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UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

In 7 yrs of 'double engine' government, UP's gone from 'red tape' to 'red carpet': PM Modi

LUCKNOW: UP has shed the baggage of the past in seven years of BJP's double-engine govt, trading "red tape" for "red carpet" to woo global investors, PM Modi said Monday while launching 14,000 projects collectively valued at Rs 10 lakh-odd crore. "I offer special congratulations to CM Yogi Adityanath. Every Indian is proud that UP has decided to become a trillion-dollar economy," Modi said at UP Global Investors Summit. "Seven to eight years ago, crime and riots were common, and no one would have even believed had anyone said UP would be this developed." The PM said the state's progress was in line with how the world now sees India as "a guaranteed destination for better returns". He held up welfare measures rolled out by his govt for all sections of society as "real social justice" and "real secularism". "Our aim is to ensure nobody is left behind in the welfare stakes," he said, declar-



Today, some may call even Sudama's gift to Krishna a bribe: PM Modi

SAMBHAL: Laying the foundation stone of the Kalki Dham Temple in Sambhal, considered a stronghold of Samajwadi Party, on Monday, PM Modi said "the wheel of time has turned for India and the country is not following others but setting an example for the world." "If temples are being built today, new medical colleges are coming up too. Our pilgrimage sites are being developed and hi-tech infra created in every village, town

the cities," Modi said. "Today, our ancient sculptures and ancient idols are being brought back from other countries, and foreign investment is also coming in record numbers," he added. The PM reiterated his call for 'Ram Rashtra'. "Like Lord Ram, Kalki avatar will determine the course of thousands of years... God has given me the duty to rebuild a 'rashtriya rupi mandir' (the temple that is India)," he added. "Modi is also taking care of those left uncared by

all previous govts," he said. Aim is to ensure nobody is left behind in welfare stakes: PM Modi In a pitch for local products, the PM urged tourists to spend at least 10% of their travel budget on items produced in the areas they visit. "It might not be a big amount for you, but it will transform the economic landscape of that place." Modi referred to the trend of big fat foreign Indian weddings as an "unfortunate tendency" among the affluent, leading to many people back home losing out on potential business. He said "wed-in-India" was one way of contributing to the economy. "Service to the country doesn't mean only sacrificing one's life like Bhagat Singh. You can also work for the country and serve it." CM Adityanath said UP had transformed into "a land of unlimited potential", going from "UP" to "Udyam Pradesh" as the country's emerging growth engine.

Farm unions reject government offer to link MSP and crop diversification

BATHINDA/NEW DELHI: Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha, spearheading "Delhi Chalo" farm protests, rejected Monday a proposal by the Centre for a five-year contract with farmers to procure maize, cotton, and pulses - arhar/tur, masur, and urad dals - at minimum support price through cooperatives and promote crop diversification. SKM's Jagjit Singh Dallewal and KMM's Sarvan Singh Pandher reiterated their demand for a legal guarantee of MSP on 23



crops, following a C2+50% formula of profit over input cost. While Piyush Goyal, one of three ministers to have attended fourth round talks with farmers Sunday, praised govt proposal as "out of the box" and emphasised its potential to encourage crop diversification and

improve groundwater levels in Punjab, Dallewal and Pandher likened to contract farming. After consulting protesters at Shambhu and Khanauri border points between Punjab and Haryana, the two announced plans for farmers to resume their march towards Delhi at

11am Wednesday. Over 20,000 protesters have been camping at these locations. BKU (Ekta Sidhupur) general secretary Kaka Singh Kotda urged farmers from every village in Punjab to converge at Khanauri and Shambhu by Tuesday. Three farm unions - Punjab Kisan Union (Baghi), Sada Eka Jindabad Morcha Punjab, and Kisan Mazdur Naujwan Ekta Punjab - also pledged support to protests, announcing their intention to join at Khanauri & Shambhu.

"Why be so patriarchal, SC asks govt for denying women PC in Coast Guard

NEW DELHI: SC on Monday pulled up Centre for its patriarchal approach by not granting permanent commission to women officers in Indian Coast Guard (ICG) and asked why it cannot treat women officers equal to their

male counterparts in ICG as being done by the Army, Navy and Air Force. A bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said court would intervene to ensure that justice is done and it

would not confine to one case where the officer had approached the court. Court was hearing a plea of Priyanka Tyagi who was denied permanent entry into the ICG. "You speak of 'Nari Shakti'. Now show it here. You are in the

deep end of the sea here. I don't think Coast Guard can say they can fall out of the line when the Army, Navy and Air Force have done it," the CJ told Additional Solicitor General (ASG) Vikramjit Banerjee.

SC to states: Go by our 1996 definition of forest

NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court on Monday directed states and Union Territories to act as per the definition of 'forest' laid down in its 1996 judgment for identifying and preserving forest land and not as per the 2023 amendment to the Forest (Conservation) Act which has allegedly resulted in 1.97 lakh square km land getting excluded from forest area. While passing the order which virtually stayed the amendment to the Forest Conservation Act, a bench of Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra also directed that its prior permission will be necessary for setting up any zoo or safari in a forest. The SC ordered the Centre to issue a circular notifying all state govts and Union Territories about these directions. The bench also directed states to file, by the end of March, reports on forest land identified as per its ruling in the T N Godavarman case. In the 1996 judgement, the SC had held that a deemed forest would not only include 'forests' as understood by the dictionary meaning of the word but also any area recorded as forests in govt records, irrespective of ownership. The court was hearing petitions filed by a group of retired Indian Forest Officers who have challenged the amendment alleging that it has resulted in vast tracts of forests losing legal protection and becoming vulnerable to be used for non-forest purposes. The PIL filed through advocate Kaushik Choudhury alleged that the change in law would "radically undermine India's decades-old forest governance regime" besides being violative of the apex court's ruling by curtailing the definition of forest land that will fall within its ambit. They also alleged that the exemption of zoo and safari from the long list of non-forestry activities would result in such activities being organised inside forests. Additional solicitor general Aishwarya Bhati refuted the allegation and told the bench the amendment was brought to

Whatever we have to do, we do it in broad daylight': Abdullahs

NEW DELHI: The National Conference (NC) has criticised former Jammu and Kashmir chief minister Ghulam Nabi Azad for his "baseless allegations" that NC chief Farooq Abdullah and his son, Omar Abdullah, were consulted by the Narendra Modi-led Centre before the abrogation of Article 370. The party accused Azad of "stooping low" and



making "senseless claims". Farooq Abdullah, who is currently serving as the Lok Sabha MP from Srinagar, expressed his disappointment with Azad's political utterances and referred to them as

mere gossip. "Azad stooping so low in his political utterances only to remain in the political circuit. A leader like him should not be circulating what he himself has termed gossip," he said. Farooq also

reminded Azad of the support he received from the NC when he won his Rajya Sabha seat in 2015. "He has to clarify actually which side of the fence he was on. He has been enjoying every perk even after ceasing to be a member of the Rajya Sabha. The question is, how?" the NC leader asked. Azad had given an interview to a TV channel.

Maharashtra government may table bill giving 10% quota to Marathas today

MUMBAI: The bill for 10% Maratha quota that the Mahayuti govt of Eknath Shinde will introduce on Tuesday would be similar to the Socially and Educationally Backward Classes Act, 2018, introduced by the Fadnavis government, albeit more compact, said people with knowledge of the matter on Monday.



The state faces both Lok Sabha and assembly polls this year amid a sustained agitation by Maratha quota activist Jarange.

The Maharashtra State Backward Class Commission (MSBCC) concluded that the Maratha community is socially and educa-

tionally backward. Its report, though, does not suggest any quota. The quantum of quota is purely a govt decision, said insiders. The state already has a 10% quota for the Economically Weaker Section (EWS) in which the politically influential Marathas are the biggest beneficiaries.

BJP MP Smriti Irani dares Rahul Gandhi to contest from Amethi

LUCKNOW: BJP MP from Amethi, Smriti Irani on Monday dared Congress leader Rahul Gandhi to contest from her constituency, sharpening the potential square off between the two leaders in the run up to the high-stakes Lok Sabha elections due soon. "He left Amethi in 2019, and now Amethi has left him. If he is

confident, then he should contest from this seat without going to Wayanad (Kerala). Let him contest from Amethi," Irani charged, while talking to reporters. On Monday, Rahul led the Congress's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra into Amethi even as the political spotlight moved to Congress's fresh bid to wrest back its erstwhile pocket bor-

ough. Rahul's emergence in Amethi comes amid swirling speculations about Congress fielding him once again from the constituency he lost to Irani by a margin of 55,000 votes in 2019. Irani, who was taking part in a gram chaupal campaign, took potshots at Rahul saying that only empty roads of the district welcome Rahul.

Fresh snow, rain lead to road closures in Himachal Pradesh

KULLU: The upper reaches of Himachal Pradesh received snowfall, while mid and lower hills recorded light rainfall on Monday, blocking roads and triggering power outages in many areas of the state. According to the meteorological centre, Shimla, it snowed in the higher reaches of Kullu, Kinnaur and Chamba districts and in Lahaul Spiti. The meteorological centre said it had snowed 5



to 50 cm in Kalpa and Pooh in Kinnaur, Manali, Keylong, Udaipur and Kukumseri in Lahaul Spiti evening. The high mountain passes, including Rohtang, also received heavy

snowfall. Popular tourist spot, Atal Tunnel, also received around four feet of heavy snowfall, prompting Kullu police to stop all vehicular movement beyond Solang valley. A number of major roads in Lahaul Spiti, including Atal Tunnel to Darcha and Sarchu, Sarcha to Shinkula and Gramphu to Lossar, were blocked due to heavy snowfall. The road from Tandi to Udaipur in Lahaul Spiti was also closed.

HC upholds life terms for 11 in '12 murder of Kerala CPM rebel

KOCHI: Kerala high court upheld on Monday the conviction and life sentences handed down to 11 convicts, three of them CPM members by the Kozhikode additional sessions court in the 2012 TP Chandrasekharan murder case. It dismissed the convicts' appeal. A division bench of Justices AK Jayasankaran Nambiar and Kausar Edappagathu also pronounced six of the convicts - guilty of criminal conspiracy, under IPC Section 120B. It set aside the acquittal of two accused - former CPM Onchiyam area committee member KK Krishnan and former CPM local committee member Geothi Babu - finding them also guilty under Sec 120B, read with IPC Sec 302 (murder). HC directed the convicts to be presented for a hearing on sentencing under this section on Feb 26 and issued non-bailable warrant warrants for Krishnan and Babu. The bench directed nine convicts handed life term (except PK and PV Rafeeq) to be present on Feb 26 to address prosecution's plea for enhanced sentence.

Centre's 5-crop MSP proposal not a lasting solution: Experts

CHANDIGARH/BATHINDA: Agricultural scientists, economists and experts weighed in Monday on Union govt's proposal to buy five crops on minimum support price (MSP) under a legal framework for five years. During talks Sunday night with farmer unions, govt offered to purchase cotton, maize, arhar/tur, masur, and urad through National Cooperative Consumer Federation (NCCF), National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation (Nafed), and Cotton Corporation of India (CCI) for five years. Economist Sucha Singh Gill criticised the proposal, stating that limiting MSP to four or five crops does not

address the crisis comprehensively. He emphasised the need for MSP calculations for all 23 crops to ensure fair prices nationwide. "The way govt is speaking about diversification, it seems it is concentrating only on Punjab and Haryana while paddy is grown in many states. Govt should consider the entire country." For his part, Satish Verma from Centre for Research in Rural and Industrial Development (CRRID) viewed the proposal positively, suggesting that the offer could facilitate crop diversification away from water-intensive paddy cultivation. "If Centre offers a convincing plan, farmers should go for it.

Delhi excise policy case: Arvind Kejriwal skips 6th ED summons, AAP explains

New Delhi

The Aam Aadmi Party on Monday said its national convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal will not appear before the Enforcement Directorate, for the sixth time, claiming that the probe agency's summons is "illegal". The AAP said the ED should wait for the court's decision instead of repeatedly sending summonses to Arvind Kejriwal. This will be the sixth ED summons in connection with the money laundering probe related to irregularities in the Delhi excise policy 2021-22 case that Arvind Kejriwal will skip. The Enforcement Directorate (ED) had approached a city court after Kejriwal skipped multiple summonses. On Saturday, the court had granted an exemption to Arvind Kejriwal from personal appearance for the day in connection with the com-



● "According to the ED, the agency wanted to record Kejriwal's statement in the case on issues like the formulation of policy"

plaint filed by the central agency. The application moved by Arvind Kejriwal's counsel stated that the Budget Session of the Delhi assembly has commenced on February 15 and shall continue till the first week of March. The Delhi chief minister said he will physically appear before the

court on the next date of hearing on March 16, it said. On February 2, Arvind Kejriwal skipped the ED's summons for the fifth time. The summons to the Delhi chief minister followed the fourth summons, which he had skipped on January 18. While skipping the fifth summons, the party called it "unlawful."

According to the ED, the agency wanted to record Kejriwal's statement in the case on issues like the formulation of policy, meetings held before it was finalised, and allegations of bribery.

11th anniversary celebration of M. L Public School today



Prayagraj : The eleventh anniversary celebration of ML Public School, located near Bagaha Chowki village of the area, has been organized in the school premises on Tuesday 20th February.

Giving informa-

tion to this effect, school manager Ved Prakash Gupta said that in the function, along with a colorful cultural program for the children, drama, dance and yoga programs will also be presented by the students of the school. The chief

guest of the function will be ACP Major Ravi Kumar Gupta. All the students and parents studying in Shri Gupta School have been appealed to participate in the function in maximum numbers on the said occasion.

Nagpur 1 of India's hottest cities, getting hotter: Study

Daily maximum temperatures in Nagpur rose by 0.5C, from 39.5C to 40C, between 1969 and 2015, according to a study. Heatwave days when temperatures exceed 45C-increased in this period from six days in 1969 to 12 days in 2015, reports Vaishnavi

Chandrashekhar.

Severe heatwave days-crossing 47C-also increased after 2005, as did the occurrence of night-time minimum temperatures crossing 32C, the study found. "There is a clear trend of rising heat," said Rajashree Kotharkar,

professor of architecture and urban planning at Visvesvaraya National Institute of Technology, who steered the research. The team mapped urban heat using real-time measurements and computer model simulations and street surveys.

Sandeshkhali: SC stays LS privilege proceedings against WB chief secy, DGP

New Delhi: The Supreme Court on Monday stayed breach of privilege proceedings initiated by the Lok Sabha privileges committee against West Bengal chief secretary and director general of police (DGP) among other officials who were accused of misconduct for the life-threatening injuries sustained by Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) MP Sukanta Majumdar while participating in a protest over the Sandeshkhali sexual assault case last week. A bench headed by chief justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud passed the order on an urgent mentioning made by the WB chief secretary Bhagwati Prasad Gopalika and DGP Rajeev Kumar who were



directed to appear before the committee on Monday by an order issued on February 15. Along with them, the committee had also summoned North 24 Parganas District Magistrate Sharad Kumar Dwivedi, Basirhat SP Hossain Mehdi Rehman and Additional SP Partha Ghosh. The bench, also comprising justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj

Misra said, "There shall be stay of further proceedings in pursuance of the official memorandum (OM) dated February 15, 2024," while issuing notice on the petition filed through advocate Astha Sharma. The Court sought response from the Lok Sabha secretariat and posted the matter after four weeks.

Bank liable for fraud ATM withdrawals

Govind Lal Sharma held a Pension Account at State Bank of India's Special Branch in the Court Complex. He was also issued an ATM card for the account. On Feb 12, 2019, at around 4.00pm Sharma received a call from 911412822408, informing him of daily debits of Rs 40,000/ from his account between Feb 4, 2019 and Feb 12, 2019. He was surprised as he had not received any SMS messages regarding the transactions. Upon checking, he



found his ATM card safe in his possession. The following day, he visited the branch with his ATM card and passbook, and discovered that Rs 3,60,000 had

been illegally withdrawn in multiples of Rs 40,000. He reported about the unauthorized withdrawals to the bank officials, and submitted a written

complaint as advised. He was assured that the complaint would be investigated within 15 days. On Feb 14, 2019, he also lodged an FIR with the police. As there was no response even after a month, Sharma approached the Banking Ombudsman who failed to issue any specific directions and instead merely advised the bank to resolve the grievance through its Internal Committee by adopting Standard Operating Procedures (SOP).

'Brave Nupur Sharma': Dutch politician Geert Wilders's message for suspended BJP leader

Netherlands far-right politician Geert Wilders has said he has sent a personal message of support to the suspended Bharatiya Janata Party leader Nupur Sharma, describing her as "brave". Wilders, who had emerged as the shock winner of the Dutch election held in November last year, said he wishes to meet Nupur Sharma someday while visiting India. "I sent a personal message of support to the brave Nupur Sharma, who is threatened by Islamists for years now only for speaking the truth. Freedom-loving people all over the world should support her. I hope to meet her one day while visiting India," Geert Wilders wrote on X on Saturday. Nupur Sharma was suspended from BJP's primary membership in 2022 after a host of



Muslim countries officially objected to her remark against Prophet Muhammad during a television debate. The controversy led to several violent incidents in the country, including the beheading of a tailor in Udaipur, Rajasthan, over the issue of supporting Nupur Sharma. Kanhaiya Lal, 48, was killed with a cleaver inside his shop on June 28, with the assailants claiming that they hacked Lal to death to avenge an alleged insult to Islam. Amid the controversy, Wilders made

headlines in India after he came out in the defence of Nupur Sharma. "Appeasement never works. It will only make things worse. So, my dear friends from India, don't be intimidated by Islamic countries. Stand up for freedom and be proud and steadfast in defending your politician Nupur Sharma who spoke the truth..." he had said.

Wilders had also supported the Indian government's decision to scrap Articles 370 and 35A in Jammu and Kashmir.

Farmers protest: What Centre proposed to farm leaders at key round 4 meeting?

● "The Union minister said there will be no limit on the quantity (purchased) and a portal will be developed for this. "It will save Punjab's farming"

Chandigarh

Union minister Piyush Goyal said that the "innovative" and "out-of-the-box" idea came up during the discussions with the farmers. The central government on Sunday night held the fourth round of talks with the leaders of farmers' unions amid the ongoing 'Delhi Chalo' march demanding unmet promises. During the meeting in Chandigarh, the government proposed some ideas, including a five-year plan, to the farmers' leaders. Following this, the farmers have put a hold on the march, general secretary of Punjab Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee Sarwan



Singh Pandher said. Talking to reporters after a four-hour-long meeting, which commenced at 8.15 pm, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said that an "innovative" and "out-of-the-box" idea came up during the discussions and the farmer leaders would decide on the government's proposal by Monday morning. This was the fourth meeting between union ministers and farmer leaders. They had met earlier on February 8, 12 and 15 but talks remained inconclusive. According to Piyush Goyal, cooperative societies such as the NCCF (National Cooperative

Consumers Federation) and NAFED (National Agricultural Cooperative Marketing Federation of India) will enter into a contract with those farmers who grow 'tur dal', 'urad dal', 'masoor dal' or maize for buying their crop at MSP for next five years. The Union minister said there will be no limit on the quantity (purchased) and a portal will be developed for this. "It will save Punjab's farming, improve the groundwater table, and save the land from getting barren which is already under stress," Piyush Goyal said.

Ex-Congress strategist helped stitch up Ashok Chavan's exit plan

A week ago, former CM Ashok Chavan joined BJP in the presence of deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis, his archival of several years. It was found that Chavan had been planning to join BJP for a long time, and his plan was given the final shape at a meeting with Fadnavis at the residence of political activist Ashish Kulkarni. Kulkarni, once a trusted aide of Shiv Sena chief Bal Thackeray, had ditched Sena, along with Narayan Rane, for Congress. For a brief period, he worked in AICC as a strategist for Digvijaya Singh. During Chavan's tenure as CM, Kulkarni pulled out all the stops to take over Mhada, but when that didn't work out, he left Congress and joined hands with Fadnavis for better political prospects.

Government, Ladakh delegation meet on issues of UT



NEW DELHI: The Centre is holding a meeting with a delegation from Ladakh here on Monday on their key demands, including statehood for the high-altitude region, two Lok Sabha seats and bringing the area under the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution. A 14-member delegation of the Apex Body Leh (ABL) and the Kargil Democratic Alliance (KDA) is meeting the High Powered Committee (HPC) for Ladakh headed by Minister of State for Home Affairs Nityanand Rai.

"We are going to discuss our demands, including statehood for Ladakh and two Lok Sabha seats," Apex Body Leh member Chering Dorjay Lakrook told PTI. The demands of the delegation are statehood for Ladakh, two Lok Sabha seats (one for Kargil and one for Leh), job opportunities for the residents of the Union Territory and constitutional protection under the Sixth Schedule, sources said. Ladakh currently has one Lok Sabha constituency. Ladakh, which no longer has

any MLA constituency, was part of Jammu and Kashmir state. The erstwhile state was bifurcated on August 5, 2019, into two Union Territories -- Jammu and Kashmir, and Ladakh. Article 370, which gave special status to Jammu and Kashmir, was also abrogated on that day. As per the provision of the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganisation Act, Jammu and Kashmir has been made a UT with a legislative assembly and Ladakh has been made a UT without any assembly.

Chhattisgarh security force officer axed to death by Maoist hit team

RAIPUR: A Chhattisgarh Armed Force (CAF) officer was hacked to death by a Maoist hit team in Bijapur district of Bastar on Sunday morning. He was buying vegetables from a local market. Inspector Tijau Ram Bhuvarya was killed barely 100m from the recently set up Jaigur security camp in Kutru (445km from Raipur) in Chhattisgarh, police said. The region is a Maoist hotbed, close to the Maharashtra border, and locations like Gangaloor, Kirandul and Bhairamgarh have seen

many a gun battle. Bhuvarya, head constable Shyam Bihari and some other personnel were out to buy vegetables on Sunday morning. Two Maoists, disguised as villagers, attacked him with axes and fled before anyone could challenge them. By the time help arrived, the inspector had bled to death. He hailed from Bargaon village in Kanker district, around 345km north of where he was posted. Bijapur SP Jitendra Kumar Yadav told TOI that it's the modus

operandi of small 'action teams' of Maoists to execute such attacks in public places, particularly weekly markets. "They attack all of a sudden and flee the spot within seconds," he said. The attack comes barely 10 days after the Maoists' Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee demanded "creation of a favourable environment for talks."

The insurgents were responding to deputy chief minister Vijay Sharma's offer for unconditional talks via video-conference.

Three electrocuted by live wire trap laid by poachers

BHOPAL: Three members of a family were electrocuted by a live wire trap laid by poachers to snare wild boar in Madhya Pradesh's Sidhi district late Saturday. The victims were identified as Prashant Kewat (22), Anil Kewat (32),

and Narmada Kewat (50), who lived in Devri village on the edge of Sanjay Gandhi National Park. They used to catch birds by covering entire trees with large nets tied to bamboo poles, Majhauli police station in-charge Deepak Singh

Baghel. Every evening, they would do a recce to locate the trees where the maximum birds were resting. Then, they would return to place their nets on those trees, Baghel said. "They left home around 3pm Saturday.

'Spoke to him, Kamal Nath not going to BJP', says Madhya Pradesh Congress chief

NEW DELHI: The Congress refuted reports of former Madhya Pradesh chief minister Kamal Nath quitting the grand old party and joining the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) adding that the "rumours" were a "conspiracy". "The rumours that Kamal Nath going to BJP, this is an example of how media can be misused. This was a conspiracy made against Kamal Nath. I spoke to him and he said that all these things are just rumours," Madhya Pradesh Congress president Jitu Patwari said. "I spoke to him and he



said that all these things are just rumours, and he is a Congress person and will continue to be a Congress person. He will continue to have Congress ideology till his last breath. This is his own thoughts," he added. Political circles were abuzz on Saturday amid speculations that

Congress veteran Kamal Nath may jump ship to BJP during his visit to the national capital. Nath's son Nakul Nath, who is the only Congress MP from Madhya Pradesh, has dropped Congress from his social media bio, further fuelling rumours of a potential switch by the father-son duo.

Separately, in Indore, Kamal Nath's staunch supporter and former minister Sajjan Singh Verma also removed Congress from his social media bio. Earlier today, a group of Madhya Pradesh MLAs who support senior Congress leader Kamal Nath arrived in Delhi, sparking speculation that Nath and his son Nakul Nath are planning to join the ruling BJP along with enough state legislators to avoid the anti-defection law. Nath, a nine-time MP from Chhindwara and the current MLA, was removed as the state president.

Protest march case: SC stays proceedings against Karnataka CM

NEW DELHI:

The Supreme Court on Monday stayed proceedings against Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah and others in connection with a protest march held in the state in 2022. A bench of Justices Hrishikesh Roy and P K Mishra issued notice to the Karnataka government and the complainant in the case. The top court also stayed the high court order, which had imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 on him as well as Congress general



secretary and Karnataka in-charge Randeep Singh Surjewala, state ministers M B Patil and Ramalinga Reddy, and directed him to appear before a special court

on March 6. The case was registered against the Congress leaders after they took out a march to lay siege to the then chief minister Basavaraj Bommai's

residence in Bengaluru, demanding the resignation of K S Eshwarappa, who was then the rural development and panchayat raj minister in the southern state. The agitation was staged after a contractor, Santosh Patil, died by suicide accusing Eshwarappa of demanding 40 per cent commission for a public work in his village. According to police, the case pertained to blocking roads and causing trouble to commuters.

Met museum head talks art of repatriation and relevance

It's not easy running one of the world's largest museums with more than 1.5 million works spanning 5,000 years. And certainly not easy amidst heightened scrutiny over looted objects and mounting pressure for repatriation. Max Hollein—who took charge of the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Met), New York as director in 2018 and CEO last July—knows this all too well. Fresh from signing a MoU with India's Ministry of Culture, being "blown away" by the Sanchi Stupa, Jantar Mantar and the Kanheri Caves and ahead of delivering a lecture at the CSMVS on Friday, Hollein remained composed as he sat down for a chat about policing its art and artefacts with a problematic past, recent restitutions and keeping the museum relevant in an age of sensory over-



load. What kind of collaborations do you foresee with the signing of the MoU with India's culture ministry? It marks a continuation of our close collaboration on multiple levels and reflects our mutual willingness to further expand on that partnership. We've done a number of important exhibitions on Indian art. We've run fellowship programs in India for a decade to train the next generation of conservators. The MoU signals our commitment to continue mounting important

exhibitions at the Met, ideally ones that will have strong resonance in India and can also be exhibited in India. We want to foster collaborations between institutions, bring more staff together and develop more fellowship programs focused on educational and cultural exchange. The US government was reported to return over 1,400 artefacts to India last year, including 15 sculptures that were housed at the Met. What is the current status of the repatriation?

MLA alleges Rs 138cr tender for uniforms favours Rajasthan, Gujarat cos

MUMBAI: Allegations of favouritism have surfaced in a Rs 138-crore tender to buy school uniforms by the state school education department. Samajwadi Party MLA Rais Shaikh alleged that to favour textile manufacturers from Gujarat and Rajasthan, tender conditions were drafted in such a way that the Maharashtra-based power loom cloth makers kept out and that there was no reservation for them in the tender. The Maharashtra Prathamik Shikshan Parishad (MSPSP) under the school education department recently floated a tender for 1.2 crore metres of cloth for their free school uniform scheme.



In a letter to CM Eknath Shinde, Shaikh has demanded that the tender be scrapped and that the Maharashtra State

Powerloom Corporation (MSPC) be made the nodal agency for procurement. "Half of the country's looms, i.e.,

13 lakh, are in Maharashtra. However, the school education department wants to buy cloth from Rajasthan and Gujarat textile manufacturers," Shaikh said. A conspiracy was hatched in the tender to keep loom owners of Maharashtra out, he said. The textile manufacturers who wanted to participate in the bid for cloth procurement are required to have productivity of 1 lakh meters per day, a three-year turnover of more than Rs 55 lakh, and a one-time supply of at least Rs 60 lakh, Shaikh said. School education department officials said that they would look into Shaikh's allegation and check if there is any substance in it.

NCW chairperson leads delegation to Kolkata amidst unrest in Sandeshkhali

KOLKATA: A delegation led by the National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma has left for Kolkata ahead of her Sandeshkhali visit. The area has been witnessing unrest for over 10 days as women protesters seek justice against alleged atrocities committed by TMC leader Sheikh Shajahan and his aides. Speaking to ANI, the NCW chief expressed her concern about the injustice done to women and her intention to visit every street and talk to the women to assure them of her support. During her visit, she plans to meet the governor of West Bengal and later meet President Droupadi Murmu. Rekha Sharma stated, "Very disturbing news is coming from Sandeshkhali.

CAPSULES

Maharashtra top cop orders anthem, tiranga drill at Red zone thanas

GADCHIROLI: Sixty-three police posts in Maoist-affected Gadchiroli, located in Dandakaranya in Red corridor, will soon start hoisting the tricolour every day, and sing national anthem twice a day, reports Soumitra Bose. The practice would start from two new frontier police posts-Wangeturi and Gardewara - at the gateway of Maoist headquarters Abujmarh, in a challenge to the guerrillas, who have indoctrinated tribals to spurn patriotism and rebel against the state. Earlier, Maoists in Gadchiroli would damage the tricolour on Independence Day and Republic Day, and not allow tribals to sing the national anthem. State director general of police Rashmi Shukla began practice of singing the anthem at Gardewara post, where tricolour was hoisted in her presence on Saturday. Sixty-three police posts in Gadchiroli, the Maharashtra Maoist-affected zone in the heart of Dandakaranya in the Red corridor, will soon start hoisting the tricolour every day and sing the national anthem twice a day. The move is a challenge to the guerrillas, who have over decades indoctrinated tribals in "liberated zones" to spurn patriotism and rebel against govt. The practice will start from two new frontier police posts - Wangeturi and Gardewara - at the gateway of Maoist headquarters Abujmarh. Earlier, Maoists in Gadchiroli would damage the tricolour on Independence Day and Republic Day, and not allow tribals to sing the national anthem. DGP Rashmi Shukla started the practice Saturday at Gardewara, where the tricolour was hoisted in her presence.

Editorial

Pakistan's destiny: Democracy, autocracy and military interventionism

It has been ten days since the latest general election was held in Pakistan on February 8. For many in Pakistan and outside, the election held amid the spate of violence and the complaints of large-scale rigging and electoral malpractices, as well as the shutdown of the internet, was more of a selection than an election. Rights bodies dubbed the election and its results neither free nor fair, and UN apex human rights bodies, along with the Western friends of Pakistan (UK, EU, and US), expressed their concern about the nature of the election and issues raised regarding the fairness of its results.

The history of Pakistan as a nation-state and its quest for elusive democracy have been fraught. Its fate has been intertwined with less democracy and more autocracy, martial law, and military intervention, overt or covert. For half of its period of existence, Pakistan has been directly ruled by the military generals, and in the remainder period, when it has not been in the direct control of the army, it has enjoyed a disproportionately high role of grandstanding the governance through the remote control.

The Role Reversal

A case in point is the last two general elections held in 2018 and 2024. It is widely believed that in 2018, the favourite of the military to win the hustings was ex-cricketer star turned popular politician Imran Khan and his party Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI), with its symbol the cricket bat. Before the election, in 2017, the steel tycoon turned ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was deposed as Prime Minister for the third time after falling out with the armed forces, and Sharif was banned for life from holding public office after the unanimous judgement of the Pakistan Supreme Court.

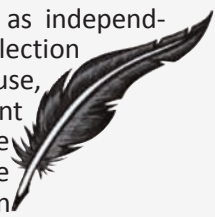
Contrary was the case in the 2024 election.

As Pakistan held elections for the 16th National Assembly on February 8, Nawaz Sharif was back on the high pedestal, the life ban on his holding public office was reversed by the Supreme Court, and the corruption cases were dropped. A pre-poll consensus made Sharif the favourite candidate of Pakistan's military to return as Prime Minister. Contrarily, ex-PM Imran found himself lodged inside the jail under a tsunami of at least 180 criminal charges, convicted for more than 31 years in jail in three distinct cases of Toshkhana, leaking state secrets, and un-Islamic marriage. Khan was also made ineligible to hold public office. Notwithstanding the army's denial of any interference in the election any longer, the writing on the wall was clear well before the election: Nawaz Sharif would take over as Prime Minister once again after the election. He had already been selected, and all that was needed was getting anointed at the auspicious moment.

Attack Jail, Barrack 3, Quaidi No. 804

While all seemed lost for Imran and PTI with the stage set for the coronation of Nawaz Sharif, the longest-serving prime minister of Pakistan, having served a total of more than 9 years across three tenures, for the record fourth term, the Pakistan electorate did something seldom expected of it.

It was an election where Imran's PTI was denied participation in the election as a party; most of its leaders were hounded and stuffed behind bars, and many were forced to leave the party altogether. PTI candidates were deprived of the party symbol cricket bat, and its members were forced to fight the election as independents, thereby tilting the election against PTI specifically because, in a country with 42 per cent illiterate voters, it was the party symbol that helped the voters cast their ballots in favour of their favourite party and the candidate.



How Modi is transforming Indian Navy, step by step

A lot of words have recently been written/spoken about India's naval prowess. The Red Sea crisis, triggered by Houthi anti-ship missiles and Somali pirates targeting commercial ships plying around the Middle East, has created shipping disruptions, harmed global trade and hampered the critical sea lanes of communications. In this backdrop, India's high-profile role as the constable of the Indian Ocean, its ability to carry out the grunt work to ensure freedom of the seas, and its function as the 'first responder' to maritime disasters show New Delhi is ready to pull its weight as the net security provider in the Indo-Pacific. And yet India's actions go much beyond just stewardship of maritime security. A series of calculated steps, a visibly confident and expanding naval presence, and an increasingly forward-leaning posture send an unmistakable message of India's great power ambitions and willingness to push back against bullying from China. India is signalling its rise as a bona fide maritime power. And this surefootedness, backed by a steady rise in capacity and an increasing appetite for burden-sharing, is flowing from the very top. With the British and American fleet getting sucked into the Red Sea crisis where Houthi rebels have wreaked havoc on



maritime cargo with missiles and drones, there has been a sudden and severe rise in piracy in the Arabian Sea and the Gulf of Aden. Terrorists and raiders operating from Somalia are taking merchant traffic hostage, subjecting vessels to attacks, hijacking and harassment. According to some estimates, since 1 December, pirates have caused 17 instances of disruption. These attacks have acted as force multipliers to the string of assaults on merchant traffic by Yemeni rebels that initially targeted Israel-flagged vessels but later expanded their scope to launch indiscriminate missiles and drones on freight passing through the narrow waters of the Red Sea, causing at least 18 shipping lines to either stop or reroute traffic and halve container movement in Suez Canal.

Regardless of whether the pirates are in cahoots with the Yemeni rebels or acting as opportunists to benefit from the security vacuum, the recent spurt in attacks have goaded into action the Indian Navy, which has refused to join the US-led fleet in the Red Sea while dispatching a number of warships to its western coastline in the vast stretch of area between north and central Arabian Sea to the Gulf of Aden, along with deploying drones and patrol aircraft for enhanced surveillance.

According to Reuters, India's unprecedented naval deployment for anti-piracy operations includes at least 12 vessels, among which two front-line warships are stationed at the Gulf of Aden, and the taskforce has so far investigated more than 250 commercial ships and small boats in the

last two months, boarding more than 40.

Compared to the constricted waters of the Red Sea, India patrols a significantly bigger nautical area to safeguard mercantile traffic — be it Indian or of any other flag.

As Harsh V Pant and Kartik Bommakanti of ORF write in Business Standard, "The region in which India's surface vessels are currently deployed to combat piracy has a surface area of 2.5 million square nautical miles, making it very daunting to patrol for any single navy. The massive deployment is paying off. On 5 January, for instance, the Indian Navy rescued all 21 crew members, including 15 Indians on board MV Lila Norfolk bulk carrier headed for Bahrain less than a day after it had received a report that the Liberian-flagged vessel had been hijacked about 460 nautical miles off Somalia. A few days later, on 18 January, INS Visakhapatnam, undertaking anti-piracy patrol in the Gulf of Aden, responded to a distress call by Marshal Island-flagged bulk carrier MV Genco Picardy that was bombed by a drone south of Port Aden. Specialists from the Indian Naval Explosive Ordnance Disposal team boarded the vessel, brought the fire under control, and rescued 22 crew members including nine

Indians. There were zero casualties, and the ship was cleared for transit. The spate of attacks continued with INS Visakhapatnam again pressed into service to respond to a distress call from a British oil tanker in the Red Sea, MV Merlin Luanda, that was aflame after being struck by a Houthi missile on 26 January. A team from the guided-missile destroyer embarked on the vessel, doused the fire after a six-hour battle and rescued 22 Indians and 1 Bangladeshi crew on board.

In late January, patrol vessel INS Sumitra carried out twin back-to-back rescue missions east of Somalia and the Gulf of Aden. In the first instance on January 28, armed Somali pirates had taken control of Iranian flagged Fishing Vessel (FV) Iman and 17-member Iranian crew were held hostage. According to a statement by the Indian Navy, following the SOPs and coercive posturing, the vessel and her crew were "safely rescued". The following day, INS Sumitra carried out yet another successful anti-piracy operation off the East Coast of Somalia, rescuing FV Al Naeemi and her crew of 19 Pakistani nationals who were held captive by 11 Somali pirates.

On 2 February, INS Sharda liberated FV Omari, an Iranian-flagged vessel, from seven Somali pirates.

84 Grandmasters and counting: The chess revolution in India

In chess, as in other sports, participation can be individual, or as a team. Team performance can be gauged from Chess Olympiad rankings, a biennial event, last held in Chennai in 2022. In the open section, with Russia and China not participating, two Indian teams stood third and fourth, the first two positions being taken by Uzbekistan and Armenia. In the women's section, India was third, behind Ukraine and Georgia. But chess is identified more as an individual sport. The strength of an individual chess player can be gauged through titles, or ratings, both decided by FIDE (the International Chess Federation). As titles go, we have Grandmaster (GM) at the top. Many years ago

(late 1920s, early 1930s), there was an extremely strong chess player named Mir Sultan Khan. He was from Punjab, the Pakistan part. At the time, he beat the best in the world and recently, FIDE posthumously conferred the title of honorary GM on him. It is a different matter that FIDE started titles only in 1950. The number of GMs has increased exponentially and there are over 2000 GMs in the world. The number of Indian GMs has also increased exponentially. India's first GM was Viswanathan Anand, way back in 1988.

Today, as the speech mentions, there are 84 (only Russia and the US have more). Ratings are a parallel measure of strength. The higher, the better. A GM will

have a rating of at least 2500. However, with some 2000 GMs, there is variation in strength within them and those with a rating above 2700 are loosely referred to as super GMs. The top 10 active Indian chess players have an average rating of 2703, bettered only by the US. For women, the corresponding rating is 2429, bettered only by China. You might find numbers floating around on the internet.

But check the vintage of those numbers. They might be dated and the Indian track record in chess is changing very fast. FIDE publishes new ratings on the last day of every month. Pending that, we have what are known as live ratings. These can change at the end of the month.

Why is India correct in seeking 'permanent solution' for food security at WTO

Last year, in November, a proposal was set forth to slash trade-distorting farm support among WTO members. Image: Moneycontrol

The agricultural revolution is often considered a great leap forward for humanity as it is believed to have facilitated a settled life from which social and political institutions grew up. However, author-historian Yuval Noah Harari disagrees; he thinks that a shift from foraging to farming ended up with humans working harder, habiting in crowded dwellings, being infected by diseases, suffering from the anxiety of their crops, and serving the feudal class. This might be a never-ending debate, and acknowledging this development as inalterable, the only optimal option is to make agricultural practices, processes, and trade sustainable for the environment—and yet in the greatest good for the greatest number. The World Trade Organisation's 13th Ministerial Conference from February 26 to 29 this year in Abu Dhabi, UAE, can be yet another opportunity to do that. In cooperation with the United Nations system, the WTO, as an organisation, facilitates establishing, revising, and enforcing the rules that govern international trade. The 164-member Geneva-headquartered intergovernmental body accounts for 98 per cent of global trade. The bien-



nial high-level meeting of the 29-year-old body has been marred by the confrontation of the contrary interests of the developed and developing countries (including nations such as India and China).

This time the meeting has varied issues to debate, including fishing, e-commerce, reforms in dispute adjudication mechanisms, etc. However, the most heated one is expected to be on agriculture—here the divide between the developed and the developing is perhaps most prominent.

India's case

New Delhi has been facing pressure for a legal guarantee of the Minimum Support Price. However, as the farmers' protests seek to insist the Indian government domestically, the Cairns Group—an interest group of 19 agricultural exporting countries, comprising Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Indonesia, Malaysia, New Zealand, Pakistan, Paraguay, Peru, the Philippines, South Africa, Thailand, Uruguay, and

Vietnam—has accused India of distorting global food prices and hurting the food security of the other countries through its farm support. They say India's public stock-holding programme is highly subsidised. Last year, in November, a proposal was set forth to slash trade-distorting farm support among WTO members. This aimed to halve the total global entitlement to subsidise. This led to a strong reaction from developing countries like India. Some experts say Cairns Group is trying to "dismantle" the MSP scheme or "reduce its scope". For its subsidies, India is protected by a "Peace Clause"—agreed by the WTO members in 2013 at the ninth ministerial meeting held in Bali—that stipulates that "no country would be legally barred from food security programmes for its own people even if the subsidy breached the limits specified in the WTO Agreement.

on Agriculture". Further, India's per-farmer subsidy is considerably lower than in developed countries; for example, a news report suggests.

Bengal's wake-up call: Seizing the moment or surrendering to fate

Bengal. We all worry about it, but we don't know what to do about it. Bengal. Once the epicentre of Indian intellectualism and revolution is today a meek, silent and servile entity in the geography of India. Bengal, which could once be easily aroused by the call of the Communists, has for the past decade, allowed its spirit to be doused by Mamata's Trinamool Congress. Today Bengal continues its existence as a spineless and speechless community, wanting relief, but not welcoming any opportunity for release! This is the irony of Bengal. This

is their self-made tale. When West Bengal got the opportunity to welcome the BJP in 2021, they let it pass, just as an inefficient defender allows the football ball to score a home goal. Bengal is not just the BJP's worry but should cause anxiety to the whole of India. The illegal Bangladeshis are not even covert in their movements all over the country. With the Trinamool Congress openly welcoming them with the gift of immediate Aadhaar cards, thanks to the benevolence of Mamata Di, their forward migration is ever so easy. Her

gift comes with a caveat. When Assembly elections happen, they must rush back to Bengal from where ever they are, to vote for Didi Mamata! Just now it appears as if New Delhi has long-term plans for Bengal. It is not doing anything alarming in Bengal to caution the people of what is to come. They are allowing some suspense to hang in the air and give some talking points to the people.

Whilst leaders from the Centre are making themselves visible every now and then, the people of Bengal, particularly the

Hindus, are still looking for a Bengali amongst them. Being a very race-driven parochial community, the Bengali feels that it will take him time to develop some more faith in the BJP or feel close to it. So far, BJP sits in the hearts of a bold few, a secretive few and a meek few. Not everyone is courageous enough to express support for the BJP openly, lest Mamata's goons hear of it. The consequences can be dangerous, both for people and property, but the unafraid are often heard saying, 'Mukhe Mamata aar buke BJP'.

Jefferies stops coverage on Paytm until regulatory issues ease



Jefferies Financial Group Inc. has become the first major foreign brokerage to drop coverage on Paytm-operator One 97 Communications Ltd. until the news flow around the struggling Indian fintech major "settles down". The investment bank has moved the stock to "not rated", weeks after lowering it to underperform after the Reserve Bank of India last month ordered Paytm Payments Bank to halt its key opera-

tions, citing non-compliance. Paytm has seen its shares lose more than half of their value since the banking regulator's surprise clampdown amid concerns over the continuity of its business model. "Without a banking license, Paytm's business model will now become similar to pure payment service providers," analysts Jayant Kharote and Prakhar Sharma wrote in a Feb. 18 note. "Paytm's focus will now move to ensuring customer retention, and we believe it will dip"

into its 85 billion rupees (\$1 billion) cash reserves for spends on retaining users, the analysts said. The RBI last week granted Paytm an extension of deadline to wind down much of its business. The company has been given until March 15 to stop accepting new deposits, from Feb. 29 earlier. Meanwhile, the company has tied up with Axis Bank to replace affiliate Paytm Payments Bank to continue its merchant payments settlement operations, allowing it a shot to stay in business.

Quess Corp to split into three listed firms

BENGALURU: Fairfax Financial Holdings-controlled Quess Corp said it will be demerged into three separate listed entities. Quess Corp will focus on workforce management, Digitide Solutions houses BPM solutions, insurtech and HRO business, and Bluspring Enterprises has facility management and industrial services. The demerger enhances strategic focus to accelerate profitable growth, optimal capital allocation strategy for each entity to invest behind its strategic priorities and the ability for each entity to create a compelling investor proposition. Once the process is complete, all



shareholders will receive one additional share for each of the new companies, for every share held in Quess Corp. This process of demerger is expected to take anywhere between 12-15 months. "A one-size-fits-all strategy does not fit all. The decentralized structure at Quess has enabled a pathway for the three demerged entities. So, we saw it neces-

sary to attend to each company with a sharper focus and provide a productive investment thesis to our investors so they're able to make their choices and not get an average of everything. There is no IPO necessary for listing the entities because we'll move the capital which is existing in the main company to the new firms," said Ajit Isaac, chairman of Quess Corp.

Pure Storage is moving firmware, NFS work to India

Pure Storage is revolutionizing enterprise storage by replacing hard drives with more robust and efficient flash drives. Their firmware, developed in India, simplifies operations and adds efficiency. With the introduction of flash modules, Pure Storage aims to make storage man-

agement vastly simpler for customers with varied requirements. Pure Storage founder John 'Coz' Colgrove with his company's engineers in the India office. John 'Coz' Colgrove raises his smartphone and drops it onto the table we are sitting at. Confident that nothing

will happen to it. And nothing does. "You would never do that if it had a hard drive in it," he says. Coz is the founder of Pure Storage, a company that's building ever-powerful flash drives that go into enterprise storage systems. Flash drives are fast replacing hard drives.

CAPSULES

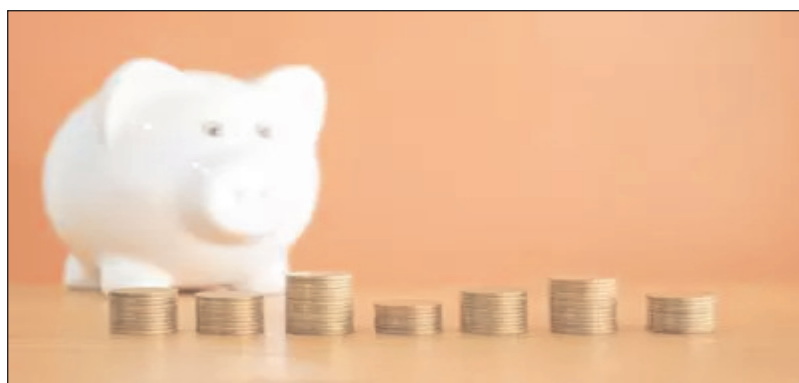
Big consumer divide: Mass market lags, premium end soars

MUMBAI: It's the great consumption divide in India: discretionary spending remains subdued in the mass markets, but the premium end seems to be faring well, an analysis of the commentary made by companies in their December quarter earnings calls showed. Bata India, for instance, said the mass market segment continues to be a "drag" on its overall growth even as its portfolio of premium brands have seen robust demand. Tanishq has seen a slowdown in the sub 50,000 and 1,00,000 categories (in terms of transactions by new customers). And, in the quick service restaurant space, pricey gourmet pizzas seem to be the flavour of the season. "Lower-income households (under 3-5 lakh annually) have been hit the most. High inflation has reduced the ability to spend on discretionary items," said Rishav Jain, MD at consulting firm Alvarez & Marsal. 'Consumer sentiment still subdued' However, discretionary spending of the top three-five crore households (earning over Rs 10-15 lakh annually) is less impacted. Categories such as international travel, premium alcohol, premium beauty and personal care, premium home improvement have performed relatively better. In macroeconomic terms, we call it the K-curve," Jain added. Brands with a good part of their consumers extending to lesser affluent households and deepening their presence to smaller cities have witnessed low or negative same-store sales growth in the past few quarters, analysts said. Companies are struggling to get consumers to transact more, with even the festive season having failed to fuel mass discretionary consumption.

Use systematic withdrawal plans to meet monthly cash flow requirements

Financial planners believe investors can set up systematic withdrawal plans (SWP) from their mutual fund scheme to get a monthly cash flow. This is one of the most tax-efficient ways to meet monthly cash flows and investors could use equity funds, hybrid funds or a mix of the two to meet their needs.

What is a systematic withdrawal plan in MFs? SWP is a feature offered by an open-end mutual fund scheme, where an investor can withdraw a fixed amount of money every month. Typically, on the date which is pre-decided, units from your scheme are sold and the amount is transferred to your bank account. The balance units in the scheme keep growing in line



with the markets. Many retired individuals and senior citizens use this money to get a regular income and meet monthly expenses.

What are their benefits? To start with, an SWP is considered a more reliable tool for monthly cash flows than a dividend. In the dividend plan of

an equity fund, the quantum and frequency of dividend as well as date of dividend are not guaranteed, and it depends on market movements and the profits that are available in the scheme. SWPs are better than mutual fund dividends for regular income as they bring stability of income.

India wants focus on health workers and remittances

NEW DELHI: As trade ministers head to Abu Dhabi for a crucial meeting of WTO next week amid a lack of consensus in key areas, India is seeking to get the over 160 member nations to acknowledge that high cost of remittances are a drain, especially on poor countries, and push for a reduction in charges. It also wants a thrust on telemedicine and building a pool of healthcare professionals to deal with pandemics and natural disasters. On critical areas - agriculture, reform of the dispute settlement system and



fisheries agreement - it's a divided house. While govt is seeking a solution to public stockholding of grains, in other words a free hand in procurement of paddy and wheat, a wide gulf with the US and the Cairns

Group (comprising the likes of Australia, Brazil and Canada) on one side and European Union on the other over a reduction in import duties and subsidies, has resulted in a lack of progress. India is insisting on a finalisa-

tion of the over 10-year old plan to rework the cap on how much countries can spend on procurement at the Abu Dhabi ministerial, while the others are once again seeking to defer the decision by two years. On dispute settlement, the US is holding up a decision, while in fisheries, India and the others are unhappy with expanding the agenda, arguing that the interest of the poor fishermen will be hurt after the developed world and China have reaped the benefits and caused massive damage.

Byju's investors to meet on Friday for board ouster vote

MUMBAI: Come Friday, shareholders of Byju's parent company Think & Learn are expected to gather for a special meeting called by a group of investors to oust the edtech startup's board led by founder Byju Raveendran. To oust the three-member board comprising Raveendran, his wife Divya Gokulnath and his brother Riju Ravindran, majority (50% plus one share) of votes cast should be in favour of the resolution. Raveendran and his family, the largest shareholders with a 26% stake in Byju's, will vote against the proposal. Rules require that two members should be present at the extraordinary meeting (EGM) to form the quorum of the meet. In Byju's case, its articles of association stipulate the presence of its promoter-director at the EGM and if



the person doesn't turn up at the meeting, the EGM can be adjourned by a week. At the adjourned EGM, even if the promoter-director is not there, the shareholders present at the meeting can form the quorum. The group of investors, who have called the EGM and who together own over 25% stake in Byju's, won't be participating in the meeting as they do not have voting rights. This is because they had signed a shareholder agreement that does not give them voting rights.

A source close to Byju's said that three of the dissenting investors were on the board of the company till last year though they didn't have any rights to board seats. Other shareholders own over 45% in Byju's, which was once India's most valued startup.

All the investors individually have a single digit holding in the company, the source said, adding that while investors don't need voting rights to call the EGM, "voting on specific matters is delinked".

Revolutionizing Home Services Landscape in India, Connecting with Reliable Professionals & Nurturing Entrepreneurship Spirit

In the bustling cities of India, where the pace of life never slows down, finding reliable and skilled professionals for home services in India can be a daunting challenge. This is where HomeTriangle, a leading on-demand home services company, is making a significant difference. Founded in 2015 by Ramesh Chincholi and Dharendra Pratap, HomeTriangle emerged from a simple yet profound need to streamline the process of finding dependable, trusted professionals for all household service requirements. hometriangle-management The genesis of HomeTriangle is as compelling as its mis-



sion. The founders, new arrivals to Bangalore at that time, experienced firsthand the challenges of building homes without a robust network of contacts. This struggle extended to routine home maintenance and repair services tasks, where finding local experts often became a tiresome endeavor. Recognizing this gap, Chincholi and Pratap conceptualized

a platform that would seamlessly connect homeowners with a curated network of service professionals, giving rise to HomeTriangle. What sets HomeTriangle apart is not just its comprehensive range of services, but its deeply ingrained ethos of partnership and fairness. Unlike traditional setups where vendors are seen merely as laborers,

HomeTriangle treats every service provider as a partner. This paradigm shift empowers these partners to set their prices and retain their earnings, fostering entrepreneurship and allowing them to build personal brands while delivering exceptional service. Under the leadership of CEO Saritha Shivarudraiah, HomeTriangle has seen exponential growth. Presently, it operates in twenty cities across India, offering nearly two hundred services. This expansion underscores the company's dedication to catering to the diverse needs of homeowners and creating opportunities for skilled professionals. hometriangle-stats

Paytm stocks hit upper circuit, surge by nearly 5% as RBI relaxes deadline

NEW DELHI: Shares of One97 Communications, the owner of Paytm, hit upper circuit on Monday as they surged by 5% in morning trade. The stock rose to Rs 358.55 and Rs 358.35 apiece on the BSE and NSE, respectively. Paytm's recent deal with Axis bank for merchant payment settlements and RBI's extension of deadline to March 15 to wind up operations of Paytm Payments Bank were the reason behind the rally. Recently, One97 Communications shifted its nodal account to Axis Bank from Paytm Payments Bank. to ensure the continuity of Paytm's services, such as Paytm QR, soundbox, and card machine. RBI had instructed customers and merchants of Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL) to shift their accounts to other banks by March 15, thereby allowing PPBL to close most of its operations.

Jasprit Bumrah set to be rested for fourth Test against England: Report



Bumrah is likely to travel to Ahmedabad on Monday via road from Rajkot - a four hour journey

NEW DELHI: India's pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah is set to be rested for the upcoming fourth Test in Ranchi, which commences from February 23, a Cricbuzz report stated. The decision to

rest Bumrah is part of workload management of the Indian team. The Indian team is expected to leave Rajkot for Ranchi on Tuesday and Bumrah is unlikely to travel with the side for the fourth Test. Bumrah's participation in the fifth and final Test in Dharamsala will depend on the outcome of the Ranchi Test, the report further said. Bumrah is likely to travel to Ahmedabad on Monday via road from Rajkot -- a four hour journey. Bumrah, the leading wicket-taker in the series -- 17 -- has

already bowled close to 81 overs combined in the first three Tests in Hyderabad, Vizag and Rajkot. Similar to Bumrah, pacer Mohammed Siraj was earlier rested for the second Test in Vizag. As of now there is no update whether there will be a replacement bowler for Bumrah or not for the Ranchi game. Pacer Mukesh Kumar, who was earlier released from the squad for the third Test to participate in Ranji game for Bengal, is expected to rejoin the team in Ranchi.

Ashwin's wife pens a heartfelt note for star spinner

NEW DELHI: India's premier spinner Ravichandran Ashwin became just the second Indian bowler and ninth overall to pick 500 wickets in Test cricket during the third Test match against England in Rajkot that India won by a huge margin of 434 runs. This was India's biggest-ever win in Test cricket in terms of margin of runs. Ashwin was on 499 scalps at the end of the second Test in Visakhapatnam and completed his 500th scalp with the wicket of Zak Crawley. Ashwin achieved the 500 wickets feat in 98 Test matches, making him the second-quickest in



Test history to the milestone after Sri Lanka's spin wizard Muttiah Muralitharan who achieved the feat in 87 Tests. The other seven bowlers took more than 100 Test matches to get to the milestone. Ashwin is the ninth bowler in Test history to breach the 500-wicket barrier, and the only one from India since the legendary leg-spinner Anil Kumble, who took 619 wickets in 132 Tests. Muralitharan (800), Shane Warne (708), James Anderson (695), Anil Kumble (619), Stuart Broad (604), Glenn McGrath (563), Courtney Walsh (519) and Nathan Lyon (517) are ahead of him in the list of highest wicket-takers in Test history.

Faiz Fazal, Vidarbha's most successful captain, hangs up his boots

NAGPUR: The face of Vidarbha cricket for over a decade. The opener who blunted rival new-ball attacks for as long as one can remember. The elegant left-hander who scripted victories and saved matches with his bat more often than not. The skipper who took his

team to the top of the domestic circuit twice, will walk out on to the field at a match for the last time on Monday. Faiz Fazal, Vidarbha's most successful captain, on Sunday announced his retirement from domestic cricket. Monday, Day 4 of the

Ranji Trophy match against Haryana at the VCA Civil Lines Stadium, will mark the end of an illustrious career spanning over two decades. "Faiz bhai informed us about the decision during the team huddle on Day 1 of the Haryana match.

CAPSULES

From tent to triumph: Yashasvi Jaiswal's rise continues

RAJKOT: The Yashasvi Jaiswal story keeps getting bigger and bigger. On Sunday, the left-handed opener from Mumbai smashed a scintillating double century (214 off 236 balls) - his second on the trot - which included a record 12 sixes, to star in India's 434-run rout of England in the third Test here. Three of those sixes were hit off consecutive balls off James Anderson, arguably the best swing bowler in the history of the game. For a while, it seemed that Jaiswal and his fellow Mumbai young gun Sarfaraz Khan, who was making his Test debut, were batting in the IPL, as the duo added 172 in just 158 balls for the fifth wicket in India's second innings. With India looking for a quick declaration, the duo toyed with England's bowlers. Returning to bat after retiring hurt at 104 the previous evening due to back spasms, 22-year-old Jaiswal unleashed a record-breaking display, putting the England attack to the sword. His feat - becoming only the second batsman in international cricket history to hit 12 sixes in an innings (joining Wasim Akram's 1996 performance against Zimbabwe) - makes his achievement even more remarkable.



BCCI warns players not to put IPL over domestic cricket

NEW DELHI: Not anticipating some players' prioritization of Indian Premier League over domestic cricket, BCCI secretary Jay Shah has asked centrally-contracted players to prove themselves in first-class cricket if they want to be considered for selection in the national side. Shah also warned players that 'severe implications' will follow if they ignore domestic cricket. The secretary pointed out that the board is happy with the IPL's success over the years but asserted on the significance of domestic cricket, saying it has been the 'foundation upon which Indian cricket stands'. "However, there is a trend that has started to emerge and is a



cause for concern. Some players have begun prioritising the IPL over domestic cricket, a shift that was not anticipated. Domestic cricket has always been the foundation upon which Indian cricket stands, and it has never been undervalued in our vision for the

sport," Jay Shah wrote in the letter addressed to players as quoted by ESPNCricinfo. The BCCI secretary further stated that the board have a clear vision from the start that whoever aspires to play for India should play domestic cricket first.

'Go tell Rohit Sharma...': Kumble's advice to Jaiswal ahead of 4th Test vs England

NEW DELHI: Young batting sensation Yashasvi Jaiswal smashed an unbeaten double century to help India register their biggest-ever win (in terms of runs) on Sunday, crushing England by 434 runs in the third Test inside four days in Rajkot. With this win, India took a 2-1 lead in the five-match series.

Chasing a mammoth 557 for win, England's batting fell like a pack of cards and the Three Lions were bowled out for 122. It was England's second-biggest Test loss since



their 562-run defeat to Australia in 1934. The 22-year-old hit a record-equalling 12 sixes in his knock, which included three consecutive hits over the fence off James

Anderson -- a first for the veteran quick who has 696 wickets in 185 Tests. The Mumbai batter now stands level with former Pakistan great Wasim Akram, who

also hit 12 sixes in an innings against Zimbabwe in 1996. Yashasvi remains the leading batsman in the series with 545 runs in three Tests at an average of 109.00.

David Warner not expecting affectionate farewell from New Zealand fans

NEW DELHI: As David Warner gears up for his final bilateral international series against New Zealand, the Australian veteran is not expecting a warm farewell from Black Caps fans in Wellington and Auckland. At 37, Warner has bid adieu to Test and ODI cricket already.

However, he's postponed his farewell from the shortest format of the game until after the upcoming T20 World Cup in the Caribbean and United States, scheduled for June. Warner, who will open for Australia in Wednesday's Twenty20 series opener against New Zealand at Wellington Stadium and the two matches that follow at Eden Park, said he would not let any



abuse affect his game. "Over here, it's always the harsh reality that we're neighbours, in sport we like to beat each other," Warner told reporters in the New Zealand capital on Monday. "From that perspective, we're going to be expecting the crowd to come at us as hard as they can. As we always say, it's in one ear, out the other -- if I actually hear anything." Warner described local fans as "derogatory and pretty vulgar" after the Australians were targeted for abuse during a test

and ODI tour of New Zealand in 2016. "I enjoy playing here," Warner added. "It's about coming out and trying to put my best foot forward, and score runs. "The crowd, yeah, they got personal, but if they have to get personal, that's their character ... if you want to pay your money to come and abuse people, you have to go back and lay in your own bed. "We're here to play the game of cricket that we love, enjoy and put bums on seats to keep the game going."

'Self-delusion': Former England captains tear into 'Bazball or bust' approach

NEW DELHI:

Succumbing to their second worst-ever Test defeat against India in Rajkot on Sunday, England players drew flak from former captains with the 'Bazball' approach being labelled as the cause of their humiliation. Since The Oval defeat against Australia by 562 runs in 1934, England, for the first time, faced such an embarrassing defeat and the former greats of the game were quick to tear into the side's approach in the chase of 577. Nosediving in the improbable chase, England were bundled out for a lowly 122 as India took a 2-1 lead in the series. "This England team are hell



bent on doing things their way, and 'saving Test cricket'. They are giving Test cricket a shot in the arm because they are so exciting," Michael Vaughan wrote. "But ultimately they have to be better than that now. They didn't win in New Zealand, they didn't win the Ashes, and if they carry on like this, they are going to lose in India. As a team, you are judged on series victo-

ries." Michael Atherton said opener Ben Duckett's "the more the better" comments after the third day regarding a realistic target England could chase down were fanciful. "One can admire the positivity and playfulness of Ben Duckett and this England team -- such were his comments on the third evening -- while also questioning their occasional self-delusion," Atherton

wrote in the Times. "Careful husbandry of resources is not the Bazball way. They have been profligate in the extreme in this match, wasting a golden opportunity to build on Duckett's brilliant second-day hundred and to achieve parity or more on first innings. "They were forced to take some bitter medicine as a consequence on a stifling and totally demoralising fourth day in Rajkot." Writing in his column for the Daily Mail, Nasser Hussain said England must learn from their mistakes. "If England don't consider tweaks, Bazball just becomes a cult that can't be questioned," he added.

Joe Root's shot in first innings was the turning point: Ben Stokes

RAJKOT: England skipper Ben Stokes admitted that former England captain Joe Root's reverse scoop, which was pounced by Yashasvi Jaiswal at second slip, early on Day Three changed the course of the match, as England were 224 for two in reply to India's 445 at that point. However, he refused to blame the out-of-touch Root for one of England's heaviest defeats. "Yes, because he got out to it, definitely (it) was a turning point. Root's scored nearly 12,000 runs, I think we can leave the decision-making and 'why' with Joe. I can understand why there would be frustration around that because of how good a player Joe is," Stokes said. He also made it clear that he wouldn't question Root for playing that shot. "I thought Joe was looking really, really good at the crease, and he sensed that as a time to put something different back onto Jasprit .

Indira Gandhi had jailed 2,100 opposition leaders but lost Lok Sabha polls: CM Mamata Banerjee

SURI/KOLKATA: Bengal CM and Trinamool Congress chief Mamata Banerjee on Sunday drew a parallel between the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) and the 1975 Emergency, saying both have been used to jail opposition leaders for prolonged periods without trial - the former by the current govt and the latter by Indira Gandhi. Banerjee made this comment at an administrative meet in Suri, the district headquarters of Birbhum, while bringing up Trinamool's district president Anubrata Mondal, who has been behind bars since Nov 2022, charged under PMLA, among others. Mondal ('Kesto', his nickname) came up numerous times in the CM's one-hour speech. Among other things, she said Mondal, who



remained popular, had "worked hard" to develop the district. Banerjee said incarcerating political leaders before polls had never yielded result, and would similarly not work this time around. Gandhi, she reminded her audience, had lost the 1977 Lok Sabha polls. Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) was being used by Centre to "keep political leaders behind bars for years without a trial". She was speaking at an administrative meet in

Suri, Birbhum's district headquarters. "Let the law take its course and accused persons face trial. Collect evidence against them and file a charge sheet. But no one can be kept in jail for prolonged periods without a trial.... Indira Gandhi had put nearly 2,100 people behind bars during Emergency. She thought that would ensure her win, but she was defeated. Those who think that using central agencies to arrest leaders before the polls will ensure them victories are wrong.

Water board identifies govt land for STPs

Secunderabad: Land acquisition to build mini sewage treatment plants (STPs) in Secunderabad Cantonment is set to become an uphill task for Secunderabad Cantonment Board officials. As per a study conducted by Hyderabad Metropolitan Water Supply and Sewerage Board (HMWS&SB), the land identified to build the mini STPs, to treat two million litres of sewer water in a day, at different locations falls under the state government's purview. Six STPs are being planned by SCB, including one each at Ramannakunta and Trimulgherry Lake, two at Bolarum, and two at open nalas —



Hasmathpet Nala and Picket Nala — in the Cantonment limits. "Though the nalas pass through the Cantonment, permission is required to allot the land to build the STPs," a senior SCB official told TOI. SCB knocked on the doors of Hyderabad district administration to urge it to allot the

required land and implement the study's recommendations, the official said. Regarding the STP at Trimulgherry Lake, SCB chief executive officer D Madhukar Naik, said, "Tenders have been finalised and work on the STPs will begin soon. HMWS&SB will build the STP.

Gang barges into Bengaluru villa, robs Rs 1 lakh valuables at gunpoint

BENGALURU: A three-member gang allegedly barged into a villa in a gated community in North Bengaluru, threatened a woman and her two teenage sons before robbing them of mobile phones, silver articles, a gold chain and Rs 10,000 in cash - all amounting to Rs 1 lakh - at gunpoint on

Friday afternoon, reports Swamy. Bagalur police have filed a case based on a complaint filed by the woman's elder son, 15, and are searching for the trio, who struck terror for 30 minutes. Only after intruders' arrest, police said, they can confirm whether the guns were real. The incident took

place between 12.30pm and 1pm at the duplex in Royal Palm Enclave, near Sathanur, on Bagalur Main Road, off Yelahanka. Gang of robbers made away with phones, ornaments & 10k cash from villa. The elder boy is a class 9 student and his brother a class 7 student at a private school.

130 huts gutted in fire at Delhi's Shahbad Dairy area

NEW DELHI:

A major fire broke out in a slum area near Shahbad Dairy in outer Delhi, around 130 jhuggis were gutted in the fire. The incident occurred on Sunday night no casualties were reported. The Delhi Fire Service received a distress call at 10.17 pm and immediately deployed 15 fire tenders to the scene. The fire was successfully extinguished, and no injuries were reported.



No arrest yet in accident at JLN

New Delhi: A day after a temporary structure collapsed at Jawahar Lal Nehru Stadium injuring 29 people, Delhi Police has approached Sports Authority of India (SAI) seeking details regarding booking of the shed, being set up for a wedding function.

While the event organiser has been booked for negligence, no arrest has been made yet. An official said that the details regarding booking of the venue were being investigated. The assistance by 14 athletes and SAI staff members in rescuing the victims have been appreciated. "The immediate action of the athletes who rushed to rescue the victim played a pivotal role in the rescue operation.

Cop dies by suicide at Pudupet quarters

Chennai: A 34-year-old police constable died by suicide at police quarters in Pudupet on Sunday morning. The deceased, Suresh, was a grade one police constable attached to the Kilpauk police station. His wife and children were out of town and Suresh had been drinking with his brother. He is suspected to have ended his life soon after his brother left. The next morning, Suresh did not turn up for the mandatory roll call and when his colleagues tried calling him, there was no response, police said. Police went to his place,



broke open his door and found him dead. They sent the body for post-mortem. Inquiries revealed that he was upset over a family dispute. There was no suicide note. (Assistance for those having suicidal thoughts is available through Tamil Nadu's health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide preven-

tion helpline 044-24640050) We also published the following articles recently Man attempts suicide after strangling his wife, daughter A man attempted suicide after strangulating his wife and daughter to death in Chakeri's Kashiram Colony. The husband, Arjun Jaiswal,

was found injured and is in critical condition. The bodies of Nisha and Ashni are being sent for postmortem examination. The extreme step was taken due to financial constraint. Police nab 19-year-old for killing his mother Kamla Nagar police solved the blind murder of Nanda More, a 42-year-old woman. Her son, Raunak, was arrested for the crime. Raunak confessed to the murder due to his desire to marry a girl and his mother's objection. Malika Rajput found hanging from the ceiling fan in her home, police suspect suicide

Gangster Lakha Sidhana at protest site, Delhi cops go on alert in city

NEW DELHI: Delhi Police have gone on alert after receiving intelligence that gangster-turned-radical Lakha Sidhana was spotted around the protest site in Haryana, allegedly inciting the farmer groups to break the barricades. Officers said on Wednesday that they had received videos on Facebook featuring him trying to mobilise the farmers and instigating them to commit violence and use JCBs to break through the barriers. The cops have shared



the videos with their counterparts in Haryana. Police will not risk Sidhana being on the loose, given their experience with him in the 2020-21 protests. Sidhana, the cops said, was accused of getting anti-social elements to

mix with the protesters, which had then led to violence. Police suspect Sidhana is planning to take the place of the deceased Deep Sidhu. Sidhana's name had cropped up in the case of violence at Red Fort on Jan 26, 2021. A resident of Bathinda in Punjab, Sidhana was once a big name in the crime world. Later, he plunged into politics. He was also a kabaddi player. Last week, Sidhana was booked by Punjab Police for damaging police vehicles and

attacking a policeman in a separate case. Following inputs about possible violence, the cops have substantially stepped up security at the borders of Delhi. Around 5am on Wednesday, more concrete was poured between the barriers erected at Tikri border. "We have also installed 360-degree PTZ cameras there. It offers pan, tilt, and zoom capabilities. To enhance nighttime monitoring, night vision cameras have also been installed.

Bijwasan rail terminal not on 'protected' forest land: NGT

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has observed that the land on which Rail Land Development Authority (RLDA) is constructing the Bijwasan rail terminal station in Dwarka is not a protected forest or deemed forest area. The tribunal has disposed of the plea that said the terminal was being built on "protected" forest land. It gave permission for the project to proceed. However, NGT has asked the project proponent to ensure that any further felling of trees is done after seeking permission from the forest department, which had imposed a fine of Rs 5.93 crore on RLDA in 2022 for the illegal felling of 990 trees in the area. For cutting trees in the city, permission from the forest department under the Delhi



Preservation of Trees Act, 1994, is required. However, if an area is a protected forest, or a deemed forest, permissions are also required under the Forest Conservation Act, 2023. A deemed forest is not a notified or a reserve forest and different states have different criteria. In Delhi, any area over 2.5 acres with over 100 trees per acre is a deemed for-

est. Similarly, 1-km stretches of roads and drains with the same tree density are also deemed forests. The plea against the building of the terminal was filed by RM Asif, a local resident, in 2023. He claimed that a piece of project land in Dwarka's sector 21 was forest land and permission from the central govt under the Forest Conservation Act had not been taken.

Dust from ballast stones suffocates railway passengers

BENGALURU/KOLAR: People travelling between Srinivasapur and Chikkaballapur by Demu trains are facing breathing issues as the railway authorities have recently dumped ballast stones along several stretches of the tracks. According to some passengers, trains moving on the stretch kick up heavy dust from the tracks, and the dust particles enter the coaches. Praveen Nandan, a second-year BTech student of Presidency University in Bengaluru, said that last Friday, when he was travelling to his hometown of Srinivasapur, he felt suffocated for 10-15 minutes as heavy dust entered his coach. All his clothes were covered in dust and some of his co-passengers had to cover their faces. Nandan said fine dust poses health problems, especially to children and those suffering from bronchitis and asthma. He added that despite the best efforts of the travellers, the doors and windows of his train couldn't be closed as they were jammed. Kishore YV, a businessman from Srinivasapur who travels 3-4 times a week to Bengaluru by Demu trains, said



the journey between Srinivasapur and Chintamani, which are about 20km apart, is a nightmare for commuters. Most passengers cover their faces on a 4-5km stretch on the route, he said. Rajkumar Dugar, founder and convener of Citizens for Citizens (C4C), said his forum has been requesting the railways to provide basic amenities in the trains, but the authorities have failed to ensure even clean washrooms and adequate water in these trains. He added that even after the completion of track electrification, the authorities are buying time to extend

Memu services to Kolar. Meanwhile, South Western Railway authorities claimed that steps have been taken to ensure the dust remains settled on the ground by using a thumping machine. A video of hardships faced by passengers has gone viral on social media. In the video, passengers travelling on a DEMU train can be seen covering their face with a handkerchief and a woman covering her head using saree to avoid dust. Passengers were finding it difficult to breathe due to heavy dust inside the coaches.

Nurses to protest on Feb 21 for regulated work hours



CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu Government MRB Nurses Empowerment Association has announced a mass protest at Medical and Rural Health Services (DMS) campus on Anna Salai on Wednesday, to put forth demands that remain unfulfilled to the chief minister. The demands include making temporary nurses, recruited through Medical Services Recruitment Board (MRB), permanent, and reinstatement of 2,500 nurses who were suspended after their dedicated service during the pandemic. They want regulated working hours for nurses deployed at primary health care centres. The association said they were promised a solution when they protested at DMS campus last year, but no action was taken.

43% highways built in April-January are 4-lane



NEW DELHI: The share of 'four-lane and above' highway stretches constructed in the country between April and Jan of the current financial year has hit the highest-ever level, with nearly 43% of all NH stretches built in 2023-24 falling under this category. While the share of four-, six- and eight-lane stretches is marginally higher than a year ago, in terms of construction pace, there has been a 16% rise, to 3,297km. Over the remaining two months of this fiscal year, the proportion is likely to be higher than last year, officials said. Beating the earlier trend of more highway construction "achievements" coming from 'strengthening' of existing stretches and

widening of NHs to only two lanes, the focus now is more on building wider highways and expressways. Govt data show that this became a priority in 2019-20 and the rate of annual construction of highways having more than four lanes has tripled compared to 2013-14. 3x more 4-lane highways coming up than in 2013-14

Govt data shows that building wider highways and expressways became a priority in 2019-20 and the rate of annual construction of highways having more than four lanes has tripled compared to 2013-14. Data available with shows that while in 2013-14, a total of 1,332km four-lane and above highways were built, this increased to

4,635km in 2022-23. Data shows that during the past 10 years, the length of NHs that have less than two lanes has reduced from 27,517km in March 2014 to 14,300km now. "Going by the current trend, we will beat the record of last year. The completion of highway stretches increases during Jan-March as this is the best construction period. Now we are building more highways and wider ones to meet the growing traffic demand," said an official. Officials admitted that since highways are meant for faster movement of vehicles, these should ideally be at least four lanes with divided carriageways in the plains. In hills and other areas, where the traffic

demand is lower, two-lane roads are sufficient. With govt now focusing more on building transport infrastructure to reduce logistics cost, the next phase of highway development will be construction of expressways and access-controlled stretches. The road transport ministry has set an ambitious target to increase the length of four-lane and above highways from the current 47,000km to 75,000km by 2030 and convert all NHs to at least two-laned highways by that time. The rapid pace of NH construction has been possible because of a jump in the budgetary allocation — from Rs 31,130 crore in 2013-14 to Rs 2.8 lakh crore for 2024-25.

Bid To Make Roads Near Schools Safer

New Delhi: The Delhi govt will conduct an audit of roads near schools for safety assessment and will make comprehensive plan for making the surroundings safer for children. A senior official said the idea is to make safe school zones for which 11 sites, which include 25 schools, would be chosen this year. To ensure road safety, the schools would be trained with a safety kit on management by traffic police and with the transport department's support. Drawings would be made of the

sites to understand the safety assessment of the area, he said. According to the plan of the transport department, the exercise would be collaborative and the department would also launch an exhibition of Delhi's first student-friendly street. The data collected from crash reports and accident patterns near the schools would be used to analyse crashes over the years. There would also be a roundtable with all schools in the district on the Road Safety Club and learnings and interaction on work done with their

model school zone activities, said the official. The whole exercise would be done by the transport department in consultation with the department of education, PWD and traffic police, as per the plan. The road safety assessment would be on various parameters like the business on the roads near the schools, whether these are main roads or internal ones. Based on the report, a safety club would be made in schools which will collaborate with the government to ensure pedestrian safety of children.

Scarred by 2013 riots, woman, 60, orders time bombs; arrested



AGRA: An elderly woman was arrested for allegedly ordering preparation of four time bombs that were recovered from the possession of a man in Muzaffarnagar a few days back. During interrogation, the woman, identified as Imrana Begum, 60, of Shamli, told cops that her house was set on fire during the 2013 Muzaffarnagar riots and she wanted explosives for protection in case any communal violence broke out in the future. Javed, 25, (first name available only) had reportedly assembled the bombs with a timer after watching YouTube videos. He was held by

UP special task force (STF) near Kali river in Muzaffarnagar on Thursday night. A communique issued by STF on Sunday said Imrana claimed to have faced significant losses during the 2013 riots in Muzaffarnagar. "She was furious at her home being gutted during the violence. She had recently met Javed, who was son of one of her acquaintances, and came to know that he was involved in making explosive devices. She had thereafter had the idea to get him to make some bombs which could be used in case of any future conflict," the communique said.

Indians more hit by long-term lung damage after Covid: Study



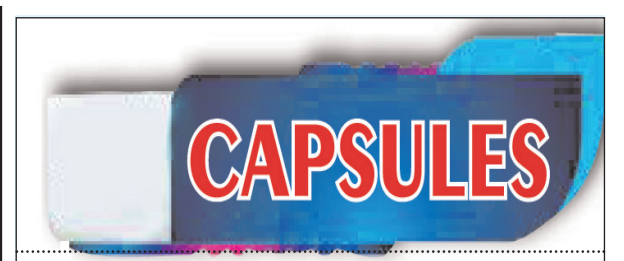
MUMBAI: A significant proportion of Indians who recovered from Covid had lung function impairment and lingering symptoms for months, a study published by Christian Medical College, Vellore, has revealed. It found Indians had more lung function damage when compared to Europeans and the Chinese. While gradual return to normalcy may occur over up to one year in some, others may have to live with lung damage for life, it stated. The study, touted as the country's largest to investigate SARS-CoV-2's impact on lung function, examined 207 individuals. Conducted during the first wave of the pandemic, this study was recently published in the PLOS Global Public Health journal. After over two months of recovery, complete lung function tests, six-minute walk test, blood tests and quality of life

assessments were carried out for these patients who suffered mild, moderate and severe Covid. The most sensitive lung function test namely gas transfer (DLCO), which measures the ability to transfer oxygen from the air breathed to the bloodstream, was affected in 44%, which CMC doctors called "very worrying"; 35% exhibited a restrictive lung defect, which would affect the ability of the lung to inflate with air as they breathe and 8.3% had an obstructive lung defect, which would affect the ease with which air could move in and out of the lungs. Quality of

life tests also demonstrated an adverse impact. "In all aspects, Indian patients fared worse," the principal investigator of the study, Dr D J Christopher, professor, department of pulmonary medicine, CMC, Vellore, told TOI. Additionally, more Indian subjects had comorbidities like diabetes and hypertension compared to Chinese and European subjects. According to Dr Saili Bendre, head of pulmonology at Nanavati Hospital, a subset of Covid patients who experienced moderate to severe infection, requiring hospitalization approximately.

Delhi: Two banquets in Karol Bagh fined for noise pollution

NEW DELHI: Delhi Pollution Control Committee (DPCC) has served a show-cause notice to two banquet halls in Karol Bagh and imposed an environmental damage compensation of Rs 70,000 for causing noise pollution in the area. A team of DPCC conducted an inspection of Ajmal Khan area of Karol Bagh on Jan 5. Of the three banquet halls inspected, DPCC said it found two were having some event. Though a DJ system was not used, the noise norms were still found to exceed both the daytime and night-time standards, said DPCC, which submitted a report to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Feb 15. DPCC also informed the tribunal that it has imposed a fine of Rs 60,000 and Rs 10,000 on two banquet halls for the violations.



Maharashtra top cop orders anthem, tiranga drill at Red zone thanas



GADCHIROLI: Sixty-three police posts in Maoist-affected Gadchiroli, located in Dandakaranya in Red corridor, will soon start hoisting the tricolour every day, and sing national anthem twice a day, reports Soumitra Bose. The practice would start from two new frontier police posts-Wangeturi and Gardewara - at the gateway of Maoist headquarters Abujmarh, in a challenge to the guerrillas, who have indoctrinated tribals to spurn patriotism and rebel against the state. Earlier, Maoists in Gadchiroli would damage the tricolour on Independence Day and Republic Day, and not allow tribals to sing the national anthem. State director general of police Rashmi Shukla began practice of singing the anthem at Gardewara post, where tricolour was hoisted in her presence on Saturday.

Sixty-three police posts in Gadchiroli, the Maharashtra Maoist-affected zone in the heart of Dandakaranya in the Red corridor, will soon start hoisting the tricolour every day and sing the national anthem twice a day. The move is a challenge to the guerrillas, who have over decades indoctrinated tribals in "liberated zones" to spurn patriotism and rebel against govt. The practice will start from two new frontier police posts - Wangeturi and Gardewara - at the gateway of Maoist headquarters Abujmarh. Earlier, Maoists in Gadchiroli would damage the tricolour on Independence Day and Republic Day, and not allow tribals to sing the national anthem. DGP Rashmi Shukla started the practice Saturday at Gardewara, where the tricolour was hoisted in her presence. Tribal children sang the national anthem at the post, only 5km from guerrilla hub Abujmarh. Shukla said the drill would be extended to other police posts. "Hoisting the tricolour and singing Jana gana mana is a practice at the DGP office, too. It should be followed elsewhere as national pride," said Shukla, who spent two days in Gadchiroli and toured remote posts. Gadchiroli SP Neelotpal said children singing the national anthem was almost impossible in the past in remote areas.

BJP MLAs challenge suspension in Delhi high court

NEW DELHI: Seven MLAs from the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have approached the Delhi high court to challenge their suspension from the Budget session of the Delhi assembly. The suspension was imposed after they repeatedly interrupted the Lieutenant Governor's address. The MLAs had sought



to criticize the Arvind Kejriwal government on various issues during the address.

The matter was mentioned before Acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet PS Arora, who allowed it to be heard on the same day. Senior advocate Jayant Mehta argued that the suspension of the MLAs was unconstitutional and violated their right to participate in the proceedings.

Atishi clears projects for repairing, strengthening roads

New Delhi: Public Works Department (PWD) minister Atishi recently approved projects for repairing and strengthening various

roads in Shahdara district, Delhi govt said. The projects include nine roads across Shahdara, including GT Road to Road number 64 via telephone exchange, R-block Road, LIC Road (from Malaria office MCD to GT Road), road stretch from divider road to Gurudwara road near Pummy Sweets, road stretch in front of Hans Raj Public School in Dilshad Garden, and road from T-point, L Pocket to R-block small rotary. These roads were constructed and upgraded long ago but have deteriorated gradually. PWD has conducted a thorough assessment of the roads and has been instructed to initiate the upgrading.

Man who won bid for plot linked to Dawood Ibrahim yet to pay up

MUMBAI: Delhi lawyer Ajay Srivastava, who won two bids during the Jan 5 auction of Ratnagiri properties linked to fugitive gangster Dawood Ibrahim, has not yet paid the first installment (25%) for one of the two agricultural plots and has sought more time to make the payment. The deadline for payment, Rs 2.01 crore, was last week. He has made full payment (Rs 3.28 lakh) for the other plot. Both were seized from the ownership of Dawood's mother Amina Bi. Four plots were up for auction. The smallest, of 171 sq m area, had a reserve



price of Rs 15,440, and was auctioned for Rs 2.01 crore. Another, of 1,730 sq m area, with a reserve price of Rs 1.56 lakh, was auctioned for Rs 3.28 lakh. Both bids were won by Srivastava. No buyers came forward for the remaining two properties. The auctioned properties

are in Mumbake village, Khed taluka, where Dawood and his siblings spent a part of their childhood. **Reserve Price** The auction was carried out in three modes -- online, public and sealed envelope tender -- under the Smugglers and Foreign Exchange Manipulators (Forfeiture of Property) Act or Safema. "For any auctioned property worth more than Rs 50 lakh, the bid winner has to pay 25% of the amount within 30 days and has to make full payment within 90 days," a source said. "Officials who carried out the auction are

examining the situation." The source said that for the other property, Srivastava made the first installment after the expiry of the deadline, but paid the balancer 75% much before the deadline for full payment. After the auction, Srivastava had said that he had quoted a high figure (Rs 2.01 crore) for numerological reasons. He had said he set up Sanatan Dharma Pathshala Trust and wanted to start a hostel for students. Srivastava has now told TOI: "I have requested over phone for some more time to make the full payment at one go.