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PM Modi: I can't be scared, action against corrupt will continue

"When I'm taking action against corruption, some people are upset and losing their senses"



MEERUT: PM Narendra Modi said on Sunday that his govt would continue to take action against the corrupt and any attempt to scare him will not succeed, framing once again the LS contest as a battle between the "corrupt" and those making efforts to remove corruption. Addressing a rally here soon after the 'INDIA' bloc accused him of misusing central agencies to fix elections by getting opposition leaders arrested, Modi said: "The corrupt should know that no matter how viciously they attack Modi, he is unstoppable. However big the corrupt are, action will be taken. The one who has looted the country will

have to return the loot, and this is Modi's guarantee." **PM: Decide if corrupt need to be saved or graft needs to go** He dismissed opposition's allegations as rants of those feeling jittery over his action against the corrupt and said: "When I'm taking action against corruption, some people are upset and losing their senses. Modi's mantra is 'bhrashtachar hatao' (eradicate corruption). They say 'bhrashtachari bachao' (save the corrupt). This is a battle between two sides. One is NDA - the arena to remove corruption.

Second is the field to save the corrupt. Now you have to decide if the corrupt need to be saved or corruption needs to go." "When Modi with all his strength started to remove corruption, these people allied to form 'INDIA' bloc. They think Modi is afraid of them, but for me my 'Bharat' is my family. It is because of this fight that the biggest of the corrupt are behind bars and they are not getting respite even from Supreme Court," he further said, working up the crowd to endorse his anti-corruption plank. This was his first

rally after the declaration of candidates; also the first one he addressed with the newly-recruited ally, RLD leader Jayant Chaudhary, and other NDA constituents. Seeking support for NDA candidates from five constituencies of western UP - Meerut, Baghpat, Bijnor, Muzaffarnagar and Kairana - Modi said that in its two terms, his govt had pulled off feats: from construction of Ram Mandir and abrogation of Article 370 to banning of triple talaq, which were considered impossible.

INDIA bloc demands level playing field, release of arrested leaders

NEW DELHI: In a show of unity, 'INDIA' bloc leaders came together at 'lokantara bachao' (save democracy) rally here on Sunday and attacked the NDA govt for being "dictatorial" and "misusing" ED and other central agencies to "rig" Lok Sabha polls by getting its opponents jailed and bank accounts of parties sealed. At the Ramlila Maidan rally - almost all 'INDIA' parties attended it - held against the backdrop of Arvind Kejriwal's arrest and amid tensions in some states over alliance seat-sharing, leaders demanded immediate release of the Delhi CM and Jharkhand ex-CM Hemant Soren, an SC-monitored SIT probe into BJP's "extortion" through electoral bonds and a "level playing field" for upcoming elections. Rahul Gandhi of Congress accused PM Modi of trying to engage in electoral "match-fixing" along with three-four billion-



aires to snatch Constitution from poor". He said, "Who selected umpires (for polls)? Narendra Modi chose the umpires." **Capture 4 We were & are still part of INDIA: TMC's O'Brien** Before the match (LS polls) began, two players (Hemant Soren and Arvind Kejriwal) from our team were arrested and put inside. What kind of elections are these? Govts are toppled by using money power, leaders are threatened and arrested," Rahul said. He highlighted his own party's case saying, "Congress is the biggest

opposition party and all its accounts have been frozen at a time it has to run a campaign and send leaders to states." Priyanka Gandhi Vadra read out Congress's demand charter and said, "EC must stop coercive action by I-T department, ED and CBI to financially strangle opposition parties and manipulate elections." Congress was represented by the entire Gandhi family (Sonia, Rahul and Priyanka) and party president Malickarjun Kharge and other senior leaders. Other attendees included NCP's Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena (UBT) Uddhav

Thackeray, Trinamool Congress's Derek O'Brien, Akhilesh Yadav (SP), Farooq Abdullah (J&K National Conference), Mehbooba Mufti (PDP), Tejaswi Yadav (RJD), Jharkhand CM Champai Soren and Punjab CM Bhangwant Mann (AAP), among others. Top leaders of left parties Sitaram Yechury, D Raja, Dipankar Bhattacharya were also present. CMs of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu, Mamata Banerjee and M K Stalin, were represented by Derek O'Brien and Tiruchi Siva respectively. O'Brien said, "We were and are still part of INDIA." Significantly, this implies that TMC's decision to go it alone in West Bengal did not mark the party's disassociation with the block. He also highlighted that there were two empty chairs kept on the dais for Kejriwal and Soren and said they are very much with the INDIA bloc members at the rally in spirit.

'Marry again' if you want before Lok Sabha poll or face UCC action'



GUWAHATI: Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma has fired a shot across AIUDF supremo and Dhubri MP Badruddin Ajmal's bows, suggesting that if he is contemplating a second or third marriage, he should do so before the conclusion of the Lok Sabha elections to avoid legal consequences under a uniform civil code (UCC). The CM was reacting to Ajmal's recent response to comments by Congress's Dhubri candidate Rakibul Hussain, who referred to him as an "old tiger". Ajmal, who is in his 70s, responded: "I am not so old. I can marry again." Sarma seized the opportunity to swipe at Ajmal, who had opposed UCC. The CM announced on Saturday that Assam plans to introduce UCC shortly after the polls, with a potential ban on polygamy, which could result in Ajmal's imprisonment if he marries again. **They want to polarise votes:** AIUDF Chief Badruddin Ajmal slams Assam govt's move to repeal Muslim Marriage Act At another event, Sarma reiterated: "UCC will come into force in Assam soon after the elections...Till now, marrying again is not illegal in Assam. We will also attend his wedding if invited. So far as I know, he has one wife, but he can have a second or third wife now. Once UCC comes, polygamy will be outlawed in Assam. All the preparations are done." In Feb this year, state cabinet approved the repeal of the British-era Assam Muslim Marriages and Divorces Registration Act, 1935, aiming to curb child marriage and pave the way for implementing UCC.

Rural job scheme in huge demand, hints at ongoing distress in villages

NEW DELHI: MGN-REGS has generated 40 crore persondays of work more than the pre-pandemic (2019-20) level - suggesting a continuing rural distress, and that job opportunities in the cities may not have returned to normal. As 2023-24 completes, the flagship distress labour scheme clocked 305.2 crore person-days on March 31. It is a figure which is



updated till the end of month and the final number will end up higher. It is in sharp contrast to 293.7 crore person-days generated in 2022-23 - roughly 12 crore persondays more. The number in 2023-24 was expected to go down as 2022-23 was the first year after the country

came out of the pandemic, and employment avenues were seen as not having returned to normal after the disruption caused by the two major corona waves which triggered the shuttering of economy across the rural-urban divide. But instead of dipping, the work has gone up by 12 crore days and the final figure would be even higher.

President confers Bharat Ratna on Advani at his home

New Delhi: President Droupadi Murmu conferred Bharat Ratna, the country's highest civilian honor, on BJP stalwart and former deputy Prime Minister L K Advani at his residence on Sunday. The ceremony was attended by Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar, PM Narendra Modi, defence minister Rajnath Singh, home minister Amit Shah, and Advani's family members, as per a



statement from the Rashtrapati Bhavan. Modi, seated beside Advani, expressed his sentiments and said, witnessing the conferment of Bharat Ratna on Advani was special, recognising his enduring contributions to the nation's progress. Modi said: "His dedication to public service and his pivotal role in shaping modern India have left an indelible mark on our history. I am proud to have got the opportunity to work with him.

Karunanidhi, taken into confidence by Indira on Katchatheevu deal

NEW DELHI: "This agreement goes against the interests of the country since it amounts to pure surrender of our territory without going through any of the norms. This is an unholy and disgraceful act of statesmanship unworthy of any govt. Therefore, we do not want to associate ourselves with the statement that is going to be made by the Hon. Minister, and we want to disassociate ourselves by walking out of the House," thundered DMK MP Era Sezhiyan on July 23, 1974 as the then foreign minister Swaran Singh moved to make a statement on India-Sri Lanka Maritime Agreement signed by the then Indira Gandhi govt by



which India relinquished its claim on Katchatheevu island. DMK MP Sezhiyan fumed at Indira govt for hiding island pact from TN DMK MP Era Sezhiyan expressed anger that the Indira regime had kept Parliament and the M Karunanidhi-led DMK govt in Tamil Nadu in the dark about the "unholy agreement" and the surrender of territory. His interven-

tion was of a piece with the many by the DMK member that had already established him as an effective Parliamentarian. There was, however, something amiss about this particular one: The usually alert Sezhiyan was probably unaware that TN CM M Karunanidhi had given his concurrence more than a month ago. In fact, the DMK leader was perhaps the only person barring the PM and "one or two senior Cabinet ministers" who may have known the contours of the agreement that was in the works. Documents accessed through RTI by chief of TN BJP, K Annamalai, show that on June 19, 1974, the then foreign secretary.

No govt staffer should cross 'red line', says US envoy

NEW DELHI: India and the US are working together in the investigation of the alleged foiled assassination plot against Khalistani terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, US ambassador to India Eric Garcetti said that a 'red line' should not be crossed. Between the two countries. Referring to the Khalistani marches and the threats issued by Pannun, Garcetti said that the American system protects free speech "for better or for worse," while adding that an American citizen can be convicted or deported only according to the country's laws. Pannun is an India-designated terrorist who holds American and Canadian citizenship.

MP mantri Patel's son thrashes journalist, three others 'in thana'

BHOPAL: Madhya Pradesh minister Narendra Shivaji Patel's son Abhigyan Patel, 30, was booked in the early hours of Sunday for allegedly thrashing in public four persons - including a hotelier couple, one of their employees and a journalist - in a prominent locality here. The accused allegedly attacked the victims yet again inside a police station when they went to file a complaint. However, four policemen, including two officers, were suspended on Abhigyan's allegation that he was manhandled by cops. The suspension followed soon after Patel, a first-time minister, visited the police station with a large group of supporters past midnight. Asked for the reason for the suspension, Bhopal police commissioner Harinarayan Chari Mishra told that

the cops faced charges of "beating the accused with a belt". In her complaint against Abhigyan, Alisha Saxena, who runs a restaurant with her husband Dennis Martin, said the couple was standing outside their restaurant around 8pm when a group of men and women arrived in a white SUV and started beating a biker - a local journalist identified as Vivek Singh - on the road. When Alisha intervened and asked why they were beating him, two men allegedly hurled abuses at her and hit her on the head with an iron rod. Her husband was allegedly beaten too. Staffer Sitaram, who tried to save his employers, was also thrashed. Alisha alleged that one of the attackers boasted that he was "Abhigyan, a minister's son", and dared his victims to "do whatever they can".

Indian Navy swiftly responds to distress call from Iranian fishing vessel



NEW DELHI: Amid a series of attacks on cargo vessels, the Indian Navy once again swung into action after Iranian Fishing Vessel FV Al Arifi made a distress call. Responding to the distress call from the fishing vessel, the Indian Naval ship INS Shivalik Mission, deployed in the Gulf of Aden, rendered medical assistance including critical medical supplies to the 18 Pakistani crew onboard. "INS Shivalik is deployed in the region in consonance with the Indian Navy's mandate of Maritime Security Operations under the broader ambit of the Prime Minister's vision of SAGAR (Security and Growth for All in the Region)," Indian Navy posted on X, formerly Twitter. This is not the first time the Indian Navy has come to the aid of distressed vessels. Earlier this month, an Indian Naval ship mission deployed in the North Arabian Sea for maritime security operations provided damage control assistance to the Iranian Fishing Vessel (FV) Ameen, with six Iranian crew onboard, operating East of Duqm. Medical aid was also extended to three injured crew members. The FV sustained extensive damage, including a hull breach leading to water ingress. Earlier in January, Indian warship INS Sumitra rescued hijacked Iranian-flagged fishing vessel Al Naeemi with 19-member Pakistani crew off the east coast of Somalia. In the same month, the firefighting team of INS Visakhapatnam successfully controlled a fire onboard the merchant vessel Marlin Luanda.

WTO meet: India seeks permanent solution to food security

NEW DELHI: India will strongly oppose a China-led proposal for an investment facilitation pact besides pressing for finding a permanent solution to public stock holding of grains for food security and protection of the interests of fishermen at the WTO ministerial meeting beginning Tuesday. The Indian delegation is led by Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal. The four-day 13th ministerial conference (MC13) will start on February 26 in Abu Dhabi, the United Arab Emirates (UAE). Trade ministers of 164 member countries of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) are meeting against the backdrop of the uncertain global economic situation due to the Red Sea crisis, the Ukraine-Russia war and the Israel-Hamas conflict. The key issue of India's interests at the meeting relates to finding a permanent solution for its minimum support price (MSP) issue for food security, agricultural reforms, fisheries subsidies, e-commerce moratorium on import duties, dispute settlement, and WTO reforms. **Food security issues** The public stock-holding (PSH) programme is a policy tool under which the government procures crops like rice and wheat from farmers at MSP, and stores and distributes foodgrains to the poor. India stresses the need for PSH for its large, vulnerable population and wants a permanent solution from the MC13. Food procurement, stockholding, and distribution are crucial to India's food security strategy. MSP is normally higher than the prevailing market rates and sells these at a low price to ensure food security for over 800 million beneficiaries.

Fast-food giant replacing cheese with cheaper vegetable oil: FDA

MUMBAI: Maharashtra FDA has cracked down on fast food giant McDonald's, slamming it for a cheesy deception - using substitutes in burgers and nuggets instead of real cheese. It has suspended the license of a McDonald's outlet in Ahmednagar, prompting the chain to erase the word "cheese" from various items. FDA is pushing the chain to extend the corrective action state-wide & even nationally. Cheese alternatives, or cheese analogues, are designed to replicate taste, texture, and functionality of traditional dairy cheese. The substitutes, allegedly identified in several McDonald's items, typically replace milk or dairy fat with cost-effective vegetable oil.

CAPSULES

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann announces Rs 1 crore ex-gratia for farmer who died during farmers protest

NEW DELHI: Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann has declared a financial aid of Rs 1 crore for the family of Shubhakaran Singh, who lost his life during the ongoing farmers' protest at Khanauri border. The announcement also includes a government job for Shubhakaran Singh's younger sister, with the assurance of appropriate legal action against the responsible individuals. The announcement follows the death of a farmer at Khanauri Border crossing in Sangrur district, Punjab. Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait declared a 'Black Friday' protest to be observed by the protesting farmers, led by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), in response to the death. Addressing concerns over potential damage during the protests, Haryana Police in Ambala District said that any harm to government and private property will be compensated by attaching protestors' property and seizing their bank accounts. Union Minister Arjun Munda emphasized the Central Government's dedication to resolving issues through dialogue and expressed the government's commitment to the welfare of the farmers. The agriculture ministry is actively addressing concerns raised by farmers' associations, union minister said. The ongoing farmers' agitation has prompted the Confederation of All India Traders (CAIT) to call for inclusive dialogue involving stakeholders across the agricultural sector. The protesters, stationed at the Shambhu border near Ambala since February 13, have seen clashes.

33 non-profit bodies to participate in second India Giving Day in US

WASHINGTON/New Delhi

As many as 33 top Indian American non-profit organisations are participating in the India Giving Day on March 1, during which organisers expect to raise money for important social welfare programmes in India. "The number (results) we're going to announce at the end of India Giving Day is going to be significantly larger than last year. That's because we have a track record as we've been working all year long and people are excited," Alex Counts, executive director of the India



Philanthropy Alliance and India Giving Day told PTI in an interview. India Philanthropy Alliance is a network of non-profit organisations that mobilise people and funding in the US for high-impact development programmes in India. The second edition of the annual India

Giving Day organised by India Philanthropy Alliance has launched a nationwide campaign to generate among Indian Americans and "friends of India" in the US to donate generously on this important day dedicated to raise funds for a host of critical social and economic issues in

India. The inaugural edition last year raised USD 1.3 million in one day. All funds raised through India Giving Day will be used to support programmes based in India or to build a more robust fundraising operation in the US to benefit India, Counts said. "The three (issues) that were most common, perhaps almost exclusive issues last year were education for the poor, healthcare for the poor, wellbeing and third was we put a broad category of livelihoods, the ability of people to generate economic sustainability.

"Indian Govt should recognize Bengali as Classical Language" – Dr. Parimal Kanti Mondal, Bongo Bhashi Mahasabha Foundation

New Delhi :

The Bangabashi Mahasabha Foundation (BBMF) hosted an International Bengali Conference and Awards Ceremony at the Vishwa Yuvak Kendra in New Delhi recently, focusing on the challenges faced by Bengalis both nationally and internationally. Bongo Bhashi Mahasabha Foundation also urged the Indian Govt to recognize Bengali as Classical Language. Renowned figures such as Shri Tathagata Roy, Former Governor of Tripura,



Meghalaya, Arunachal Pradesh, Shri Biplap Roy Goodwill Ambassador, IIA India, Official Partner UNESCO, National and International]President of BBMF Dr. Parimal Mondal, and General Secretary Dr. Shubhro Chakrabarty graced the event alongside distinguished guests from India, Bangladesh,

Canada, Australia, England, and Germany. The conference celebrated the accomplishments of Bengali speakers across various domains including art, literature, culture, healthcare, social service, entrepreneurship, management, journalism, and cinema. Chief guest Dr. Tathagata Roy, the Former gover-

nor said, "Despite Bengali being the fourth most spoken language globally, UNESCO's recognition of it as the "sweetest language" and its ancient origins dating back to 3500 BC, it is yet to be acknowledged as a Classical Language by the Indian government. This underscores the importance of uniting Bengalis worldwide under one umbrella to advocate for their language and heritage. All Sanatani Bengalis around the globe must unite and stand against injustice."

Courts cannot direct states to implement particular schemes: SC

NEW DELHI: The scope of judicial review in examining policy matters of the government is very limited and the courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a "better, fairer or wiser" option is available, the Supreme Court has said. The observation came while disposing of a PIL seeking formulation of a scheme on setting up of community kitchens to combat hunger and malnutrition. The top court refused to pass any direction in the matter observing that the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes are being implemented by the Centre and states. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal said legality of the policy, and not the wisdom or soundness of the policy, would be the subject of judicial



review. "It is well settled that the scope of judicial review in examining the policy matters is very limited. The courts do not and cannot examine the correctness, suitability or appropriateness of a policy, nor are the courts advisors to the executive on the matters of policy which the executive is entitled to formulate. The courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a better, fairer or wiser alternative is available," the bench said. The apex court said it was open to states and union territories to ensure

implementation of alternative welfare schemes. "When the National Food Security Act (NFSA) with a 'right based approach' for providing food and nutritional security, is in force and when other welfare schemes under the said Act have also been framed and implemented by the Union of India and the States, to ensure access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity, we do not propose to give any further direction in that regard. "We have not examined whether the concept of community kitchens is a better or wiser alternative available to the States to achieve the object of NFSA, rather we would prefer to leave it open to the States/UTs to explore such alternative welfare schemes as may be permissible under the NFSA,"

BJP's slams 'cruel' Mamata Banerjee

NEW DELHI: Suwendu Adhikari, the West Bengal BJP chief, launched a stinging attack on chief minister Mamata Banerjee over the delay in the arrest of key accused Sheikh Shahjahan in the Sandeshkhali sexual assault case. Hitting out at Mamata Banerjee for lodging 42 cases against him and failing to arrest Sheikh Shahjahan, Suwendu Adhikari on Saturday said, "She is a cruel lady".

Suwendu said Mamata Banerjee would never arrest Shahjahan as doing so would cost ruling TMC the Basirhat seat. "Mamata Banerjee's police will not arrest Sheikh Shahjahan because he controls the votes. If he is arrested, then TMC will lose the Basirhat seat. The hearing is on March 6 on CJI's

bench. We hope that the case will go to CBI, and Shahjahan will be in jail within 24 hours," he said. "Stop calling Mamata Banerjee 'Didi'; she has now become an 'aunty'... I defeated her in Nandigram during the assembly elections. She lodged 42 cases against me. She is a cruel lady," said BJP leader Suwendu Adhikari at Jawaharlal Nehru University while addressing a panel discussion on political violence in Bengal at Jawaharlal Nehru University. The BJP leader also pointed out that section 144 imposed by the state government is only to prevent BJP leaders. "Strictest action should be taken. Sheikh Shahjahan should get capital punishment.

The CBI and NIA investigations should

happen. They should take appropriate action as soon as possible. The people of Sandeshkhali and the entire West Bengal are waiting for it. Section 144 is imposed only to prevent BJP leaders, MLAs, and MPs. It is illegal. It is politically motivated. The state government is using section 144 to hide the situation inside," Adhikari said. "Under PM Modi-led government, ED and other investigative agencies have the freedom to work; hence, the incident of Sandeshkhali is in front of the entire country," he added. Suwendu levelled further allegations, claiming that Sheikh Shahjahan, who switched allegiance to the Trinamool Congress (TMC) in 2013, had prior affiliations with the CPI (M).

Suwendu asserted that Shahjahan was implicated in bribe collection and accused of being involved in land mafia activities. He alleged that Shahjahan routed 20% of the collected proceeds to Kolkata through Jyotipriya Mallick and Narayan Goswami, notable leaders from North 24 Paraganas. Adhikari also claimed that there is a situation of presidential rule in West Bengal. "BJP has not imposed President's rule anywhere in the last 10 years except Jammu and Kashmir. The objective of our party is to change power by making the public aware. There is a situation of the president's rule in Bengal, but as a BJP leader, I am not demanding it," he added. (With ANI input)

Thieves steal Rs 20,000 from temple donation box in Navi Mumbai



MUMBAI: Police have registered a case after thieves broke into a temple in Airoli, Navi Mumbai and stole Rs 20,000 from a donation box. The incident occurred between the night of February 21 and February 22. The temple trustee filed a complaint, leading to the Rabale police registering a case. The station house officer stated that they are currently reviewing the temple's CCTV footage to identify the culprits responsible for the theft.

Delhi Development Authority will build homes in 3 JJ clusters

Delhi: In an in situ rehabilitation project, Delhi Development Authority would redevelop Kalandar, Deepak, and Dilshad Vihar jhuggi clusters in east Delhi with roughly 4,000 houses. DDA will rehabilitate Trans-Yamuna slums for the first time under the Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan project. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena and DDA vice-chairman Subhashish Panda made this decision. It would be the fourth such project after Kalkaji, Kathputli Colony, and Jailorwala Bagh, where homes are being built. Saxena was astonished by the basti's dirt and lack of civic amenities for 30,000-35,000 inhabitants. LG posted about the visit on X, tagging CM Arvind Kejriwal. After seeing the civic issues residents experience, he felt obligated to bring this public matter to CM's attention. Kejriwal asked the chief secretary to address Saxena's concerns. The in-situ



rehabilitation project would develop multi-story structures on about seven hectares of land in the three slum clusters. "These will be flats with modern amenities and they will be given to the slum dwellers who have been living in subhuman conditions," claimed a source. A source stated, "LG issued specific directions to DDA to execute the project in a time-bound manner and to avoid any delay in starting the project, unlike in the past when similar efforts were delayed for years." PM Narendra Modi inaugurated DDA's first in situ project at Kalkaji in November 2022. To rehabilitate slum inhabitants, 3,024 EWS flats were erect-

ed. Another Jailorwala Bagh project is underway to shelter 1,675 households. DDA officials say the recipients will receive the Rs 421.8 crore flats soon. A DDA official said 1,078 flats will be given over in Phase I when verification and other formalities for unit distribution to eligible recipients are complete. DDA has identified two more jhuggi clusters where beneficiaries are being verified for the remaining units. The Kathputli Colony redevelopment project is building 2,800 units in 14-story towers for approximately 40-year-old slum inhabitants. Average apartment size is 37 square meters. The facility would

MCD to investigate street vendors again

Delhi: After a citywide survey of street sellers, the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) will allocate shop locations. Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal said the strategy would ensure dignified working conditions for this key group. "Proper space will ensure social inclusivity and fulfil the government's commitment to provide equal opportunities for all," stated Kejriwal. Some police, committees, and policemen harass street merchants. We want these problems gone." To identify how many shopkeepers are in which location, who sits where, and what types of shops



are put up, all street vending shops will be surveyed. CM predicted a few months for this survey. Their shop setup will be arranged. AAP's national convener added, "We will arrange street vendors so that other shopkeepers around will not face any inconvenience."

He emphasized that cleanliness will be maintained. An AAP-run MCD street vendor

study was scheduled to begin in January this year. Since Lok Sabha elections are coming, the survey may start afterward. A 2022 government poll found 75,000 street sellers. Some vendor unions say there are 5 lakh street sellers in the city. They argue street vendor management is unlikely without a full survey and identification certificates for everybody.

Delhi LG authorizes freehold industrial plots

Delhi: Officials stated Lieutenant governor (LG) VK Saxena approved the transfer of DSIIDC's Relocation Scheme, 1998 industrial plots from leasehold to freehold. Landowning agencies lease leasehold properties to lessees for a set duration. Freehold

properties are transferred from the landowning agency to the owner. On Friday, the LG approved the transfer of these plots to freehold, easing the ban on selling or buying 22,000 small and medium industrial units in the Capital until March

31, 2025. The LG said the conversion will be granted if the original allottee owns the plots, has completed building construction, has closed his industrial unit in non-conforming areas, and has paid conversion charges, fees, and all other pending dues.

The Delhi Outer Ring Road will have electric-vehicle chargers every 5km

Delhi: Electric vehicles will be charged along the Outer Ring Road by Delhi's government at fast charging stations every 5km. A government official said the corridor was planned along Outer Ring Road, one of the city's busiest highways connecting major destinations. He suggested charging stations be placed below flyovers and on vacant land to avoid blocking traffic. The official stated the charging corridor would be built after the model code of conduct for general elections is lifted. Another



official claimed Outer Ring Road would be marketed as an easy EV charging route. This would reduce new EV purchasers' range concern. "Despite Delhi's high EV adoption, charging facilities are less apparent than gas stations, requiring Google Maps. New EV buyers would feel cer-

tain that they can readily charge their vehicles by branding the route, the official said, adding, "This stretch also has several residential areas along its circular length." The 47km Outer Ring Road travels via RK Puram, Munirka, IIT, Nehru Place, Kalkaji, Okhla, Azadpur, Jahangirpuri,

Rohini, and Model Town in the south, southeast, and north. Over 10,000 passenger cars passed via Chirag Dilli, Khel Gaon, IIT, and August Kranti Marg in 24 hours, according to a feasibility assessment. "The fact that there are charging stations at regular intervals also helps alleviate people's fear of long queues at such stations." Bhatt suggested posting signs on Outer Ring Road announcing the charging stations' presence to reassure future EV purchasers. The entrances and exits

Home Ministry to establish CAA helpline for Indian citizenship seekers

Delhi: Two days after issuing the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) guidelines, the Union Ministry of Home Affairs (MHA) announced a helpline for applicants. The ministry tweeted that CAA candidates can call the hotline from 8 am to 8 pm from anywhere in India to acquire information about the new law. MHA representative revealed information. "Helpline number for Indian citizenship applicants under #CAA-2019 is starting soon. Free calls from anywhere in India allow



applicants to acquire CAA-2019 information. Helpline open 8 am-8 pm. The law allows Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Buddhist, Christian, and Parsi refugees from Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Pakistan who immigrated to India before

December 31, 2014, to become citizens without a passport or visa. December 2019 saw Parliament adopt the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill

The Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha passed the Bill on December 9 and 11, respectively. The

MHA issued a statement amid protests over the CAA reassuring Indian Muslims that 18 crore Muslims have equal rights and will not be asked to verify their citizenship.

Indian Muslims need not fear because CAA has not affected their citizenship and has nothing to do with the 18 crore Indian Muslims who have equal rights as Hindus. The ministry stated that no Indian citizen would be required to show proof of citizenship after this Act.

Delhi Development Authority provides 24/7 PNG to 41 villages

"Saxena also gave the villages 5,000 sandalwood, 1,000 grape, and 5,000 guava trees to help them financially"



central government's Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan, Delhi Development Authority will undertake development projects. DDA has received Rs 960 crore to build infrastructure in urbanized villages and new urban regions. The Rs 20 crore PNG network, developed by Indraprastha Gas Limited, covers 100 sq km. The Union home minister said Rs 383 crore in village development were approved in a record

three months this year. The Dilli Gramodaya Abhiyan will build and improve roads, drains, footpaths, central verges, sewage treatment plants, pumping stations, rainwater harvesting, ponds and water bodies, parks, playgrounds, sports facilities, village libraries, community halls, and cattle care centres. Saxena also gave the villages 5,000 sandalwood, 1,000 grape, and 5,000 guava trees to help them financially.

"BJP councillor: None of the 10 municipality assurances stated before elections have been fulfilled in a year"

Delhi: Mayor Shelly Oberoi expressed alarm about the deteriorating condition of MCD's internal roadways, saying that Rs 1,500 crore had been allocated for their construction. During a press conference before the model code of conduct took effect, she promised to build 3,000 roads in Delhi using the mayor's Rs 1,000 crore and Rs 500 crore. All Delhi roadways, front lanes, and rear lanes will be pothole-free." In its first year running



MCD, AAP has prioritized development, Oberoi added. "We started several initiatives by building schools, parks, maternity centers, and parking lots. She said we started confirming corporation personnel and offering new jobs. The mayor's last-minute pronouncements were an attempt to garner public attention, according to opposition leader Raja Iqbal Singh, who said AAP

feared losing Lok Sabha elections and that the announcement only hours before the model code of conduct was set in was disgusting. The populace is furious with Delhi govt and MCD due to broken internal roads, unclean water, and failing parks. BJP councillor: None of the 10 municipality assurances stated before elections have been fulfilled in a year.

The DDA distributes 1,396 Jailorwala Bagh units.

Delhi: The DDA has allotted 1,396 units in Jailorwala Bagh under the "Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan" in-situ rehabilitation project. "This is a huge step toward giving national capital slum dwellers modern quarters and a respectable living. An official said 1,675 flats are built here, 1396 of which are for residents of three JJ clusters in Jailorwala Bagh in Ashok Vihar in north Delhi. Lieutenant governor VK Saxena instructed for early allocation of these flats to qualified beneficiaries during his visits and review meetings. qualifying JJ residents for over Rs 1.4 lakh as beneficiary contribution, compared to Rs 25 lakh for construction.

Not reporting ITR on Rs 2 crore income gets a Delhi woman 6 months in jail

Delhi: A Delhi court sentenced a lady to six months in prison for not filing a Rs 2 crore income return. The Income Tax Office (ITO) filed a complaint alleging that TDS (tax deducted at source) of Rs. Two lakh was deducted against the receipt of Rs 2 crore made to the accused, Savitri, during the financial year 2013-14, but the assessee/accused did not file a return of income for 2014-15. In the March 4 ruling, Additional Chief Metropolitan Magistrate (ACMM) Mayank Mittal sentenced the convict to six months of simple jail with a Rs 5,000 fine and one month of simple imprisonment in default. Savitri's counsel said she is an ignorant widow with no caregiver. She received 30 days' bail to appeal the order after the court considered her application. The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) found that 89 percent of individuals and 88 percent of enterprises believe.

Editorial

Global fight against terrorism

Many people in hospitals were in critical condition and the Governor of the Moscow region said rescuers would continue to search the site for "several days". Some witnesses filmed the gunmen from the upper floors as they walked through the stalls shooting people and sharing the footage on social media. "The terrorists used a flammable liquid to set fire to the concert hall's premises, where spectators were located" the Investigative Committee said and that people died both from gunshot wounds and smoke inhalation after a fire engulfed the 6,000-seater venue. The gunmen appear to have planned the attack carefully, setting fires by an emergency stairwell to herd people toward a killing zone in the middle of the lobby. Helicopters were brought in to drop about 160 tonnes of water, but it took 10 hours for the fire to be contained. Investigators said a man who jumped on one of the gunmen as he was shooting at the concert-goers, "immobilising" him and thus "saving the lives of people around him" would receive an award.

Russian MP Alexander Khinshtein said the attackers fled in a white Renault car and were stopped in the Bryansk region, about 340 kilometres away from Moscow. Russia's Federal Security Service (FSB) announced 11 people had been arrested, including four "directly involved". Russia's interior ministry said they were foreign nationals. Unconfirmed reports have mentioned nationals from Tajikistan. Khinshtein said passports from the country had been found in the car.

In Moscow, residents stood in long lines in the rain to donate blood for those hospitalised and mourners came to lay flowers outside the concert hall. Memorial posters featuring a single candle replaced some advertising billboards in the capital and major events were cancelled across the country.

IS-KP

ISIS-K emerged in 2014 and 2015 in Afghanistan and Pakistan after its leaders broke away from Al Qaeda and the Taliban. Its fighters declared loyalty to the even more violent and extremist Islamic State, also known as ISIS, which was gaining influence at the time, mounting attacks in Iraq and Syria. IS-K seeks to destabilise, overthrow and supplant existing governments in the historic Khorasan region to create a Caliphate in South and Central Asia, governed by a strict interpretation of Islamic sharia law. In January, it bombed the commemoration ceremony of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani in Kerman, Iran causing a high number of fatalities. With the Moscow attack, the terrorist group seems to be expanding its geographical scope. Russia had in decades past dealt with religiously inspired militancy, including in Chechnya and Dagestan. In more recent times, Russia had intervened to turn the tide in favour of Syrian forces fighting both their political opponents and jihadists. There were also reports that Chechens and other Russian jihadists had fought against Bashar al-Assad's regime during the Syrian civil war. Now that the Syrian front is largely quiet, these militants, under the IS-KP flag, may have decided to take their fight to Russia to avenge their defeat. The group later released highly graphic footage from the attack. The video, shows one of the gunmen opening fire on several people. New York Times has cited Colin Clarke, a counterterrorism analyst as saying; "ISIS-K has been fixated on Russia for the past two years. ISIS-K accuses Moscow of having Muslim blood in its hands, referencing Moscow's interventions in Afghanistan, Chechnya and Syria." In footage on social media, one of the suspects said he was offered money to carry out the attack.

Until 2023, the World Happiness Report was a publication of the Sustainable Development Solutions Network, a global initiative of the United Nations, and from 2024 onwards, it is a publication of the Wellbeing Research Centre at the University of Oxford. At first glance, it looks like the work of a genius—a report compiled after in-depth research and collated by the world's most esteemed institutions.

However, once you start noticing the details, their inaccuracies and biases inadvertently start jumping at you like a bunch of Bernie Sanders fans squeaking about wealth redistribution at a corporate dinner. Our first stop on this merry-go-round of analysis is the cultural carnival of the survey questions. Picture this: a questionnaire designed with all the cultural sensitivity of a bull in a china shop, asking respondents if they smiled or laughed yesterday as if happiness were a universal language spoken with a grin. It's as if the report believes the entire world shares the same sense of humour as a dad joke enthusiast at an open mic night. Job security? Income inequality? Access to education and healthcare? Who needs those when you can simply ask if someone had a good laugh yesterday? Speaking from personal experience, I



am not sure about yesterday, but I did laugh a lot today, and that was when I looked at the World Happiness Report 2024. Another flaw that the report indulges in is interpreting "aspirations" as unhappiness. Individuals from developing countries might be a lot more aspirational or ambitious; it does not necessarily make them unhappy with their lives. In fact, the opposite can still be argued. Someone who draws meaning from their everyday struggle, one who wants to turn their start-up into a billion-dollar venture, might be extremely content with their life, wishing to take it to another level. Imagine hustling day and night, dreaming of a better future, only to be termed "depressed" by some reports that mistake ambition for anguish and growth for gloom. This year's World

Happiness Report isn't the only one under scrutiny; the entire notion of happiness surveys seems flawed as it effectively ends up conveying nothing. Take the UN report averaging self-reported happiness scores from 2014 to 2016, for example. It claims that the happiest countries on Earth that year were, in order, Norway, Denmark, Iceland, Switzerland, Finland, the Netherlands, Canada, New Zealand, and, tied for ninth, Australia and Sweden. It's like trying to rank the world's best pizza toppings; everyone has their own opinion, and nobody can agree on the supreme winner. Also, imagine claiming that any two countries are exactly equal in happiness. In a Pew survey conducted in 2014 across 43 countries, Mexico, Israel, and Venezuela emerged as the unlikely champions, secur-

ing the top three spots, while the US made it into the top 10, barely beating Vietnam and Colombia. If that is not confusing enough, here are the countries that scored better than Japan: Argentina, Peru, Malaysia, Pakistan, South Africa, and Nicaragua. If any survey ranks Pakistan higher than Japan in happiness, then we might as well start measuring happiness through tarot cards instead of surveys. These surveys mostly rely on subjective self-reporting, overlooking cultural nuances in the process. In Japan, for example, there exists a cultural reluctance to boast about one's good fortune, while in Scandinavia, there's an overwhelming societal expectation to proclaim one's happiness to the world. Coming back to the World Happiness Report 2024, India is ranked 126th out of 143 nations. It is not disputable that India is a third-world country with very low per capita income and miles to achieve in alleviating poverty, infant mortality, women's safety issues, and corruption. There is no denying the fact that the law and order situation in India can get a thousand times better, and the ease of doing business needs to improve a lot more. That being said, India securing a lower spot than Libya, Iraq, Palestine,

Ukraine, and Pakistan does seem like a bit of a stretch. It is not being argued that an average person in these countries cannot be happy with their lives or that India has achieved the absolute pinnacle of happiness as compared to these countries, but war-torn countries like Libya, Iraq, Ukraine, Palestine, and debt-ridden, terrorism-infested countries like Pakistan faring better than India is bound to raise some eyebrows. Even people under the military dictatorship of Myanmar are apparently happier than in India; the less said about this, the better. Iran's positioning above Tunisia may seem perplexing too, considering the stark contrast in women's rights and personal freedoms between the two nations. While Iranian women continue to face stringent dress codes and limitations on their autonomy, Tunisian women enjoy relatively more liberal rights, including the freedom to marry outside their religion. Meanwhile, the US finds itself nestled among the top-ranking nations, basking in the glow of its American Dream. Yet, beneath the stars and stripes lies a nation grappling with political polarisation, income inequality, and a healthcare system that seems to operate on the principle of "survival of the richest".

Democratic Taiwan: An ideological and political challenge for China

On January 13 this year, Democratic Progressive Party (DPP)'s candidate Lai Ching-te won the Taiwan President election by receiving 40 per cent of the votes, while his opponents, Kuomintang (KMT)'s Hou Yu-ih won about 33 per cent and Taiwan People's Party (TPP)'s Ko Wen-je received about 26 per cent of the votes. However, the ruling DPP lost the majority in the Legislative Yuan. Taiwan has been conducting elections since 1996 with the participation of its 23 million citizens in the democratic process. However, the stakes for China are high now. Firstly, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a free and fair election in Taiwan buttressed by a mature rule of law is a major

ideological challenge and political legitimacy issue. The CCP has been arguing that it follows an inexplicable "socialist democracy". Theoretically, its 98 million cadres elect over 2,000 deputies to the party congress every five years, who in turn elect a 200-member Central Committee, a 25-member Politburo, and a seven-member Politburo Standing Committee. China's 1.4 billion people thus have no role in this "democratic" process. It had been suggested that the CCP's policies have led to the building of a "well-off society" with higher per capita income. It did not explain why it took seven long decades of communist rule to achieve this. The CCP had ridiculed democracies for their shoddy

responses to the Covid pandemic, besides growing income inequalities. Of course, Beijing did not explain to the international community how the virus emerged in Wuhan and penalised those who questioned China's responses, such as Australia. The CCP also reduced Marxism to crass economism by trumpeting its economic policies. CCP's "model", which is now being exported abroad, is thus facing a crisis. Secondly, CCP leaders have ratcheted up their rhetoric and actions to reunify Taiwan, even though an overwhelming majority of Taiwanese prefer the status quo. As China has risen, its ambitions also soared, with all-round assertive behaviour across the neighbourhood and beyond.

Putin: Continuity with control

The re-election of President Vladimir Putin has emerged as a pivotal event in the global geopolitical landscape, drawing intense scrutiny and analysis from various quarters. Although widely anticipated, this development marks a critical juncture in determining Russia's future trajectory and its interactions with the international community. The discourse surrounding the election encapsulates a myriad of perspectives, each dissecting the implications of Putin's continued presidency through distinct lenses. At the forefront of the discussions is the narrative prevalent in Western countries, notably the US and key European nations, which attributes Putin's electoral success to his authoritarian consolidation of power. This narrative primarily focuses on the suppression of political dissent within Russia, highlighting actions such as the mysterious deaths of Alexei Navalny, who, prior to becoming the face of opposition in Russia, was associated with far-right and hyper-nationalist forces. Such incidents are portrayed as indicative of Putin's intent to silence any opposition, securing his hold on power through any means deemed necessary. Contrary to this viewpoint, a significant portion of the Russian population, along with some international commentators, offers a counter-narrative. They argue that the Western perspective simplifies the complex socio-political landscape of



Russia, failing to fully recognise the genuine support Putin enjoys among many Russians. From their perspective, Putin's leadership is seen as a defiance against NATO's encroachment and the destabilising efforts of Western powers. This support is often framed within the context of strategic challenges faced by Russia, with the expansion of NATO portrayed as a direct threat to the nation's sovereignty and security. The discourse extends to think tanks across the Atlantic, which have been vocal in analysing the election's ramifications. Notably, institutions that have historically been skeptical of Russia have refrained from accusing Putin of significant voter fraud in this instance. However, they remain reluctant to acknowledge Putin's popularity, attributing it simplistically to authoritarianism. The election's implications are far-reaching, with Putin's victory solidifying his position for another term. Attention now turns to his long-term vision for Russia and the geopolitical manoeuvres he may

undertake. A critical aspect of this vision is identifying a successor who can perpetuate Putin's legacy and further Russia's global aspirations. This initiative transcends mere governance continuity; it aims to reinforce Russia's stance against Western narratives that often depict Putin as a visionless, power-hungry autocrat. By successfully managing the power transition, Putin can challenge these portrayals and affirm the legitimacy of his leadership. Another dimension of the election's aftermath can involve testing NATO's resolve, potentially through provocations that question the alliance's commitment to collective defence as outlined in Article 5. Such strategies not only evaluate NATO's unity and strength but also aim to expose the limitations of its security assurances, undermining its credibility. Furthermore, the election outcomes may encourage Putin to escalate military engagements, notably through the second mass mobilisation of reservist forces for operations in Ukraine.

Japan is rocked by financial scandals

Is Japanese politics likely to change in the near future? On the one hand, the ruling Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), rocked by financial scandals, is moving towards reducing the influence of its factions, though nobody has been convicted yet of financial irregularities. Simultaneously, the upcoming Nippon Ishin No Kai, or Japan Innovation Party, held its party convention in Kyoto on Sunday, March 25. The party has stated its main goal of becoming the largest opposition party in the next elections to the Diet. At the same time, they have intro-

duced a larger goal, which is to push the ruling LDP-Komeito alliance out of government in the next election. The effort of the Nippon Ishin is to take Japan towards a two-party system. In Nippon Ishin's view, the next election should, in its perception, start a process of deciding upon Japan's future. An election is due only in October 2025, but the opposition party believes that the scandal racked the LDP, possibly with a new leadership by September, when Fumio Kishida's tenure as LDP President ends. Struggle

could bring a snap election. The G7 Summit in June and the Tokyo elections on July 7 are events guiding the timing of a snap poll. Major political change in Japan has been rare since World War II ended. In August 2009, the LDP lost an election to the Democratic Party of Japan. They elected Yukio Hatoyama as Japan's Prime Minister. This occurred 15 years after the LDP first lost office in 1993, when Morihiro Hosokawa led a coalition government, forcing the LDP from office for the first time since its establishment in 1955. Both of

these events were described as historic but lacked sustainability, and the LDP came back to power after each such excursion and has continued till date. Hosokawa in 1993 and Hatoyama in 2009 were backed by high popularity and great expectations from Japanese voters. However, it took less than a year for each of them to have internal conflicts in their governments. Popular perceptions have lost hope in them. The total absence of LDP from governments since 1955 has been four years over the two breaks.

Norges Bank of Norway supports ICICI Securities delisting

NEW DELHI: Amid Quantum Mutual Fund voting against the proposed delisting of ICICI Securities, the largest public shareholder Norges Bank Investment Fund has voted in favour of the proposal of the stock broking arm of ICICI Bank. The foreign fund, which holds nearly 3.25 per cent stake in ICICI Securities, voted in favour on Thursday, the first day of e-voting, as per the information posted on the website of Norges Fund Investment Bank. The e-voting will remain open till March 26. The move of the Norway-based Norges Bank provided a shot in the arm of ICICI Securities' plan to delist itself as it needs two-thirds of the public shareholders' support to pass the resolution. However, Quantum Mutual Fund, which holds a 0.09 per cent stake in ICICI Securities, voted against the resolution



on Thursday. Quantum Mutual Fund opposed the delisting as it did not find the swap share ratio lucrative to the shareholders of ICICI Securities. As per the scheme of arrangement, shareholders of ICICI Securities will get 67 shares of ICICI Bank for every 100 shares they hold. Public shareholders collectively hold nearly 25 per cent stake in the company. Now, the fate of the resolution hinges on how the remaining public shareholders vote. Insurance Corporation is the second biggest public shareholder, with a

2.5 per cent stake in ICICI Securities. Indian insurance companies, including LIC, hold a 3.5 per cent stake, while mutual funds hold a 2 per cent stake. The total shareholding of foreign portfolio investors is 10 per cent. Resident Indians hold nearly 6 per cent. ICICI Bank is the promoter of the company, with nearly 75 per cent shareholding. ICICI Securities announced the plan to delist in June 2023. If the resolution goes through, ICICI Securities will eventually become a wholly-owned subsidiary of ICICI Bank.

FAA to examine United Airlines safety procedures

NEW DELHI: The US Federal Aviation Administration will be examining safety procedures at United Airlines following a series of incidents involving Boeing-manufactured planes. The aircraft maker has been facing serious criticism, after several reports of safety issues, which includes an incident in January where a panel on a Boeing 737 MAX 9 Alaska Airlines jet came off during a flight. United Airlines, which operates the largest fleet of 737 MAX 9s with 79 aircraft, has disclosed issues like poorly secured bolts on cap doors. Sasha Johnson, United's vice president of corporate safety,



informed employees that the FAA will intensify its oversight of the airline's safety protocols. She emphasized the need for a thorough evaluation of operational areas to enhance safety compliance. She said United needed to take an "even closer look at multiple areas of our

operation to ensure we are doing all we can to promote and drive safety compliance". Recent safety incidents have prompted a reevaluation of procedures to ensure utmost safety measures are in place. United Airlines, which became the largest US airline by traffic.

Amazon India revises seller fee structures

NEW DELHI: E-commerce major Amazon on Saturday said it is revising its seller fees on account of inflation and interest rates, as well as to match the industry-prevalent fee structures. Starting April 7, Amazon.in is revising its fee structure, including referral fees, closing

fees, and weight handling fees besides other ancillary fee heads, for sellers on its marketplace. "These revisions take into consideration various macroeconomic factors such as inflation, interest rates, operational costs etc, and align with industry-prevalent fee patterns,"

the company said. Referral fees will be reduced in categories like apparel, bedsheets, cushion covers, and dinnerware, and increased in categories like business and scientific supplies, chimneys, laptop sleeves and bags, and tires, a company statement said.

Maruti Suzuki acquires over 6% stake in Amlgo Labs

NEW DELHI: Maruti Suzuki India on Saturday said it has acquired over 6 per cent stake in technology startup Amlgo Labs. The startup operates in data analytics, cloud engineering, machine learning (ML) and artificial intelligence (AI) to assist companies in data-driven decision-making. The investment is being made through Maruti Suzuki Innovation Fund, an initiative to undertake strategic investments in startups exhibiting high levels of technological innovation, the auto major said in a statement. This is the second such investment by the company. Earlier, it had invested in Sociograph Solutions in June 2022. "Our investment in Amlgo Labs will help us to further strengthen the quality of new models, using advanced analytics and machine learning," Maruti Suzuki India Managing Director and CEO Hisashi Takeuchi said.

Trade body slams Moscow terror attack

CHENNAI: The Indo-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industries has expressed deep shock at the Moscow terror attack which claimed more than 70 lives. "We extend our deepest condolences to all those affected by this horrific act of violence. Our thoughts and prayers are with the friends and families of the victims," said a statement issued here by P Thangappan, secretary-general of Indo-Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industries, on Saturday. The Chamber assured the Russian Federation of all support, and said, "We are always with you against terrorism in any form."

'Govt has set sight on marathon to 2047, emphasis on fiscal prudence'

In the Budget speech, the focus on 2047 is evident. The government is committed to a long-term journey, akin to running a marathon. This endeavor requires sustained effort and endurance, as opposed to short bursts of energy, says Finance secretary T V Somanathan. 'Govt has set sight on marathon to 2047, emphasis on fiscal prudence'



marathon, it's not a sprint. If you are going to run a marathon, you need to be in good shape and you can't have short-term stimulants or something that will get you some yards and then it's done. The whole focus is on making India a developed country by 2047, for which a healthy pres-

ent and a strong fiscal position is an important concomitant. Some purely short term measures don't really fit into that picture. It's a consistent picture: focus on the long term for which you need to build strength in the short term and that needs to be done by prudence in fiscal policy and

by not doing things which can detract you from that path. Not doing the wrong thing is more important than appearing to do things. The idea is that gov't finances may be good, bad or indifferent depending on the times, depending on the circumstances, depending on the policies. But what is the position should be reflected as reasonably and accurately as possible. That is an emphasis. As regards the Finance Commission, again the terms of reference that have been given to them are the term.

Amul goes international with launch in US

ANAND: Popular dairy brand Amul, whose tagline is 'Taste of India', goes international for the first time and is ready to cater to the people with its range of fresh products in the US. "I am pleased to inform that Amul shall be launching its fresh milk products in the United States of America. Happy to inform that we have tied up with a 108-year-old dairy cooperative in the US - Michigan Milk Producers Association, and this announcement was done at their annual meeting on March 20 at Detroit," said Jayen Mehta, Managing Director of Gujarat Cooperative Milk



Marketing Federation (GCMMF), which operates Amul. "This is for the first time Amul fresh products range will be launched anywhere outside India and in a market like the United States, which has a very strong Indian and Asian diaspora," Mehta told ANI. Further, he said Amul hopes to expand the

brand and become the largest dairy company in line with the vision given by Prime Minister Narendra Modi when he attended its golden jubilee celebrations recently. Amul's entrepreneurial spirit has made it one of the strongest dairy brands in the world. Addressing the gathering during the

golden jubilee celebration, the Prime Minister asserted that a sapling that was planted 50 years ago by the farmers of Gujarat has become a giant tree. Amul products are exported to more than 50 countries around the world. It has under it 18,000 milk cooperative committees, a network of 36,000 farmers, processing more than 3.5 crore litres of milk per day. The evolution of the dairy sector in India and the stellar role played by dairy cooperatives since the launch of Operation Flood form an integral part of the country's growth story as the country now is the largest producer of milk.

'Office space demand in January-Mar set to rise 35 per cent in 6 cities; 2-fold jump in Hyderabad'

NEW DELHI: Office space demand across six major cities continues to be strong, with gross leasing of workspaces set to rise 35 per cent annually in the January-March quarter, according to Colliers India. Real estate consultant Colliers India has released the data on the office market for the January-March period, nine days before the closing of the current quarter. As per the data, the total gross leasing of office space is estimated to rise to 13.6 million square feet across six major cities -- Bengaluru, Delhi-NCR, Mumbai, Chennai, Hyderabad and Pune -- during the first quarter of 2024. The leasing stood at 10.1 million square feet (sq ft) in the year-ago period. The demand is set to



grow in Hyderabad, Mumbai, Bengaluru and Delhi-NCR, but may fall in Chennai. In Pune, the demand is likely to remain flat at 0.8 million sq ft. According to the data, the leasing of office space in Hyderabad is estimated to jump more than two times to 2.9 million square feet during January-March from 1.3 million square feet in the year-ago period. In Mumbai, the demand is expected to surge 90 per cent to 1.9 million sq ft from 1 million sq ft. Office space leasing in

Bengaluru is set to rise 25 per cent to 4 million sq ft from 3.2 million sq ft. In Delhi-NCR, the demand is expected to rise 14 per cent to 2.5 million sq ft from 2.2 million sq ft. Office demand in Chennai is estimated to fall 6 per cent to 1.5 million sq ft during January-March this year compared to 1.6 million square feet in the year-ago period. Gross absorption or leasing data does not include lease renewals, pre-commitments and those deals where only a letter of intent has been signed.

Miners urge govt not to impose export duty on low grade iron ore

NEW DELHI: Miners' body FIMI has urged the government not to impose any export duty on low-grade iron ore, stating that any such move would cause a significant loss of state revenues and employment and also affect foreign exchange earnings. In a representation to the government, the Federation of Indian Mineral Industries (FIMI) said the mining sector was adversely impacted when in May 2022 the export duty was imposed on low-grade iron ore fines and pellets. The government, however, withdrew the tax in November same year. A major share of the mining sector's contribution to the country's GDP is accounted for by iron ore among the non-coal minerals. Iron ore mining also significantly contributes



towards creating jobs with employment of about 5 lakh persons -- 45,000 direct and 4,50,000 indirect, it said. More than 90 per cent of the country's overall iron ore shipments go to China. "We request that any proposal for banning, restricting exports of iron ore and pellets may kindly not be considered and the status quo of nil export

duty on these products be maintained," the miners' body said. With the opening of new mines and expansion of existing mines the iron ore production capacity is likely to rise to 330 million tonnes in FY'25. But if there is a ban on exports of iron ore or a duty is imposed on its exports, in such a scenario the production will drop to

225 million tonnes, it said. In the mining of iron ore, lumps are generated to the tune of only 25-30 per cent and the balance of iron ore is in the form of fines. "The fines below 58 per cent Fe are required to be kept in the mining lease area only as these cannot be utilised by the steel industry specially secondary steel sector," it said. The non-removal of low grade iron ore from the mines restrict the production of lumps also and becomes an environmental hazard besides limiting scientific mining. Thus accumulation of iron ore fines in the mines also leads to the restricted availability of lumps in the market which in turn adversely impacts the steel industry, it said.

'Ageing' Shami needs to take cue from Anderson: McGrath

NEW DELHI: Legendary Australian pacer Glenn McGrath believes that the current Indian pace attack has much to offer before the next generation can take over. McGrath also encouraged Mohammed Shami to draw inspiration from the longevity of England veteran James Anderson. McGrath made these remarks on the day when India secured an impressive 4-1 Test series victory over England at home. "We have to wait and see the next generation coming through. (Jasprit) Bumrah has still got a bit to go, (Mohammed) Shami is a little older, and (Mohammed) Siraj has been around for a little while but still has plenty left. So, the (current Indian) bowling attack has still some life left," McGrath told PTI. On the sidelines of an MRF Pace Foundation event in Chennai.

Salman Khan's Production Company Issues Warning Against Fake Casting Calls

Salman Khan's production company, Salman Khan Films, has issued an official statement cautioning the public about fraudulent casting calls. Through a post on their official Instagram page the production house clarified that they have no affiliations with third parties for casting in films. The statement read, "This is to clarify that neither Mr Salman Khan nor Salman Khan Films are casting for any film currently. We have not hired any casting agents for any of our future films. Please do not trust any emails or messages received by you for this purpose. Legal action will be taken if any party is found falsely using Mr Khan's or SKF's name in any unauthorised manner." Sharing the screenshot, the production house wrote, "Official notice!"



Ashok Saraf wins Maharashtra Bhushan 2023

Delhi: Chief minister Eknath Shinde announced that legendary Marathi cinema and stage actor Ashok Saraf received the Maharashtra Bhushan 2023, the state's highest civilian award, for his artistic contributions. The hits Gammatt Jammatt, Ashi Hi Banwa Banwi, Dhoom Dhadaka, Balache Baap Brahmachari, Bin Kamacha Navra, and Majha Pati Karodpati made Saraf (75) famous. Other heroes like Sachin Pilgaonkar and Laxmikant Berde appeared in his films. His Hindi film roles are also funny. The actor told reporters, "I am thrilled to join the ranks of P L Deshpande and other greats. It shows that the state recognizes my 50 years of industrial hard work." CM Shinde praised him for his success in comic, serious, and villainous parts and for ruling his followers. The award includes a medal, citation, and Rs 25 lakh. Awards were raised from Rs 10 lakh to Rs 25 lakh by the state government last year.

Sandeep Reddy Vanga to team up with Salman Khan for a dark thriller?

Delhi: Sandeep Reddy Vanga, who is currently riding high on the mega success of the Ranbir Kapoor starrer 'Animal', might soon work with superstar Salman Khan for a dark thriller. The director is currently in talks with Salman Khan regarding the same. Vanga is presently collaborating with Allu Arjun and Prabhas on his other projects. However, there has been no confirmation on his project with Salman yet. Earlier, Vanga had revealed that Ranveer Singh called

him after the release of the movie and spoke to him for 40 long minutes on the phone. Vanga expressed his own surprise, mentioning that the actor spoke to him for almost 40 minutes over the phone. He found the lengthy message from Singh enjoyable, having read it multiple times. While the specific details of the message couldn't be disclosed, Vanga noted that Singh highlighted aspects of Animal that made him realize, "Oh, this is also in my film." In the interview, director

Sandeep Reddy Vanga discussed a media report that referred to a statement he made. He mentioned the context where the second ex-wife of a superstar criticized films like Baahubali 2 and Kabir Singh for allegedly promoting misogyny and endorsing stalking. Addressing the assertion, Sandeep conveyed his opinion that the individual making the claim might not grasp the distinction between pursuing someone and approaching them respectfully.

Thalapathy Vijay may change Tamil Nadu politics

Delhi: Vijay, known as 'Thalapathy' (commander in Tamil), launched Tamizhaga Vetri Kazhagam, his political organization. Vijay is only the second superstar after M G Ramachandran (MGR) to enter politics in Tamil Nadu. Can he challenge

Tamil Nadu's political order? The Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) and All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) groupings control 70-80% of Tamil Nadu's vote. The remaining 20-30% votes are up for grabs. Vijay will target

this space, as have many before him for 30 years. Veteran Congress politician G K Mooppanar founded the Tamil Nadu Congress in 1996. Captain Vijayakanth founded Desiya Murpokku Dravida Kazhagam in 2005.

CAPSULES

Kriti- Shahid arrived in Delhi to Promote "Teri Baaton Mein Aisa Uljha Jiya"

Delhi: Recently actors Shahid Kapoor and Kriti Sanon came to Delhi to promote their upcoming movie "Teri Baaton, mein Aisa Uljha Jiya". The promotional event was held at the Imperial Hotel, New Delhi. The movies are all set to release on 9 February 2023 in theatres. The movie is based on the life of Aryan (Shahid Kapoor) who is not able to find a perfect life partner. He meets a perfect girl, Sifra (Kriti Sanon), during an official assignment in the US and falls in love with her only to discover later that it's an impossible love story. The movie is produced under Maddock films and Jio Studios. It is directed by Amit Joshi and Aradhana Shah.



Film City in Noida, UP, to host cinema university

Delhi: A cinema university would be built on 20 acres of the 230-acre International Film City in Sector 21 off the Yamuna Expressway, 6km from the future Noida International Airport. The institution plans editing suites, VR labs, and 15 acres for set, costume, and prop manufacturing. After competing with T-Series and consortiums led by Akshay Kumar and KC Bokadia, producer Boney Kapoor's Bayview Projects and real estate developer Bhutani Group won the first phase of the project.

Disney+Hotstar streams "Miss Perfect"

Delhi: Hotstar has revolutionized online shows. Featuring the lovely Lavanya Tripathi, Miss Perfect has become the talk of the film industry due to its diverse story about society. Characters in the series appeal to everyday viewers. Miss Perfect follows the lives of Miss Lavanya (Lavanya Tripathi), Mr. Rohit, their close neighbors, society, and a maid with pleasant humor and thought-provoking issues. Young director Vishwak



Khande Rao directs. This comic series stars Telugu superstar Lavanya Tripathi, famed for Andala Raakshasi, Bhale Bhale Magadivoy, and others. Her character, Lavanya, is a clean freak who denies OCD and will break any rule if it's not flawless. The plot

revolves around how her drive for perfection gets her into humorous situations she tries to escape. Harshvardhan, Jhansi, Mahesh Vitta, Abhijeet, Abhigna, Harsh Roshan, Sunayana, Roopa Lakshmi, Keshav Deepak, Manik Reddy, and others star in the series Disney+Hotstar excels with this new comedy web series that might be enormous. New web series "Miss Perfect" is airing on Disney+Hotstar.

Saregama Talent launches with Maahi, Pragati, and Arjun as its first three next-gen

Delhi: Saregama, an RPSG group company, is excited to unveil 'Saregama Talent,' a vertical for budding artists. After this thrilling move, the business introduced Maahi, Arjun, and Pragati, its first three next-gen performers. These three performers' creative music style captivates listeners of all ages. The launch introduces promising musicians and shows Saregama's commitment to nurturing, promoting, and showcasing new talent. Greeting Maahi,



Pragati, and Arjun, Saregama India Ltd. MD Vikram Mehra said, "The launch of Saregama Talent marks a strategic move to enhance our non-film content offering, a cru-

cial step toward delivering diverse and comprehensive entertainment experiences to our audience. Maahi, Pragati, and Arjun have exceptional talent and music passion. We will work with them on many audio and video projects. Saregama Talent will soon include non-Hindi performers. We believe that with Saregama, this trio will make waves in the music industry and win over music fans worldwide." The year-long training, grooming, and mentoring Maahi, Arjun, and Pragati received from Saregama sets this launch differently. Instead of just singing, they study acting, stage presence, fashion, persona, and more.

Pooja Gorgeous Red Arpita Mehta Mirror Lehenga Was Made To Set Valentine's Day

Delhi: With Valentine's Day 2024 just around the corner, inspiration is being searched for from everywhere. The usual dose of heart prints and Barbie pink silhouettes may be a fail-safe fashion choice on the day of love but if you're seeking something of the traditional variety, then Pooja Hegde is the one to look at. The Indian film actress is currently celebrating the #WeddingSeason in Mangalore and chose an ensemble that fit the ethnic bill while also sticking to the theme for the upcoming Valentine's Day.

Pooja Hegde donned a striking crimson lehenga from designer Arpita Mehta which came in a contemporary silhouette.

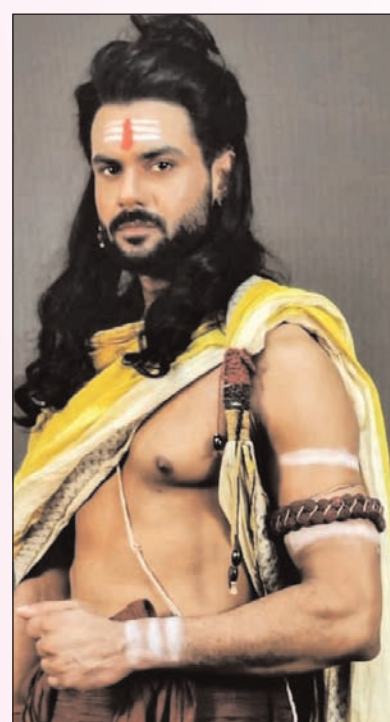
The skirt featured heavy mirror embellishment in an embroidered floral and chevron pattern over its base. Matching it was a bralette-style blouse with narrow straps and a plunging neckline with



a fringe trimming. Draped over her arms was a red dupatta to go with the look. Far from your usual traditional style, this one's a must-wear if you'd like to merge ethnic with Valentine vibes on the day of love.

Vishal Aditya Singh Plays Lord Parashuraam

Delhi: Actor Vishal Aditya Singh, who will play the lead in 'Bhagwaan Parashuraam', shared that he is excited to delve into the unexplored, saying the show aims to bring viewers closer to Indian history and culture. 'Bhagwaan Parashuraam' starring Vishal, Ishita Ganguly, and Navina Bole, tells the unknown story of a God whose presence is recognised but not entirely explored. The devotional series will showcase the journey of Lord Parashuraam, the sixth avatar of Lord Vishnu. Talking about the show, Vishal, who plays the character of Bhagwaan Parashuraam shared: "India has deep roots in mythology, and the Indian entertainment industry has brought forth some amazing stories. While we are familiar with Lord Vishnu's tales, his avatars are less known." He further said: "As a spiritual person, when the opportunity to play 'Lord Parashuraam' came my way, I was excited to delve into the unexplored. The show will not only entertain viewers



but also takes them on a deep dive into the lesser-known backstory of this powerful entity. I am excited to be a part of this as it aims to bring viewers closer to Indian history and culture." 'Bhagwaan Parashuraam' will premiere on February 5 on Star Bharat.

Rahman's AI voice-generation of late singers raises discussion

Delhi: AR Rahman clarified on social media after the song's use of Bamba Bakya and Shahul Hameed's vocals polarized. The winner said, "We took permission from their families and sent deserving remuneration for using their voice algorithms. technology is not a threat and a nuisance if we use it right... (sic)" AR Rahman employed AI to replicate Bamba Bakya and Shahul Hameed's voices for Rajinikanth's upcoming film Lal Salaam's song Thimiri Ezhu. Even though the composer disclosed that the singers' families were consulted and compensated, his action sparked a dispute. Music composer and lyricist Sean Roldan supports voice reconstruction, saying, "AI is not a threat. It is the inevitable next step."

Sanjay Leela Bhansali's OTT Debut

Sanjay Leela Bhansali is coming up with an interesting web series for Netflix. Titled "Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar," the makers unveiled its first look. The project marks Bhansali's debut on OTT, and the series features a stellar cast, including Manisha Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Aditi Rao Hydari, Richa Chaddha, Sanjeeda Sheikh, and Sharmin Segal. The series depicts a story amid a power struggle in Heeramandi. "A young heir caught in the crossfire chooses love over succession, disrupting the status quo. Set in pre-independent India against a burgeoning freedom movement, the final thread holding the art of tawaif (courtesans) is put to the test" is the official synopsis of the series. Touted as an epic saga exploring themes of love, power, revenge, and freedom.

Ramannakunta goes dry, locals worry as groundwater plummets in abutting colonies



SECUNDERABAD: Up to last Dec, the century-old Ramannakunta, situated in the heart of the Secunderabad Cantonment, was a cesspool as it was filled with sewage water year-round. With the increase in temperature, the sewage water started to evaporate from Feb, and by March, it had turned into barren land. The impact of the lake drying up has also been seen in the depletion of groundwater levels in the surrounding colonies. Residents of the colonies, including

Ganesh Nagar Colony, Sairam Colony, Sitarampur Colony, Ramreddy Colony, and Harshvardhan Colony were surprised to see the lake suddenly dry up. As of now, groundwater has plummeted up to one meter below ground level. "We spent almost three days in the sewage water which overflowed from the lake due to a heavy downpour in 2020," said residents of Sitarampur Colony. They said they have never seen the lake completely dried up in the past five decades. STOI saw a few chil-

dren playing cricket in the middle of the lake. "We do not have a playground to play cricket, so we are utilizing the lake as a playground," they said. SCB former ward-VI member, Pandu Yadav, said the then BRS govt sanctioned 30 crore to build a storm water drain between Harshvardhan Colony and Center Point Bridge at Bowenpally. However, the GHMC has not yet started works to divert sewage water from the nearby colonies into the lake.

GHMC nod for porous concrete

Hyderabad: To enhance groundwater levels in city by allowing rainwater to seep into ground, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) is going to introduce pervious concrete. In collaboration with Re Sustainability Limited, an C&D management agency, GHMC has developed pervious concrete blocks and tiles. GHMC commissioner Ronald Rose directed officials and waste management agencies to produce porous concrete and tiles using recycled materials from construction and demolition sites.

A successful demonstration was held and a pilot project to lay porous concrete footpaths will be initiated. tnn Shree Cement forays into RMC segment with new plant in Hyderabad, launches Bangur Concrete Shree Cement expands into RMC segment with Bangur Concrete plant in Hyderabad. The company aims to boost brand equity, cost efficiency, and R&D efforts to emerge as a modern, green building materials firm. 'Concrete' evidence against Congress with income tax department, says Delhi high

court Delhi High Court dismisses Congress' petitions challenging income tax reassessment, citing late filing and substantial evidence of Rs 520 crore unaccounted transfers. Details include tax raid on MEIL, payments to MPs/MLAs, and violation of statutory provisions by the tax authority. SpaceX collaborates with US intelligence agency on \$1.8 Billion spy satellite project SpaceX and a US intelligence agency are working on a \$1.8B project to deploy spy satellites, improving surveillance capability.

Delhi tourism to organise heritage walks at 50 places

NEW DELHI: Delhi's tourism department is organising heritage walks at 50 different locations across the capital on Saturday. These walks will continue till March 31 with the first inaugural walk scheduled at Mehrauli Archaeological Park. According to the tourism

department's website, Mehrauli Archaeological Park, which is uniquely dotted with ruins from early medieval times to the 19th century, is one of the most popular heritage sites in the city. The major attractions at Mehrauli Archaeological Park include the mosque and tomb of Jamali, a

royal tomb which is the first building in the sub-continent to use the true arch, a beautiful step well with subterranean rooms and residence of a British official (which was built out of a tomb). The site is adjacent to another historically important place, the Qutub complex.



'Covid lungs' continue to plague survivors

Kolkata: Four years after the state recorded its first Covid death on March 23, 2020, a significant number of Kolkatans are contracting respiratory infections with Covid survivors forming a chunk of such patients. 'Post-Covid lung' continues to plague these patients, making them susceptible to asthma, COPD and upper and lower respiratory tract infections, including pneumonia, often in a more severe form, say doctors. Several city private hospitals still have many pneumonia and some Covid patients, though most have a mild disease. Many of these patients have suffered long-term scars on their lungs from Covid, say experts. Covid survivors have been suffering from frequent bouts of cough and cold and chest infections, which point to the fact that their immune system has weakened and they need to be cautious, said CMRI Hospital pulmonology director Raja Dhar. "Any respiratory illness, be it upper respiratory tract infection, pneumonia, influenza-triggered chest infection, bronchitis, Covid or adenovirus, affects the lungs. In most cases, the condition is reversed with treatment but those in the 50-plus age group remain at risk, especially if they have comorbidities. A significant number of them have suffered a permanent damage or lung fibrosis due to Covid. They remain susceptible to frequent infections," said Dhar. He added that as temperature drops, polluting particles multiply at the lower levels and trigger lung and upper respiratory tract ailments. "Since last winter, we have come across a significant number of Covid survivors who have had severe exacerbations of asthma, COPD and respiratory infections."

BJP may offer MNS RS seat vacated by Goyal, MLC nomination for Raj's son

Mumbai: In the event no arrangement works out to attain the 45+ seats goal in the Lok Sabha elections, the BJP may offer Rajya Sabha seat to an MNS nominee, preferably Bala Nandgaonkar, who had defeated OBC leader Chhagan Bhujbal from Mazgaon, said a top BJP leader. He further said Raj Thackeray's son Amit may be appointed on the legislative council from Governor's quota. Incidentally, one Rajya Sabha seat will be vacant as Union minister Piyush Goyal is contesting LS polls from Mumbai North. The top BJP leader spoke at length on the unexpected meeting between Thackeray and Union home minister Amit Shah on the possibility of an alliance between



BJP and MNS. The meeting was reportedly facilitated by deputy chief minister Devendra Fadnis. "We do not know if BJP has offered a seat to MNS, but the sudden meeting assumes significant political importance," said the BJP leader. "BJP is expecting to reach an amicable deal and

ensure MNS supports the BJP for reaching the 45-plus goal," he said. Elaborating on his contention, the BJP leader said there's no doubt that Shiv Sena leader Eknath Shinde not only engineered split in the Shiv Sena, but also secured party symbol and name. However, despite securing support of 44 of 55 Shiv Sena legislators, there are doubts over the present status of Shinde's voter base. "We feel most legislators are with Eknath Shinde, but voters at the grassroots level, both in urban and rural areas, still owe allegiance to UBT president Uddhav Thackeray. BJP leadership believes that if voters prefer Uddhav Thackeray, it will be difficult to achieve the goal of 45-plus.

VBA to back Cong's Shahu Maharaj for Kolhapur

Mumbai: Vanchit Bahujan Aghadi (VBA) chief Prakash Ambedkar said on Saturday his party would support the head of Kolhapur's royal family and Congress's official candidate for Kolhapur Lok Sabha (LS) seat Shahu Chhatrapati Maharaj. Ambedkar said based on his party's ideology, it has been decided that VBA will give him full support and ensure his win. "We will take all efforts to ensure his win. VBA will work towards

it. We will take care that there are no instances like in the past," Ambedkar said. Ambedkar said he wasn't aware of seat-sharing talks in Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). "They haven't communicated with us about what decision they have taken. Let them first solve their problem, only then can they talk to us. We will wait till March 26 and then make our stand public. We have already offered to support Congress on seven seats. So we are already

moving forward and there is no standstill. We have written to the Congress president and not to regional leaders. We expect them to inform us. Dislodging BJP is our target and we will not mind any small tussles or delays," Ambedkar said. "We don't have to inform anyone, we will inform the voters and the public... We are already taking meetings and protests and have a well-oiled election machinery... We have already galvanised voters and built the

party at district and city levels," Ambedkar said. Shahu Chhatrapati (76) is the 12th generation heir of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj and great grandson of social reformer Rajarshi Chhatrapati Shahu Maharaj. Ambedkar last Tuesday offered VBA's support to Congress candidates in any seven Lok Sabha seats in a letter to its president Mallikarjun Kharge. The offer came even as it became apparent its chances of entering MVA were unravelling.

MCOCA wrongly applied, four acquitted of charges

Mumbai: Observing that there was no evidence to prove that the robbery even took place, a special court acquitted four men accused of being part of an organised crime syndicate and stabbing with a cutter and robbing a jewellery firm's office boy of 19 pieces of diamond ornaments at Andheri (E) in 2019. In the 74-page judgment copy, the judge also said both the then police commissioner and additional commissioner had granted sanction for invoking provisions of the stringent Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) without application of mind. While retired officer, Sanjay Barve, was the then police commissioner, DIG Manoj Kumar Sharma was the additional commissioner of police,

west

For charges under MCOCA to be invoked, a requirement under the Act is that there has to be more than one chargesheet against the head of the alleged crime syndicate in the preceding ten years

region. Both deposed as witnesses. For charges under MCOCA to be invoked, a requirement under the Act is that there has to be more than one chargesheet against the head of the alleged crime syndicate in the preceding ten years. Among

those acquitted are watchman Iqbal Isak (34), businessman Firoz Malik (37, auto driver Ramjan Khan (41) and Rakesh Singh (33) who was unemployed. Malik was alleged to be the gang's head. Referring to Sharma's deposition, special judge BD Shelke said that it was incumbent upon him to verify nature of offence registered against the accused and assess all investigation papers and also, assess chargesheet in respect of preceding crimes registered against them in last 10 years. "...the evidence came on record from his mouth referred above demonstrates that he has not taken this exercise and mechanically issued prior approval order. Thus, the prior approval order is not valid," the judge said.

Tamil Nadu's electricity demand crosses peak of 2023, touches 19,409MW

CHENNAI: Tamil Nadu's electricity demand surged to a record high of 19,409MW on Friday, surpassing last year's peak demand (19,387MW on April 20, 2023) a month earlier than expected. By April, Tangedco officials expect the state's demand to go up by another 8%. Officials say the early spike in demand is due to rising temperatures pushing up use of fans and air conditioners, and sanction of a three-phase power supply for irrigation. "The maximum demand was recorded around 11 am on Friday, coinciding with peak solar hours. We met the need without any difficulty as solar power generation was good," said an official. When demand peaked, generation



from solar energy was 4,162MW, nearly touching the maximum capacity of 4,200MW. Tangedco officials anticipate the peak may exceed 20,000 MW by the month-end or early April, and go up to 21,000 MW this summer. The surge in demand began in Jan. Officials say it is normal to see an 8% year-on-year increase in power demand. The power demand in Jan went up

by 11% compared to Jan 2023. In Feb there was a 9% increase compared to Feb 2023. In March and April, the surge is likely to hover over 9%, officials said. To meet demand, Tangedco has entered into short-term power purchase agreements with gencoms and power swapping agreements with northeastern states, securing an additional 4,321MW for April. To keep costs in check, power swap agree-

ments have been signed. North Chennai Thermal Power Station Stage III, which was recently inaugurated with an 800MW capacity, has commenced production at 260MW. This output is expected to increase after March 26, following the arrival of imported coal. Additionally, Vallur thermal plant units 1 and 2, which together have a capacity of 700 megawatts, will start generating power by March-end. Kudankulam Unit 1 will start generation in April second week. "By the time unit 2 of Kudankulam is shut down for fuelling in May, the wind season will begin and we should be able to manage the demand without much trouble," said officials.

Singer Anupam Roy is an alum of Texins

Instruments India campus. Naman Bafna, analog design lead at TI India, says music has always been his passion, and at TI, he found a way to connect over it with his colleagues. "Our jamming sessions are woven with laughter, collaboration, and shared passion, and this has given many the confidence to start their own YouTube channels and also perform both on and off campus on various occasions." The Music Room in Texins is a treasure trove of instruments catering to every musical whim - from the serene melodies of classical Hindustani and Carnatic to the energetic beats of fusion, jazz, pop, rock, and even progressive rock. There are drum kits, electric and bass guitars, amplifiers, pianos, tablas, flutes, violins - the list goes on. Arindam Chatterjee, HR leader at TI India, says the space pulsates with creativity and camaraderie.

Delhi Capitals survive MS Dhoni cameo to beat Chennai Super Kings



Despite a vintage Dhoni cameo of 37* off 16 balls, studded with 4 fours and 3 sixes, Delhi held nerve to beat Chennai in Vizag. But the foundation of the win was laid by Pant's quickfire 51, the opening burst of Khaleel (2 for 21) and his fellow pacer Mukesh Kumar's (3/21) death-over bowling, as he didn't get perturbed even when Dhoni was hitting big. Leading from the front, Rishabh Pant finally marked his return from a harrowing car crash with a commanding performance, scoring his first

IPL half-century since the incident, as Delhi Capitals secured a 20-run victory over Chennai Super Kings in Visakhapatnam on Sunday. Captain Pant's 51 off 32 balls, combined with left-hander David Warner's robust 52, propelled Delhi to a total of 191-5, their temporary home ground due to the impending general elections in the country. Despite being in the heartland of Chennai, the crowd largely rallied behind their beloved MS Dhoni, chanting his name fervently. Dhoni, in turn,

responded with a stellar unbeaten 37 off just 16 deliveries, comprising four boundaries and three sixes. But Delhi bowlers held their nerves, restricting Chennai to 171 for 6 to securing their team's first win of the season and halting Chennai's two-match winning streak. Khaleel Ahmed impressed with figures of 2-21, while Mukesh Kumar (3-21) claimed three crucial wickets towards the latter part of Chennai's chase. Earlier, Warner and Prithvi Shaw laid a solid foundation for Delhi with a 93-run opening

Will it be happy homecoming for Mumbai Indians and Hardik Pandya?

MUMBAI: Almost 22 years ago, a chilling act shocked the sporting world. When Luis Figo showed up in bitter rivals Real Madrid jersey to take a corner kick in an El Clasico clash at Barcelona's famed Camp Nou, a butchered head of a pig was hurled at him.

The severed skull laid near Figo's feet demonstrated the extreme hatred that Catalan team's fans had developed for the former Portuguese captain, who had, two years back, chosen to be a 'Galactico' at a handsome paycheck of 44 million pounds.

While things are unlikely to go that level at the Wankhede here on Monday night, there could be resentment in the hearts of passionate Mumbai Indians fans when Hardik Pandya having replaced Rohit Sharma leads them out against Rajasthan Royals in one of most highly-anticipated IPL matches. Having been booed and heckled in the ground and trolled on social media ever since he replaced Rohit, who



led MI to a record five titles, Pandya is set to play the toughest match of his career. And what makes it worse for the India allrounder is the fact that despite Pandya taking over, Mumbai Indians have made their trademark slow start, losing both their away games so far, by six runs to the Gujarat Titans, followed by a 32-run loss to Sunrisers Hyderabad in Hyderabad. A few of Pandya's decisions, like opening the bowling himself and holding back Jasprit Bumrah in Powerplay, coming to bat as late as No 7 when the chase was getting tighter against GT, giving an

IPL debut to South Africa's 17-old left-arm pacer Kwena Maphaka, who went for 0-66 in four overs as SRH's marauding batsmen tore into him, have come under fire. Despite the barrage of negativity around him for the last month or so, Pandya, as Steve Smith recommended to him has "shut out external noise" and is unflustered. "What's appearing on social media doesn't bother him since he has avoided it completely of late. He wants his team too to be focused on cricket, rather than worry about him being booed in stadiums," a source told.

A match-winning performance with either bat or ball, or both, will help Pandya win back the love of his fans.

It remains to be seen if MI persist with Maphaka or English left-arm pacer Luke Wood comes back in. Will they hand an IPL debut to Sri Lankan import Nuwan Thushara? Additionally, will Mumbai left arm spinner Shams Mulani, finally getting match-time for Mumbai Indians, come to the party at his home ground?

For MI to get back to winning ways, it's vital that Rohit and Ishan Kishan find their mojo again. Like he has done in the last few IPL seasons, Rohit, who scored a 29-ball 43 vs GT and 12-ball 26 vs SRH, is showing a tendency to lose his wicket after an initial burst.

For someone who can be susceptible to left-arm pace early on,

Rohit needs to be guarded while playing RR's left-arm speed merchants Trent Boult and new recruit Nandre Burger, who has been impressive.

'This is something I have built my life on': Pant after leading Delhi Capitals to first win of the season

NEW DELHI: Rishabh Pant showcased his leadership prowess by delivering his first IPL fifty since his return from a harrowing car accident as Delhi Capitals secured a 20-run victory over Chennai Super Kings in the IPL 2024 on Sunday. Captain Pant led the charge with a brisk 51 off 32 balls, following a stellar performance by fellow left-hander David Warner, who contributed 52 runs, propelling Delhi to a total of 191-5 in



Visakhapatnam. IPL 2024 Points Table Delhi's bowlers put up an impressive display, restricting Chennai to

171-6, securing their first win of the season and handing their opponents a defeat after two consecutive

opening victories. Talking about his innings, Pant mentioned that he took some time to settle in before unleashing his strokes. He emphasized that he had been eagerly anticipating this moment for the past year and a half, highlighting that his life revolves around the game of cricket. "Took my time initially because I haven't played much cricket, but I kept believing I could change the match.

David Miller's brilliance propel Gujarat Titans to win vs Sunrisers Hyderabad

NEW DELHI: Delivering a comprehensive performance, Gujarat Titans secured a decisive seven-wicket victory over the formidable Sunrisers Hyderabad in the Indian Premier League (IPL) on Sunday. Experienced seamer Mohit Sharma showcased his skill in the final over, claiming impressive figures of 3/25, while Afghan spin duo Rashid Khan and Noor Ahmad dominated the middle overs, restricting the aggressive SRH to a modest total of 162/8 after Pat Cummins chose to bat first.



SRH might be feeling disappointed with themselves, having posted an impressive 277 for five in their previous match. South African batsman David Miller exhibited his prowess with an unbeaten 44 runs from 27 balls, steering the Titans through a small

chase despite battling cramps. He sealed the victory with a six off Jaydev Unadkat's first ball in the final over. Sai Sudharsan also lifted his game, top-scoring for GT with his 45 from 36 balls as GT won with five balls to spare. GT now have won both their

matches at home. Their only loss came against Chennai Super Kings in an away match.

SRH have suffered two losses and with one win they have two points from three matches.

GT had things under control in pursuit of the small target at their home venue and Wriddhiman Saha did his job to set the tone. He stepped out to Bhvneswar Kumar for a boundary, and then pulled Jaydev Unadkat over square leg. But Saha could not convert his start and mistimed Shahbaz Ahmed.

Babar vows to make Pakistan world-beaters after regaining T20 captaincy

NEW DELHI: Upon his reappointment as captain, Babar Azam expressed his determination to elevate Pakistan cricket to the pinnacle of success, aiming to mold the team into the best in the world. Babar takes over the Twenty20 captaincy from the embattled Shaheen Shah Afridi, who faced criticism

following a disappointing 4-1 series loss to New Zealand in January during his brief tenure. Babar's return to leadership comes after he relinquished captaincy across all formats in November, following Pakistan's premature exit from the 50-over World Cup held in India. With a renewed sense of purpose, Babar aims to guide Pakistan cricket to new heights, instilling a winning mentality and fostering a culture of excellence within the team. "Our joint aim is to make this team the best in the world," said Babar, who will seek out fast bowler Shaheen's advice on the best way forward for the squad. "As a captain, I have always valued his input and I will keep consulting him for important decisions. We must take advan-

tage of his strategic understanding of the game." Shaheen voiced his unequivocal support for the seasoned Babar, expressing his full confidence in the experienced campaigner's leadership abilities. "As a team player, it is my duty to back our captain, Babar Azam. I have played under his captaincy and have nothing but respect for him," he said. "I will try to help him both on and off the field. We are all one. Our aim is the same, to help Pakistan become the best team in the world."

Following Babar's decision to step down from the captaincy last year, he was succeeded by Shan Masood as the Test skipper and by Shaheen in T20Is. In the aftermath of Pakistan's disappointing performance in the World Cup.

How a frail teenager became super-fast pacer: The story of Mayank

NEW DELHI: Devender Sharma's phone rang, just past midnight Saturday. In most ideas, midnight is the start of a new day, a changeover in the passage of time. The message in the call, too would be signifying that – a new start. But the voice at the other end was betraying no such reaction, remembers Sharma.

"Sir, aaj na mera debut ho gaya. (Sir, today I got my debut)." The 'contents' of the call was plain, telegram-like short, but the Sonnet Club coach immediately got the enormity of the meaning.

"He spoke as if nothing happened. He just wanted to listen what I had to say," Sharma told TOI the morning after.

Mayank Yadav, super-fast from Delhi, had just rattled a watching



IPL-verse. Fuelled by sheer pace, with his 3/27 helping Lucknow Super Giants outbowled Punjab Kings in Lucknow, Saturday, then, was a 'debut' in every sense of the term. "He has always been a simple and humble guy," recalled Sharma, adding how during the

2021-22 winter, Yadav distributed sweets to everyone at Sonnet, because he had just made his debut for Delhi in the Vijay Hazare Trophy. Then he had defended three runs in the final over of a chase, helping Delhi pull off a win. Now 21, the unassuming lad then seemed just

happy that he was playing for Delhi and wanted to show his gratitude to his club and coaches, late Tarak Sinha and Devender Sharma. Maybe the aversion to even permissible hyperbole is somewhere down to Yadav's humble, no-frills upbringing.

Most Maiden Overs in IPL History

Delve into the artistry of bowling excellence with TOI's dedicated page on the Most Maiden Overs in IPL (Bowler). Witness bowlers dominate the game with precision, control, and unyielding determination. Stay informed about the bowlers who consistently apply pressure and stifle opposition batsmen. Follow this page for analysis, player profiles, and statistical breakdowns of the IPL's most miserly bowlers. In the high-octane environment of the Indian Premier League (IPL), bowlers play a crucial role in stifling opposition batsmen and turning the tide of the game in their team's favour. And if it is a maiden over, it means six balls are wasted on the batsman's end, but for a bowling side, it is a pot of the record for the most maiden overs (14) in IPL history is held by none other than Praveen Kumar, the swing master who has represented five different franchises, including Gujarat Lions, Kings XI Punjab, Mumbai Indians.