sore throat, running nose and body aches."

NEW COVID VARIANT IN INDIA

JN.1, a descendant of the Omicron lineage and has been classified as a 'variant of interest' by the World Health Organization, has become one of the fastest-spreading viruses in the last

few weeks.

In India, the first case of JN.1, which is a lineage of Omicron, was found in a 79-year-old woman in Kerala. As many as 22 cases of the Coronavirus sub-variant JN.1 were reported across the country until December 21, as per central government sources. Out of the 22 JN1 cases, 19 have been traced in Goa and one each in Kerala and Maharashtra. Details of one case is yet to be revealed by the authorities.



The Indian government requested Apple to mitigate the effects of hack warnings

In October, Apple cautioned Indian opposition figures about potential government hacking of their phones, leading Prime Minister Narendra Modi's administration to swiftly urge the tech giant to moderate its alert, as per the Washington Post. Sources, not disclosed, indicated that Indian officials summoned Apple's representatives to dilute the impact of these warnings, pressing for alternative explanations. An Apple security expert was called in from overseas

for a meeting in New Delhi, where efforts were made to devise alternative reasoning for the alerts. Both Apple and India's Ministry of Electronics and Information declined immediate comment on the matter. The Indian opposition accused Modi's government of attempting to hack the phones of senior opposition figures who had received cautionary messages from Apple. Screenshots shared on social media by some lawmakers displayed notifications quoting Apple's



belief in the recipients being targeted by state-backed attackers aiming to remotely breach their iPhones. Apple, however, previously

clarified that they did not specifically attribute these threat notifications to any particular state-sponsored entity.

Capsule News

OnePlus 12 is coming to India

The OnePlus 12 is coming to India, something that the company has already confirmed via its social media channels. The premium flagship phone will launch on January 23, but the event is still almost a month away. Over the years, OnePlus has gradually increased the price of its premium phones by a few thousand rupees and the same is expected to happen with the OnePlus 12 as well.

After an appeals court lifted the US ban, Apple restarts watch sales

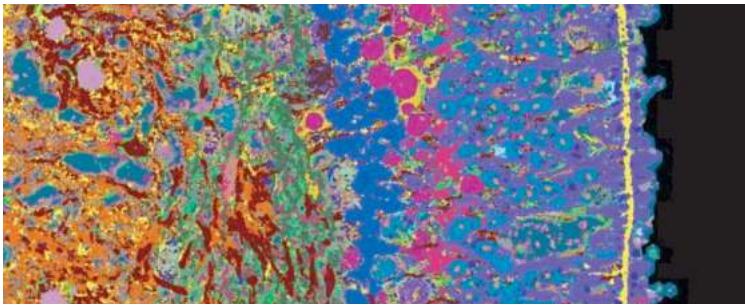
Apple Inc. announced the reinstatement of its latest smartwatch models for sale in its US retail stores following a favorable court ruling in a patent dispute, temporarily lifting the ban that impacted its \$17 billion business. The company declared the re-entry of Apple Watch Series 9 and Ultra 2 in physical stores on Wednesday and online sales resuming by noon Pacific time on Thursday. The US International Trade Commission (ITC) had prohibited the import and sale of these products after siding with Masimo Corp., a medical device manufacturer, in a patent

infringement case. However, an appellate court in Washington issued an interim stay on the ITC's decision, allowing Apple to seek a full appeal. Apple expressed its dedication to developing user-centric health technologies and acknowledged the US Court of Appeals' decision to pause the exclusion order while considering their appeal request. The watches will gradually return to Apple's approximately 270 retail locations across the US starting Wednesday, with wider availability expected by Saturday.



The ITC had imposed the sales ban in October, affecting models that included blood-oxygen measurement features. Apple ceased sales in December, aiming to comply with the order. The company awaits approval for a software update aimed at resolving the issue, submitted for consideration by US customs by January 12.

Examining the human eye's retina: A comprehensive view



Scientists in Basel and Zurich work on a high-resolution human retina atlas, visualizing 50+ proteins concurrently using an advanced method. This technique illuminates retina development and function. The atlas aims to identify cell types, genes, and proteins in human tissue, including organoids, for understanding embryonic development and disease causes. Organoids offer

manipulation for studying healthy tissue and diseases. The imaging method, 4i, showcases 53 proteins in human retinal organoids, detailing cell functions and gene expressions. Researchers share findings on retinal development via EyeSee4is, envisioning similar mapping for diverse tissues, potentially aiding disease studies like retinitis pigmentosa.

Discovery

Studying the combination of RNA and DNA to explore the origins of life on Earth



The search for life's origins focuses on RNA and DNA synthesis prebiotically, aiming to understand chimeric sequence roles. The RNA World theory suggests RNA's role in DNA evolution, but challenges arise due to early Earth's lacking components. Krishnamurthy's study proposes RNA-DNA hybrids creating unstable duplexes, catalyzing RNA/DNA replication. These chimeras suggest a

simultaneous RNA-DNA appearance, diverging from RNA World's sequential model. Synthetic molecules like TNA, akin to RNA, aid this cross-pairing, supporting RNA-DNA emergence. Thermodynamically, unstable chimeras transition to stable RNA/DNA, offering insights into life's chemical beginnings. Further research must align with prebiotic Earth's available ingredients, validating these reactions' plausibility.

Submarine Drone

The initial Orca submarine drone by Boeing has been handed over to the US Navy

Boeing has handed over the initial Orca Extra Large Uncrewed Undersea Vehicle (XLUUV) to the U.S. Navy after completion of acceptance trials, delayed by discrepancies from its prototype and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. The autonomous submarine, renowned as "Orca," boasts cutting-edge abilities for prolonged, critical undersea missions, vital for maritime dominance in contested waters. Undergoing extensive testing with the Navy, the Orca, a product of over a decade of Boeing's innovation, has displayed its unique capabilities in



maneuverability, both above and below the water's surface. Boeing plans to deliver four more Orcas to the Navy, concluding with the last one in June 2024. Weighing 80 tons and spanning 85 feet long, the modular Orca features an expandable payload section, supporting up to eight tons. Designed to accommodate

diverse mission needs, it's equipped for mine deployment, surveillance, and potential future adaptations for varied tasks. Propelled by a hybrid diesel-electric system, its silent, prolonged underwater capabilities mark it as a valuable asset for the Navy's operations, enhancing their capabilities significantly.



'Bharat rice' coming soon, to retail at discounted rate of Rs 25/kg: Report

The government is considering the introduction of 'Bharat rice' at a discounted rate of Rs 25 per kilogram as part of its efforts to tackle the escalating prices of essential food items leading up to the upcoming general elections next year, according to a senior official quoted in a livemint.com report.

The move follows the successful implementation of discounted rates for 'Bharat atta' (wheat flour) and 'Bharat dal' (pulses).

The proposed Bharat rice will be offered at a discounted rate and may be made available through government agencies such as the National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India (Nafed), National Cooperative Consumers' Federation of India Ltd (NCCF), Kendriya

Bhandar outlets, and mobile vans.

Tackling cereal inflation

The decision comes amidst a significant surge in the all-India average retail price of rice, reaching Rs 43.3 per kilogram, reflecting a 14.1 per cent increase from the previous year.

"There is always one motive: curtailing prices and, thus, inflation," said the official quoted in the livemint.com report.

At present, the government provides Bharat wheat flour and chana dal to consumers at concessional rates of Rs 27.50 per kilogram and Rs 60 per kilogram, respectively.

These products are distributed at over 2,000 retail points. The process of selling Bharat rice is expected to follow the same model as that of Bharat dal and atta.



In recent months, the government has taken several measures to stabilise the prices of essential food grains, including the ban on non-basmati rice exports and the imposition of an export floor price for basmati rice.

The Food Corporation of India (FCI) has also offered rice under the Open Market Sales Scheme (OMSS) to increase its availability in the domestic market.

It may be noted that cereal prices witnessed a 10.3 per

cent rise in November, contributing to an overall food inflation of 8.7 per cent, up from 6.61 per cent in October. This increase in food inflation is a significant component of the overall Consumer Price Index (CPI). Devendra Pant, Chief Economist at India Ratings, told the publication that the subsidised food grain initiative indicates economic growth figures may not accurately represent the situation at the bottom of the income pyramid.

LTC claim rules relaxed for central gov employees

The government has recently introduced relaxed rules for claiming Leave Travel Concession (LTC) for central government employees. The Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances, and Pensions of the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT) issued an office memorandum on December 21, highlighting significant changes in rules related to the time limit for submitting LTC claims. This move aims to streamline the reimbursement process for LTC (Leave Travel Concession) journeys. Ministries, departments, and subordinate or attached offices now have the authority, with the concurrence of financial advisers, to admit reimbursement claims for LTC journeys without the need to refer to the Department of Personnel and Training (DoPT).

CREDO IPO

Credo Brands Marketing disappoints on market debut as shares list at Rs 282

Credo Brands Marketing (Mufti Menswear) had a subdued debut on December 27, as its shares were listed at Rs 282.35 on the National Stock Exchange, representing a marginal premium of 0.83 per cent over the IPO price of Rs 280. The public issue, amounting to Rs 550 crore, garnered significant attention during the subscription period from December 19 to 21, reaching a subscription rate of 51.85 times.

The response from retail investors was particularly strong, with their portion being subscribed 19.94 times, and non-institutional buyers also showed solid interest, subscribing 55.52 times. The qualified institutional buyers (QIBs) portion saw an impressive oversubscription of 104.95 times, contributing to the overall subscription of 51.85 times. Commenting on the weak market listing, Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth, Swastika Investment Ltd, said, "Credo Brands, the company behind the Mufti brand, made a lukewarm debut on the stock markets, listing at Rs



282 per share, almost flat compared to its IPO price of Rs 280. This lackluster performance falls short of pre-listing expectations." "Despite the disappointing listing, Credo Brands still possesses its core strengths, including a strong brand, a wide distribution network, and consistent financial performance. However, the flat debut highlights the potential risks associated with the highly competitive market, seasonality, and current market sentiment," Nyati noted. "Given the uncertain outlook, a cautious approach is warranted, and investors may consider exiting their holdings, but long-term investors with high-risk capacity may hold their position by keeping stop loss," she added. Credo Brands Marketing Limited, incorporated on April 29, 1999, is known for its casual clothing for men under the flagship brand "Mufti."

Information Technology (IT) major Wipro filed lawsuit against former chief financial officer Jatin Dalal

Information Technology (IT) major Wipro has filed a lawsuit against its former chief financial officer Jatin Dalal, who joined global rival Cognizant this month after his appointment was announced in September.

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The legal proceedings were initiated by Wipro at a civil court in Bengaluru, reported The Times of India. Following the initiation of the suit by Wipro, Dalal promptly submitted an application and asked the court to refer the matter to arbitration.

All about the legal proceedings

While the exact reason behind the legal proceedings remains unclear at the moment, the report suggests that the arguments from both parties have been heard, and a hearing has been scheduled for January 3. At the hearing, the court is expected to pass an order on whether the matter should be referred to arbitration.

It may be noted that arbitration is a dispute resolution process that employs an arbitrator rather than a judicial



court. This approach is typically utilised when specified in the employment contract. The initial hearing for the case took place on November 28. Subsequently, in early December, Dalal submitted an application under Section 8 of the Arbitration and Conciliation Act of 1996. This section empowers the judicial authority to instruct the involved parties to proceed with arbitration. Wipro has not yet issued a public statement on the matter. Jatin Dalal, now part of Cognizant, brings over two decades of experience from his tenure at Wipro. He is expected to relocate to the

US or UK upon completion of visa formalities in his new role at Cognizant.

At Cognizant, Dalal reports to Ravi Kumar S, Cognizant's Chief Executive Officer, and is tasked with overseeing Cognizant's worldwide financial planning and analysis, accounting and controllership, tax, treasury and internal audit, corporate development, investor relations and enterprise risk management functions.

After serving as Wipro CFO from 2015 and taking on additional responsibilities as president from 2019, Dalal left the company on November 30, 2023.

Education

Visva Bharati researchers name new plant growth-promoting bacteria after Tagores

In 1906, Rabindranath Tagore, who would become India's first Nobel Prize winner seven years later, sponsored three young men from Santiniketan to study agriculture and dairy farming at the University of Illinois in the USA.

Among them was his eldest son and second child, Rathindranath Tagore, an agriculturist, architect, writer, painter and carpenter. He would later become a genetics teacher and even a VC at Visva-Bharati University after it became a Central University.

The intention was for these young men to apply the knowledge gained during their agricultural sciences education to contribute to rural reconstruction in India upon completing their higher studies.

At that time, Rabindranath Tagore was looking towards a major rural reconstruction project, that of Sriniketan, a locality next to Santiniketan and now home to the second campus of Visva-Bharati University.

In 1909, the trio of graduates came back equipped with advanced training in agriculture and animal husbandry. They started to work together with the villagers to integrate scientific methods for implementing progressive agricultural practices.

Gradually, the elder Tagore's vision to develop Sriniketan with scientists, economists, sociologists and technicians along with villagers was realised.

Around 114 years later, six microbiology researchers from Vishva Bharati



University, founded by Rabindranath Tagore in 1921, discovered a plant growth-promoting bacteria that could give a big push to sustainable farming practices. Raju Biswas, Arijit Misra, Sandip Ghosh, Abhinaba Chakraborty, Puja Mukherjee and Bomba Dam worked at Dr. Bomba Dam's lab to isolate the plant growth-promoting bacterial species from the rhizospheric soil of an open-cast coal mine in Jharia, Jharkhand.

They named it Pantoea tagorei as a tribute to two

ground-breaking Tagores -- the visionary father Rabindranath Tagore, and his eldest son and agriculturist, Rathindranath.

The study was recently published in the Indian Journal of Microbiology. Arijit Misra, a research scholar involved in the discovery, expressed pride in isolating Pantoea Tagorei. He posted on X: "Proud moment for our lab (Dr. Bomba Dam's lab). Isolated a novel bacteria and named Pantoea tagorei as a tribute to Rabindranath Tagore, first Indian Nobel laureate, and Rathindranath Tagore, an agriculturist. WGS based study for bacterial identification."

The bacterium, officially named MR1 (Mine Rhizosphere), is Gram-negative, short-rod, and non-motile.

Capsule News

MPhil not recognised degree anymore

The University Grants Commission (UGC) has issued a warning, cautioning students against pursuing Master of Philosophy (MPhil) programmes from universities. This alert follows the cancellation of the MPhil course by the UGC, despite which some universities persist in offering it. The UGC had earlier declared the MPhil degree illegitimate, instructing higher educational institutions not to offer MPhil programmes. Furthermore, universities were directed to halt admissions to the MPhil programme for the academic year 2023-24.

Winter vacation 2023: Schools closed in many states amid cold wave

North Indian states, including Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Jharkhand, and others, are experiencing cold waves and dense fog, prompting authorities to announce winter vacations. The Indian Meteorological Department has warned of potential health impacts due to the low temperatures.

Here's a breakdown of school winter vacations in different parts of India:

UTTAR PRADESH

- Uttar Pradesh has declared a winter vacation spanning approximately 15 days, starting from December 31, 2023, to January 14, 2024
- Authorities have left room for a possible extension if the prevailing weather conditions persist.

DELHI

- Schools in Delhi faced an unexpected closure from November 9 to 18 due to elevated pollution levels
- The winter vacation is scheduled to take place from January 1, 2024, to January 6, 2024.

PUNJAB

- Punjab has streamlined its winter holiday schedule, with schools closing from December 24 to 31, 2023
- Reopening is set for January 1, 2024, although



closures may be reconsidered if cold wave conditions worsen.

HARYANA

- Government and private schools in Haryana will remain closed from January 1 to 15, 2024
- This decision applies to schools affiliated with the Haryana board, as well as those affiliated with CBSE and ICSE.

RAJASTHAN

- Winter break in Rajasthan began on December 25 and is slated to continue until January 5, 2024
- Similar to other regions, extensions are plausible based on the evolving weather conditions.

JHARKHAND

- Jharkhand has mandated school closures from December 26 to 31 as part of its winter break
- A potential extension is under consideration if there is no improvement in the prevailing weather.

Bihar grants government employee status to around 3.5 lakh contractual teachers

The Bihar Cabinet on Tuesday decided to give government employee status to around 3.5 lakh contractual (Niyojit) teachers

In a significant move, the Bihar Cabinet, chaired by Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, has decided to grant government employee status to approximately 3.5 lakh contractual (Niyojit) teachers in various government-run schools across the state. The announcement was made by S Siddharth, Additional Chief Secretary (Cabinet Secretariat), who addressed reporters after the cabinet meeting held on Tuesday.

The state Education department proposed the initiative, which received approval during the meeting. According to Siddharth, these contractual teachers, serving in state-run schools for several years, will soon be designated as 'exclusive teachers' with government employee status once the state government issues the notification. **COMPETENCY TESTS TO BE CONDUCTED**

He explained that the exclusive teachers must undergo competency examinations to maintain their government employee status. The competency tests,



yet to be conducted, will determine whether these teachers meet the criteria set by the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC). Those who do not pass the examination will have their fate decided by the state government at a later stage. Each teacher will be given three chances to clear the competency examination. Siddharth emphasised that their salary structure will remain unchanged after the notification, but revisions will be made according to BPSC guidelines only after successfully clearing the competency tests.

The total number of contractual teachers in Bihar is approximately 3.5 lakh,

making this decision a significant one as contractual teachers have been advocating for government employee status for several months.

In addition to this decision, the Cabinet also approved Bihar's new 'Tourism policy.' Under this policy, the government aims to develop world-class tourism infrastructure in the state. Financial assistance will be provided to promote hotels, restaurants, resorts, and tourist facilities at various locations, including those along highways. The policy also includes provisions for the development of camping sites and adventure sports facilities.

Campus News



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ENTERTAINMENT

Saif Ali Khan wanted to play Vijay Sethupathi's role in 'Merry Christmas'

Speaking to Pinkvilla, Raghavan revealed, "What happened is that I had met Katrina, casually after Andhadhun and we were discussing of doing something. And I had this story and as I began, I said, 'okay. She will be fab in this. Who's the guy?' Then I went through the usual set; our whole lot. I was trying to compare. Either they (Katrina Kaif and the other actor in question) have done something. And I wanted a very unique kind of a pairing because that's the story requirement. One should not get a baggage from either of them that, 'What are these

two people about', and so on."

Katrina Kaif then insisted Raghavan to reveal the actor's name who wanted to be a part of Merry Christmas, post which the filmmaker stated, "So I met Saif Ali Khan. He was a little upset that I told him no. But that time, I had not cast Vijay Sethupathi. I just said that, 'I want something fresh. I don't know what I am looking for'".

Elaborating about the fresh pair of Katrina and Vijay, the director mentioned during the same interview,



"I thought that this is very interesting and this odd-ball combination will make people curious. And I myself was curious. With any regular pairing, I could sort of imagine a certain movie. Here, I did not know it myself. So the excitement was there".

Salman Khan celebrated his 58th birthday with his close ones and niece Ayat

Salman Khan turns 58 years today, December 27, 2023. The superstar rang in the special day with his close ones and cut the cake with niece Ayat. His close friend, Bobby Deol, was also present. In fact, Deol took to his Instagram to share glimpses from the celebrations. Salman Khan rang in his 58th birthday on December 27. The actor celebrated his birthday with his niece, Ayat. He arrived at Kalina airport late at night and also greeted the paparazzi with folded hands.

He then headed straight to Aayush and Arpita's residence, where the entire family came together to ring in his birthday. A three-tier cake was also cut for Ayat, and



everyone joined in to celebrate both the superstar and his niece's birthday together. **BOBBY DEOL WISHES 'MAMU' SALMAN, SHARE GLIMPSES FROM THE PARTY**

Bobby Deol took to his Instagram to share glimpses from the party. He shared two photos with his 'Race 3' co-star Salman Khan with the caption, 'Mamu, I love

you.

Salman Khan was recently seen in 'Tiger 3', which turned out to be a super hit at the box office. He reprised his role as agent Tiger. He will reportedly be working on 'Tiger vs Pathaan' next, where he will share screen with none other than Shah Rukh Khan. He is also currently hosting 'Bigg Boss 17'.

Shruti Haasan and boyfriend Santanu Hazarika react to wedding rumours

Shruti Haasan and her boyfriend Santanu Hazarika often share loved-up pictures on their social media pages. Recently, Orry AKA Orhan Awatramani claimed that the two are married, which went viral on social media. Soon, reports suggested that Shruti had been secretly married to Santanu for a while. The two have issued clarification on their respective social media pages regarding their relationship status. Shruti Haasan is in a live-in relationship with her boyfriend Santanu Hazarika in Mumbai. In an interview with IndiaToday.in, she



called him her best friend. Recently, Orry conducted an Ask Me Anything session on Reddit in which he called Shruti Haasan rude and also mentioned that she's married. Soon, rumours about Shruti being secretly married to Santanu started doing the rounds. The couple put an end to the rumours by issuing statements.

Hollywood

'Parasite' actor Lee Sun-kyun found dead inside a car amid drug use trial

Lee Sun-kyun, who played a pivotal role in the Oscar-award winning film, 'Parasite', was found dead on Wednesday (December 27) morning in Seoul. According to Reuters, he was found unconscious inside a car in a park. Lee made headlines for the past few months as he was investigated over illegal drug use. Lee Sun-kyun was in the news after he appeared for the investigation over illegal drug use allegations. He claimed to have mistakenly consumed drugs at a nightclub. On December 27, he was found dead inside a car, as per Yonhap news agency. His wife contacted the police after she had found what appeared to be a suicide



note. According to Yonhap, Lee's wife found the note after he left the home. Lee Sun-Kyun was born in 1975. He played the role of a rich father in 'Parasite'. He also played lead roles in many South Korean movies including, 'Helpless', 'All About My wife', and several other notable projects.

Lee was also part of Apple TV+'s first Korean original series titled 'Dr Brain'. It is a six-episode sci-fi thriller which released in 2021.

'Dunki' actor Anil Grover recalls being with SRK during brother Sunil's heart surgery

In early 2022, actor-comedian Sunil Grover suffered a heart attack. During his hospitalisation, his brother Anil Grover had to face a challenging situation. In a recent interaction, Anil, who was recently seen in 'Dunki', revealed that he had to meet Shah Rukh Khan on the same day his brother, Sunil Grover, underwent surgery. Anil said, "On January 27, he (Sunil Grover) was going to get operated and that was the day we had our second



sitting with Shah Rukh sir. So I was feeling very torn in that moment. That situation was very tricky for me. That was a very difficult day for me." Anil confessed that he initially struggled to decide whether to go for the meeting or not.

Ronit Roy on marrying wife again on 20th anniversary: Was like a time travel for us

In a heartwarming gesture, Ronit Bose Roy renewed his vows with Neelam on the occasion of their 20th wedding anniversary. The couple, surrounded by their kids and close family members, remarried on Monday, December 25. In an exclusive interview with India Today, Ronit shared that his wife desired to renew their vows, and fate seemed to align with their wishes. The couple had recently inherited a temple and planned a special pooja

for it. They decided to seize the opportunity to commemorate their marriage in this unique and meaningful way. "Earlier, I thought we'd do this on our silver jubilee but Neelam was keen to do it now. Also, my daughter who is studying abroad was here. My son will leave next year for his further studies. My mother, who doesn't like travelling, was also around. It was just meant to be, and so we all went along. It just worked out beautifully," he shared. The 'Kaabil' actor



said that he was quite excited about the wedding and nervousness was nowhere to be felt. He added, "Honestly, even during the first time, I wasn't nervous because Neelam is the kind of woman who instils confidence.

Sports

Virat Kohli fight ends in vain as India surrender to innings defeat in Centurion

India had arrived in South Africa with high hopes of conquering their "final frontier", but Rohit Sharma's men came up with one of their poorest performances in a Test match in recent memory. South Africa hammered India by an innings and 32 runs as the Boxing Day Test finished in just 3 days.

Virat Kohli held the fort with a steely 76 in the third innings, but the rest of the batting unit looked clueless against a fired-up South African pace attack, led by experienced Kagiso Rabada and debutant Nandre Burger, who finished with figures of 4 for 33. India lasted only 34.1 overs in the 3rd innings as they folded meekly in one of the most timid batting shows by the Test team in the recent past. They managed just 131 runs



as South Africa pacers ran riot. It looked like the SuperSport Park pitch played differently for the two teams as the South African pacers got plenty of purchase in both innings. India's bowling attack, largely dependent on Jasprit Bumrah and Mohammed Siraj, looked flat as debutant Prasidh Krishna and all-rounder Shardul Thakur leaked aplenty. KL Rahul's hundred in the first innings was a bright spot, but a collective failure from the batting unit can't be overlooked. On the other

hand, Dean Elgar, playing his penultimate Test, hit a sensational 185 while all-rounder Marco Jansen hit 84 not out as South Africa posted 408 in the first innings. Captain Temba Bavuma, who suffered a hamstring injury, did not bat in their first innings, but Cricket South Africa said on Thursday evening that he would bat, if required in the final innings. However, his services were not needed by the hosts after India's shocking batting display on Day 3.

Novak Djokovic calls 2023 'one of his best seasons' as he ends year as world number 1

24-time Grand Slam champion Novak Djokovic has called 2023 one of his best years in his career. Djokovic ends the year as the world number 1, having become the player with the most Grand Slam titles in the history of the sport.

Djokovic clinched three Grand Slam titles to break Rafael Nadal's record for the Majors won by a men's player, while going level with Margaret Court to become the player with most Grand Slams. The Serb won the Australian Open, Roland Garros and the US Open while losing to Carlos Alcaraz in the final of Wimbledon. As quoted by Eurosport, Djokovic called 2023 one of his best season while saying that he won more matches in some of the other seasons. This is the fourth time that Djokovic won three of the



four Grand Slam titles, achieving the feat in 2011, 2015 and 2021. "One of the best years. I wouldn't say the best, but one of the best. It's definitely one of the best seasons. I had a couple of years, I think three times, that I won three out of four Slams in a season in those years, I won more matches. I mean, I played more tournaments. I was really feeling very dominant on the tour. It's quite different circumstances this year comparing to all the other years because I played, what, 10, 11 tournaments this year," said Djokovic.

Wrestler Vinesh Phogat to return Khel Ratna and Arjuna Awards amid WFI row

Olympian Vinesh Phogat said on Tuesday, December 26 that she would be returning her Khel Ratna and Arjuna Awards as a mark of protest against the ongoing Wrestling Federation of India row. In an open letter to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, shared on social media, Vinesh Phogat expressed disappointment over the treatment meted out to female wrestlers even as they protested against Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, who was accused of sexual harassing wrestlers. Vinesh Phogat highlighted how "oppressor" Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh has managed



to "ridicule" female wrestlers umpteen times even as the top wrestlers in the country protested against the BJP MP and the ex-president of the WFI. Vinesh highlighted that Sakshee Malikkh retired in protest against the newly-elected WFI body and that Bajrang Punia left his Padma Shri Award on the pavement of Kartavya Path in New Delhi as a mark of his stand.

David Warner jumps to Usman Khawaja's defence after ICC rejects his application

Australia batter David Warner has jumped to the defence of opening partner Usman Khawaja after the International Cricket Council (ICC) rejected his application for displaying a message on his bat during their ongoing Test series against Pakistan. Khawaja had put in a request with the ICC to display an image of a dove and an olive branch on his bat and shoes during Australia's Boxing Day encounter against Pakistan at the iconic Melbourne Cricket Ground. His request



was aimed at spreading awareness about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. However, his request was rejected by the ICC. Speaking after the end of Day 1, as quoted by ESPNcricinfo, Warner said Khawaja believes in the statements he's made.

Football

Premier League: Wolves thrilled after sensational Christmas Eve victory over Chelsea

Wolverhampton Wanderers delivered a festive shock to Chelsea, overcoming injury concerns to secure a 2-1 victory in the Premier League on Christmas Eve. The historic match marked only the second time a Premier League game was played on December 24th, with the previous occasion dating back to 1995. The win at Molineux Stadium was particularly sweet for Wolves, who have shown a knack for rising to the occasion against top-tier teams in the ongoing season.

Wolves had headed into the game with injury concerns, but manager Gary O'Neil was thrilled by the steely resolve that was on display. Wolves also extended their unbeaten run at home to six matches with the game as Chelsea succumbed under pressure in a late thriller. The match began with both sides showing intent, but it was Wolves who managed to maintain their composure and capitalize on their opportunities. Despite some early pressure from Chelsea, Wolves' resilience shone through. Mario Lemina opened the scoring with a header from



Pablo Sarabia's corner early in the second half.

As the game progressed, Chelsea struggled to find their rhythm and were unable to convert their chances into goals. Their frustration was evident as they laboured to unlock Wolves' defence. In stoppage time, with Chelsea pushing forward in search of an equalizer, Wolves struck again. Hugo Bueno provided a cross that found Matt Doherty, who took advantage of a poor clearance to slot home Wolves' second goal, effectively sealing the victory. Chelsea did manage to pull one back in the dying moments of the match, with substitute Christopher Nkunku heading in his first goal for the club. However, it was too little too late, and

the muted response from his teammates underscored the sense of disappointment that hung over the Chelsea squad.

"I had a call early this morning from the doctor. Jean Bellegarde not feeling well, Craig Dawson not being 100 percent from his virus," O'Neil said.

"We had to call up young lads to make sure they were available this morning. incredible win with what we had available to us, injuries and three young lads on the bench against a team and squad the size of Chelsea. The result left Chelsea languishing in 10th place in the league table, a stark contrast to the aspirations they held at the start of the season. For Wolves and their fans, it was a perfect Christmas present.