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## 8 SP MLAs skip Akhilesh's dinner amid cross-voting fears in RS election today

● This is nine MLAs short of the required strength (296) to see all eight BJP candidates through. BJP is pinning its hopes on cross-voting



**LUCKNOW:** Amid fears of cross-voting in the high-pitched electoral battle between NDA and Samajwadi Party-Congress combine for 10 Rajya Sabha seats from Uttar Pradesh on Tuesday, eight SP MLAs did not turn up for a dinner that party chief Akhilesh Yadav had hosted for legislators at his residence on election eve, sources said. BJP had initially fielded seven candidates and SP three. However, the election has turned into a cliffhanger with BJP fielding ex-MP Sanjay Seth as its eighth candidate. Sources said the eight SP MLAs who skipped the dinner were Rakesh Pandey, Abhay Singh, Manoj Pandey, Rakesh

Pratap Singh, Vinod Chaturvedi, Maharaj Prajapati, Pooja Pal and Pallavi Patel. Raja Bhaiya & RLD in tow, NDA now just 9 short of magic mark. Even as both NDA and SP-Congress were engaged in parleys with other parties on Monday to muster the requisite strength to ensure victory for their candidates, BJP received a fillip with Raja Bhaiya's Jansatta Dal-Loktantrik pledging support of its two MLAs to it. Jayant Chaudhary had already indicated the support of his RLD for BJP earlier this month after Bharat Ratna was awarded to his grandfather, Chaudhary Charan Singh. On Monday,

RLD's nine MLAs met CM Yogi Adityanath and joined NDA allies for a strategy session at Lok Bhawan. Given the current strength of UP assembly (399), each candidate requires the support of 37 legislators to sail through. With RLD's nine MLAs and Raja Bhaiya's two, the numbers of NDA (BJ, AD(S) 13, Nishad 6, SBSP 6) swell to 288. SBSP MLA Abbas Ansari is lodged in jail and this brings down the tally to 287. This is nine MLAs short of the required strength (296) to see all eight BJP candidates through. BJP is pinning its hopes on cross-voting and abstentions. SP needs the support of 111 MLAs to see its three candidates —

Ramji Lal Suman, Jaya Bachchan and Alok Ranjan — through. SP's strength of 108 in the assembly comes down to 106 with two of its MLAs, Irfan Solanki and Ramakant Yadav, lodged in jail on criminal charges. Even with Congress's backing of two MLAs, SP is three short of the magic number. Sources said SP has been harping on its PDA (an abbreviation that Akhilesh Yadav has coined for enlisting the support of OBCs, dalits and minorities, respectively) narrative to counter BJP. The BJP camp is confident of ensuring the win of its 8th candidate. A senior leader who has been tasked with managing votes told that the party is confident of getting the required first-preference votes. But if that doesn't happen, the candidate will certainly sail through with the help of second-preference votes, he said, adding: "No matter how hard SP camp tries.

## Vijay Shekhar Sharma steps down as Paytm Bank's chairman

**MUMBAI:** Nearly a month after RBI's move to curb operations of Paytm Payments Bank, Vijay Shekhar Sharma, its founder and majority shareholder, has stepped down as the non-executive chairman of the bank's board. Parent company One97 Communications's nominee director Bhavesh Gupta too has quit the bank's board. Sharma's departure from the board marks the end of his seven-year banking stint as a fintech entrepreneur. He will continue to lead One97 Communications, which owns the Paytm brand and app. Going forward, the app will serve as a third-party application provider for UPI transactions. As part of a rejig, the bank appointed former Central Bank of India chairman Srinivasan Sridhar and three other members - retired bureaucrats



Debendranath Sarangi and Rajni Sekhri Sibal, and former Bank of Baroda executive director Ashok Kumar Garg. paytm Given that Paytm Payments Bank is no longer authorised to raise funds, the role of the new board will be to ensure the orderly winding down of the business. While customers cannot deposit funds after March 15, they can continue using their accounts, wallets, Fastags, and other prepaid instruments until their balances are depleted.

The rest of the board members include former Punjab & Sind Bank ED Arvind Kumar Jain, who serves as an independent director, and Paytm Payments Bank MD & CEO Surinder Chawla. In a statement, One97 Communications, showed support for the decision to transition to a board consisting solely of independent and executive directors by withdrawing its nominee. The company also confirmed that Sharma has resigned from the board to facilitate this change.

Paytm Payments Bank will appoint a new chairman. **Paytm Founder Steps Down Amid Regulatory Challenges, Eyes UPI Expansion** Sharma owns 51% in Paytm Payments Bank with One97 Communications holding the rest. Paytm shares were up 5% on Monday after Goldman Sachs said in a report that RBI's clarification that @paytm UPI handles can be seamlessly migrated to other banks resolves a major unknown for Paytm. New board member Garg, with 39 years of banking experience, had earlier headed Bank of Baroda's US operations in New York and was MD of the Bank of Baroda in Uganda. Sarangi serves as an independent director on the boards of Southern Petrochemical Industries and Voltas.

## Rs 83,000 crore port projects in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra set to be rolled out before polls

**NEW DELHI:** In a big boost to the port and shipping sector, government is set to launch two mega projects entailing more than Rs 83,000 crore investment in Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra before the announcement of poll dates. While the project in Tamil Nadu will add more capacity to the Chidambaranar port, the VadHAVAN port in Maharashtra will be the first major (central govt) port to be developed after more than two decades. Sources said PM Narendra Modi is scheduled to launch the Outer Harbour project of Chidambaranar Port on Wednesday at a cost of Rs 7,056 crore. TOI has learnt that the Cabinet chaired by Modi approved the project to develop four berths that will add 4 million twenty-foot equivalent unit (TEUs) capacity to the port and create capability to service mega container vessels. The project is essential to cater to the growing demand for gateway and transshipment cargo. TEU is a general unit of cargo capacity, often used for container ships and container ports. The Cabinet is also likely to give go ahead for Rs 76,000 crore VadHAVAN Port project in the next two weeks before the Model Code of Conduct (MCC) kicks in. The mega port, which will come up in Palghar district, will have nine container terminals with 18 berths and will have a combined container handling capacity of 23.5 million TEUs. The port will be developed in two phases by 2030. The total cargo traffic of the port is expected to be over 300 million tonnes per annum. The port has a natural draft (depth) of about 20 metres close to the shore, which will be enough for handling bigger container vessels of 16,000-25,000 TEUs capacity, giving advantages of economies of scale and reducing logistics cost.

## WTO chief lets cat out of bag: Goyal may be fighting LS polls

**ABU DHABI:** Commerce and industry minister Piyush Goyal's absence from the first two days of WTO ministerial meet has emerged as a talking point of sorts among attendees here, with director general Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala only whetting their interest by linking the BJP functionary's itinerary to the possibility of him contesting Lok Sabha polls from



Mumbai. Asked at the press conference and the minister is about Goyal's absence from the crucial meeting, the WTO chief said, "India is going to election and the minister is politically engaged since he is running for a seat himself. So, he has to spend some

time (in India). There is no mystery, there was a slight mistiming & he will be here." She added that Goyal's role as the textiles minister and the Bharat Tex event, largest-ever textile exhibition, in Delhi had also delayed his arrival. UAE trade minister and conference chair Thani bin Ahmed Al Zeyoudi said Goyal was likely to join the talks on Tuesday evening.

## Mumbai doctors find way to curb risk of cancer spread

**MUMBAI:** Doctors at Tata Memorial Centre here say they've discovered a mechanism for cancer metastasis and developed nutraceutical therapy to minimise its risk. As per their decade-long research published in reputed journals, dying cancer cells release 'chromosome fragments' (chromatin), which, at times, fuse with healthy cells and cause new tumours, reported. A nutraceutical is a



food or food product that provides health benefits beyond basic nutrition, often due to its added bioactive compounds or medicinal properties. Study reveals chemo, radiotherapy hazards

Although many patients are cured of cancer, our study uncovered a potential risk involved in current cancer treatment practices," said Dr Indraneel Mittra, who led the research.

## MSY government's '93 curbs on Gyanvapi puja illegal: HC

**PRAYAGRAJ/NEW DELHI:** The erstwhile Mulayam Singh Yadav-led UP govt's act of stopping worship of Hindu deities by a family of priests in the southern cellar of Varanasi's Gyanvapi Masjid in 1993 without a written order was illegal, Allahabad HC said Monday while dismissing Anjuman Intizamia Masjid's (AIM) appeal challenging ex-district judge AK Vishvesha's Jan 31 ruling allowing puja to resume. Justice Rohit Ranjan Agarwal's order describes the three-decade-old restrictions on the Vyas family, several generations of whom had been performing rituals until 1993 in a part of the basement



known as "Vyas Ji Ka Tehkhana", as "a continuous wrong being perpetuated". Citing Article 25 of the Constitution, Justice Agarwal said freedom to practise one's religion could-

n't be snatched by "arbitrary action of the state", more so without a written order. "After going through the entire records of the case, and after considering arguments of the parties concerned, the court did not find any ground to interfere in the judgment passed by the district judge on Jan 17 appointing DM, Varanasi, as receiver of the property, as well the Jan 31 order by which puja was permitted in the tehkhana (cellar)." AIM joint secretary SM Yaseen said the mosque committee would approach Supreme Court. Advocate Vishnu Shankar Jain, counsel for the Hindu side, said his client would file a caveat.

## HC: No stay on Shahjahan's arrest

**KOLKATA:** Calcutta HC clarified on Monday that there is no stay on arrest of Trinamool Congress strongman Sheikh Shahjahan, who has evaded authorities since Jan 5 when a mob attacked and wounded three ED officers during a search operation at his Sandeshkhali home in Bengal's North 24 Parganas district as part of a probe into an alleged Rs 550-crore ration scam, reported. HC emphasised that it had only stayed a joint CBI-state police probe into the attack. In response, TMC spokesperson Kunal Ghosh acknowledged HC's clarification: "The matter was stuck in a legal tangle. Opposition was doing politics using the opportunity.

## India Seeks To Guard Interest Of Farmers

**ABU DHABI:** India on Monday hit out at recent suggestions by WTO brass, seeking to link poor in rich nations with poor countries, as it saw this as an attempt to rewrite the rules, which provide a special dispensation to developing and least developed countries in implementing various agreements, including reducing subsidies or duties. "Our objective should not be to create layers of special and differential treatment by socio-economic segments. This is a concept, which in the WTO rulebook applies to developing members, including the LDCs. If some members feel their society and economy requires domestic special and differential treatment, it should be done through domestic policy and affirmative action," commerce secretary Sunil Barthwal



said at a closed-door meeting. The comments come days after WTO chief Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala said "poor countries, poor people in rich countries and marginalised people in communities, including women, did not benefit as much from the first wave of globalisation", while advocating "re-globalisation" to help these people. Indian officials said that it was blatantly unfair to compare the poor in rich nations with those in developing countries, such as India or Africa, given the massive gap in per capita levels. They said there is an attempt by the developed countries and the WTO.

## 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.

## Ajit Pawar hints at wife Sunetra contesting against cousin Supriya at Baramati

**Baramati**  
Ajit Pawar's speech fuelled speculation that the party will field his wife Sunetra against his cousin, the incumbent Baramati MP, Supriya Sule. The deputy chief minister himself is the sitting MLA from Baramati. The local NCP unit also used the occasion to launch a chariot that will run through the constituency talking up the social initiatives taken up by Sunetra Pawar. While speaking to his party workers, a day after Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar upheld the Ajit Pawar faction as real NCP, Ajit Pawar's speech

fuelled speculation that the party will field his wife Sunetra against his cousin, the incumbent Baramati MP, Supriya Sule. The deputy chief minister himself is the sitting MLA from Baramati. The local NCP unit also used the occasion to launch a chariot that will run through the constituency talking up the social initiatives taken up by Sunetra Pawar. While speaking to his party workers, a day after Maharashtra Assembly Speaker Rahul Narwekar upheld the Ajit Pawar faction as real NCP, Ajit Pawar told party workers

in Baramati that he would field a candidate who has not contested an election earlier, but that person would have the support of those with ample experience. People, he added, should vote for his candidate as if he himself were in the fray. "As party workers, you should tell voters without hesitation that the elected MP from here will work more for the development as compared to the one you have been electing for the last three to four terms. Tell the voters that this is a promise to them from Ajit Pawar.

## 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.

## 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.

## 'It's being addressed': US diplomat Richard on action against Pannun

**NEW DELHI:** The US deputy secretary of state, Richard Verma, has assured that the United States will take action against India-designated terrorist Gurbatwant Singh Pannun and his associates if they cross the line. In an interview with ANI on Tuesday, Verma said, "I'm not going to get into specific cases, but I just go back to what I said about operating within the law. When people cross that line, they will be held accountable." Verma also said, "When people say things, and we each have different



rules when it comes to free speech. We have to assess where the line crosses into conduct, but we won't tolerate any violence or any kind of harassment directed at officials, and we will crack down on it where the law allows us to do it, and we have done it, and we will continue to do it." Regarding the alleged involvement of

India in the attempted assassination of Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, the US deputy secretary of state said, "Look, we raised the concerns with the Indian government at the most senior levels. They took it seriously. They've launched an investigation, and we look forward to continuing to hear back from

the Indian authorities about what they've found, but it's a very important issue, and it's being addressed." Gurbatwant Singh Pannun, an India-designated terrorist holding American and Canadian citizenship, has been charged with murder-for-hire. The US Justice Department revealed that an Indian national, Nikhil Gupta, has been charged for attempted 'murder-for-hire' of Pannun. The US government is waiting for the committee of inquiry set up by India to provide updates on the investigation.

## 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 Mishra said legality of the policy, and not the wisdom or soundness of the policy, would be the subject of judicial



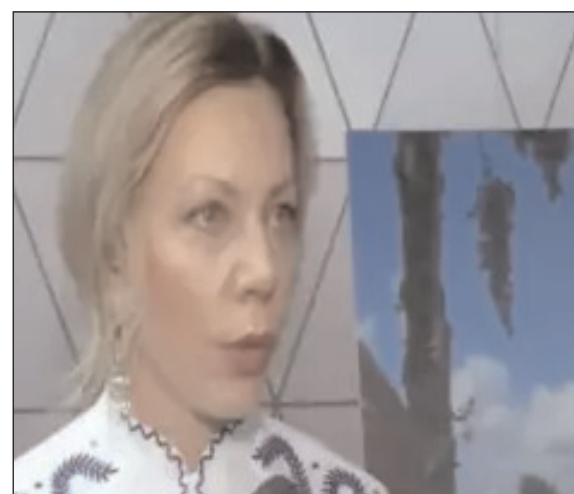
review. "It is well settled that the scope of judicial review in examining the policy matters is very limited. The courts do not and cannot examine the correctness, suitability or appropriateness of a policy, nor are the courts advisors to the executive on the matters of policy which the executive is 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,".

## India has to be part of peace-finding solution: Ukraine Dy FM on conflict with Russia

**NEW DELHI:** Terming India as a voice of the Global South, Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister, Iryna Borovets, said that India has to play a "crucial role" in finding a peaceful solution to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. She further said that Ukraine has invited India to the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland in March. Speaking to ANI, Borovets said, "India has a crucial role. First of all, India is a global leader, it is certainly powerful voice of the Global South countries.

India respects the territorial integrity of my country. So in that sense, we have full support. But, India could be more vocal on it, could take more action towards finding a peaceful solution." "India has to be a part of the peace-finding



solution. We have invited the Indian government to be present at the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland in March. We very much expect representative of India there," she added. Regarding the Russia-Ukraine conflict, India has always condemned civilian killings and called for a peaceful resolution to the conflict.

In a major statement, PM Modi

told President Putin that "this is not the era of war" on the sidelines of the SCO summit in Uzbekistan last year. The statement even made to the G20 communique under the presidency of India. Earlier, Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik lauded the ties between India and Norway, saying the two countries have a strong and

equal commitment to multilateralism, international law, and finding solutions to global issues. "Our relations are very strong.

We have an equal commitment to multilateralism, to international law, to finding solutions to some of the global issues that we're tackling, climate change, inequality, and reforming international institutions. So we have had very good discussions about those issues and other issues, also bilateral issues," he told ANI. "We have a free trade agreement that we're close to finalising, and we have various interactions between our two countries. The conversations I have had with various Indian officials have been fantastic, and very productive," Kravik added.

## 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.

## Government allows donor egg & sperm in surrogacy



**"It further says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple".**

**NEW DELHI:** There is new hope for couples dreaming to become parents via surrogacy. The Centre has amended Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 to allow use of a donor gamete – ova or egg cells and sperm – if one of the partners is certified to have a medical condition that prevents use of his or her own gametes. In usual circum-

stances, a couple undergoing surrogacy must have both gametes from the intending couple. The story But Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024, that have been notified by the government, state that the district medical board must certify that either spouse is suffering from such a condition. It further

says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple". It adds, "Single women (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedures."

## Akul Dhawan had frozen to death after being denied entry to US club, say police

**NEW DELHI:** A teenage Indian-origin student at Illinois University froze to death near a club that denied him entry. Akul Dhawan, 18, was on a night out with his friends, according to a report by the Champaign County Coroner's Office in Illinois, a month after the incident. The Indian-American student died of hypothermia following "acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, which significantly contributed to his death."

Akul's parents had filed a complaint with the University of Illinois Police and questioned the police about the protocol they followed during the search.

Akul's parents alleged that cops carried out no search near the Busey-Evans Residence Hall and University police failed to follow their missing search protocols. The parents have accused the University of Illinois Police of being negligent.

In an open letter released in The News Gazette, Akul Dhawan's parents had said, "As parents, we need answers. We have filed an official complaint with the UI police. We have the following questions for the university officials and police: The police say that



they searched around the Busey-Evans Residence Hall at 2:09 a.m."

Earlier on January 31, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in a press release said that the University of Illinois Police continue to probe the circumstances surrounding the January 20 death of Akul Dhawan, a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. It said that the information collected so far supports the initial belief that the death was accidental, and no foul play occurred. It said that Dhawan was found deceased at about 11:08 am (local time) on

January 20 in the 1200 block of West Nevada Street, Urbana.

According to the press release, a friend who lost contact with Dhawan called the police at 1:23 am (local time). According to the statement, investigators have shared a timeline of the police response to that call.

A series of tragic deaths among Indian students at US colleges has sparked widespread concern, highlighting broader issues of mental health and campus safety for international students.

**"No excuse for violence..." US on attacks against Indian stu-**

**dents**

In 2024, seven young men of Indian and Indian American descent have met untimely deaths under various circumstances, ranging from suspected suicides and overdoses to violent acts. Last week White House official

John Kirby condemned attacks on Indian students and asserted there is "no excuse for violence based on race, gender, or any other factor".

"The president and this administration have been working very, very hard to make sure we're doing everything we can to work with state and local authorities to try to thwart and disrupt those kinds of attacks and make it clear to anybody who might consider them that they'll be held properly accountable," Kirby said amid a slew of attacks on Indian and Indian American students in various parts of the United States.

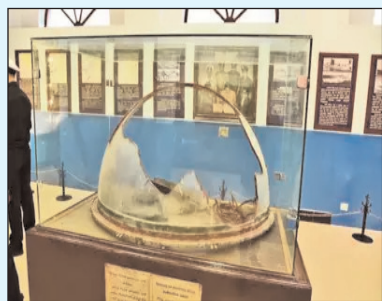
Also, Eric Garcetti, the US Ambassador to India, said that the Biden-led administration is "very committed" to assuring Indians that the US is a "wonderful and safe" place to pursue higher studies.

The Indian government and the mission in the US offered support and counselling to the distressed students and their relatives.

## Wreckage of Pakistan submarine, which sank in 1971, found off Vizag

**VISAKHAPATNAM:** A newly acquired Indian Navy deep submergence rescue vehicle (DSRV) has recently located the wreckage of PNS Ghazi, the Pakistani submarine that sank on December 4, 1971 during the India-Pakistan war. The Tench-class submarine, which served earlier in the US Navy as USS Diablo, was found at a depth of around 100 metres about 2 to 2.5 km off the coast. However, Indian Navy does not want to touch it out of respect for those who fell in action, in true Navy tradition, sources here said.

The sinking of PNS Ghazi with 93 men (11 officers and 82 sailors) on board off the coast of Visakhapatnam was consid-



ered a high point in the war, which ended with the creation of Bangladesh in 1972. Pakistan had despatched US-made PNS Ghazi to mine India's eastern seaboard and to locate, shadow and sink INS Vikrant, India's British-built Majestic-class aircraft carrier.

**'2 submarines lying at bottom of sea off Vizag coast'** Ghazi left Karachi on November

14, 1971 and quietly sailed 4,800 km around the Indian peninsula to reach Vizag coast. India despatched its destroyer, INS Rajput, which tracked the Ghazi and dropped depth charges, leading to its sinking. The Pakistani military has a different view, attributing its sinking to accidental explosions. PNS Ghazi is not the only submarine that lies on the floor of the Bay of Bengal near Vizag. A Japanese submarine of the Imperial Japanese Navy (RO-110) was sunk off the coast of Rambilli locality, in undivided Vizag district, during World War II (Feb 12, 1944). The submarine was sunk by HMAS Launceston and HMIS Jumna using depth charges.

## After fresh arson, section 144 again in 9 Sandeshkhali areas

**SANDESHKHALI:** In a fresh incident of arson at Sandeshkhali, locals mobbed a bheri controlled by absconding Trinamool functionary Sheikh Shahjahan's brother and torched a structure set up to oversee fishing operations there on Thursday afternoon, prompting police to once again clamp fresh prohibitory orders under section 144 of CrPC in nine places under five gram panchayats - Trimoni Bazar, Kaharpara, Patrapara, Khulna Hat and Jeliakhali - from



Thursday night. Villagers alleged the bheri, spread over six bighas, was one of several farmlands forcibly grabbed by Shahjahan's brother Siraj and converted into fishing

farms. "The prohibitory restriction will continue till 12pm on Feb 24," a senior district police officer said. As news of the arson spread, hundreds of women gathered at the spot and

staged an agitation demanding the arrest of the two brothers. The locals alleged the arson took place soon after Siraj and his men visited Jhupkhali under Bermajur gram panchayat II on Thursday morning and threatened women with dire consequences. "Siraj and his gang roamed around the bheri area and threatened women. Villagers chased them out. Later, a mob set the structure (ala ghar) adjacent to the bheri on fire," a villager said.

## Ex-model held for stalking motivational speaker for 6 months

**LUCKNOW:** Lucknow police arrested Deepesh Thakur, 26, for stalking a motivational speaker on her multi-city tours over a period of six months. A fashion model and son of a prominent hotelier in Maharashtra, Thakur had been relentlessly following the speaker to her events, aspiring to marrying her.

According to police, Deepesh meticulously tracked the speaker's movements, attending all her programmes across the country. His obsession escalated to the extent that he would book rooms in five-star hotels in advance ahead of her scheduled appearances, even flying from Mumbai to attend the events in different cities. During the event in



Lucknow, the man's relentless pursuit prompted intervention from law enforcement agencies. Lucknow police swiftly responded to the situation, thwarting his bid to spoil the show. Additional DCP, Central Zone, Manisha Singh, confirmed the arrest and subsequent booking of the suspect. Investigations revealed that the accused, before his

infatuation with the motivational speaker, worked in the entertainment industry and appeared in advertisements for skincare products. He is a commerce graduate from a reputed college in Mumbai. Police disclosed that similar cases of stalking involving the same speaker have been reported in other cities, too, including Jalandhar and Kolkata.

## Quad a message that others can't veto our choices: EAM Jaishankar

● " "The natural question that greets any new arrival is the reason for their existence. So let us look at why the Quad? The answer is very simple "

**NEW DELHI:** Foreign minister S Jaishankar said on Saturday that Quad - which seeks to promote free, open and inclusive Indo-Pacific - is here to stay, grow and contribute, calling it a laudable initiative that makes not just the region, but the world as a whole more free, open and much more respectful of international law and a rules-based order.

Speaking at the inaugural Quad Think Tank Forum, the minister said Quad comprises five messages, one of which is a statement that in this day and age, others "cannot have a veto on our choices". The minister also said that the four-nation group reflects the growth of a multi-



polar order and that it's a post-alliance and post-cold war thinking.

According to Jaishankar, Quad is against spheres of influence and expresses the democratising of the global space and a collaborative, not unilateral, approach.

"The natural question that greets any new arrival is the reason for their existence. So let us look at why the Quad? The answer is very simple. It is there for global good and it is there for the global commons. It is facilitated by the emergence of the Indo-Pacific," said the minister, adding that Quad is propelled by a change in the global order that requires more, not less, collaboration among the like-minded.

Jaishankar said Quad seeks to build resilient supply chains in telecom, cyber security, semiconductors and artificial intelligence (AI), promoting cyber awareness and capacity building in the Indo-Pacific, which is vulnerable to cyber threats. Detailing his expectations of the Forum, which was launched in partnership with the Raisina Dialogue, the minister said it should generate new ideas, promote the Quad and also counter any negative propaganda about the group. Jaishankar described the coalition of India, US, Japan and Australia as an "overhead light" that is a "creative, flexible, nimble, responsive and open-minded" enterprise. Joining through virtual mode.

## Sec 144 near Siliguri after jumbo intrusion

**SILIGURI:** The forest department has imposed Section 144 at Teepark and Bhola More on the outskirts of Siliguri after an elephant ventured into the area from Baikunthpur forest. The department sounded an alert in surrounding villages urging people not to step out of their homes at night. The jumbo, seen at Bhola More area on Saturday, had probably entered through Canal Road and Bhalobasha More, said a forest official, adding that they were trying to drive back the jumbo into the forest.

"Forest teams from Baikunthapur division and Sukna elephant squad have been deployed," said principal chief conservator of forests Niraj Singhal. Recently, the department had chased away two elephants - which had taken refuge at Zero Point on the Indo-Bangla border in the Phansidewa Bandargach area - to Mahananda.

## Editorial

### China is unfazed by the Red Sea crisis. India must look into the reasons why

LESS THAN four months after Hamas' aggressive assault on Israel, the conflict has dangerously spilled over into the Red Sea, posing serious economic and security challenges for India and the world. The Houthis, allegedly backed by Iran, had already aligned with Hamas against Israel. Their attacks on Israel-bound commercial ships started on 19 October 2023. Soon, the US Navy became involved, playing an instrumental role in intercepting Houthi missiles launched against Israel. Houthi spokesperson Yahya Saree publicly threw down the gauntlet, took responsibility for the attacks and said that they would continue. While he initially claimed to have only attacked Israeli ships, other ships were also targeted. Soon, Houthi attacks on commercial vessels in the Red Sea became prevalent. The Red Sea is a crucial global maritime route. Technically, it is a seawater inlet of the Indian Ocean between Asia and Africa. This sea passage is confined between two crucial points—the Suez Canal and the Sinai Peninsula in the north and the Bab el-Mandeb strait in the south toward the Gulf of Aden (old name for Yemen). Houthi militants lately have been targeting merchant vessels from diverse nations in the Red Sea, particularly in the Bab el-Mandeb strait. This strategic chokepoint holds significant importance in the global economy. These assaults have significantly impacted the commercial feasibility of one of the world's busiest maritime routes, with India's maritime trade also suffering considerable consequences. The US and UK launched joint strikes on the Houthis on 11 and 22 January in response to these attacks. The US has also launched eight separate strikes. India's early response to the Red Sea Crisis was balanced and muted. External affairs minister S Jaishankar's visit to Tehran on 15 January signalled India's willingness to explore a diplomatic solution. It has steered clear of joining the US-led multinational naval coalition in the Red Sea while it remains critical of the Houthis' violence. However, things quickly changed when the spectrum of attacks against commercial vessels diversified to a return of pirates' attacks in the region. India, initially exploring a diplomatic solution to the problem, is now deploying unprecedented naval capabilities to solve it. The experience of attacked vessels—MV Chem Pluto, which had Indian crew on board and MV Sai Baba, which was registered in India—has been instrumental in New Delhi's toughened stance. In its largest deployment in the region, India has stationed two frontline warships in the Gulf of Aden and at least 10 warships in the northern and western Arabian Sea, along with surveillance aircraft. India's commitment to duly respond to piracy is indeed a commendable feat. It shows New Delhi's ability to rise to emergency maritime situations. The country has aced the diplomatic game by saving Pakistanis, Iranians, Israelis and others alike. But does that solve India's economic setbacks in the region? Not quite. Despite India's efforts, securing sea lanes remains an elusive endeavour. The crisis may escalate further, with the risk of a direct confrontation between Iran and the US becoming more real. This likelihood has increased after three American GIs were killed by Iraqi militants in Jordan on 28 January. The pressing global concern now is to prevent the sabotage of trade in the Red Sea region. The repercussions on India's maritime trade are profound, as the economic fallout of Houthi attacks on commercial ships has taken a severe toll on the global economy. According to data from Xeneta, an ocean freight benchmarking firm, the surge in ocean freight rates has already exceeded the levels seen during the Covid-19 pandemic, when global supply chains were mercilessly disrupted. These shipping costs have skyrocketed by over 200 per cent in the first 50 days.

## Modi govt's FY25 revenue receipt looks gloomy. For every rupee earned, it will spend Rs 1.54

What are the key assumptions underpinning fiscal math for FY 2024-25? The Interim Budget assumes a 10.5 per cent growth in nominal GDP in FY25. Gross tax receipts are estimated to increase by 14 per cent—with income tax at a whopping 28.4 per cent, corporate tax at 13 per cent, GST at 11.6 per cent, customs decreasing by -0.8 per cent, and excise by -6 per cent. Revenue receipts are estimated to rise by 14 per cent, with tax revenues (net to Centre) increasing by 11.6 per cent. However, non-tax revenues are estimated to rise by a whopping 32 per cent, driven mainly by the increased dividends from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and revenues from the sale of telecom spectrum waves. With the use of a magic wand, revenue expenditure increase has been contained at just 4.3 per cent from Rs 35.02 lakh crore in FY24 BE (budget estimate) to Rs 36.54 lakh crore in FY25 BE. Within revenue expenditure, interest payments are estimated to rise by 10 per cent from Rs 10.79 lakh crore in FY24 BE to Rs 11.90 lakh crore in FY25 BE. Total capital expenditure, including grants for the creation of a capital account, rises by 9 per cent from Rs 13.7 lakh crore in FY24 BE to Rs 14.96 lakh crore in FY25 BE. The rise in total expenditure is estimated at a modest 5.8 per cent. The fiscal deficit in FY25 is projected at Rs 16.85 lakh crore (5.1 per cent



of the estimated nominal GDP of Rs 327.71 lakh crore). So, in FY25, the government of India is going to earn Rs 30.8 lakh crore, including divestment proceeds of Rs 50,000 crore and non-tax revenues comprising mainly dividends from RBI or Public Sector Undertakings (PSUs) and telecom receipts of Rs 3.99 lakh crore. And the Centre plans to spend Rs 47.65 lakh crore. This means for every Rs 1 it earns, it will spend Rs 1.547, or for every Rs 1 it spends it will take in only Rs 0.646. As the late RBI Deputy Governor SS Tarapore used to tell me, instead of focusing on fiscal deficit as percentage of GDP, which takes complex calculations and is based on far too many imprecise factors, especially in a data-poor nation like ours, we should look at fiscal deficit vis-a-vis recurring revenue receipts. When seen in this context, the situation

looks distinctively gloomy and sobering. Has the government tightened its belt, and will significantly large resources be available for crowding in private sector capital investment? Although the government's gross market borrowings will come down from Rs 15.43 lakh crore in FY24 RE (revised estimate) to Rs 14.13 lakh crore in FY25 BE; the net borrowing is almost at the same level at Rs 11.75 lakh crore in FY25 BE compared to Rs 11.80 lakh crore in FY24 RE. The government aims to achieve a fiscal deficit target of 5.1 per cent of GDP in FY25 versus 5.8 per cent in FY24. With a projected GDP of Rs 327.71 lakh crore in FY25, this 0.7 per cent reduction would save Rs 2.29 lakh crore. Had the fiscal deficit remained at the same percentage of GDP in FY25 as in FY24, the government's gross borrowing would have increased to that extent. Of

course, it would then have adversely affected India's credit rating, and bond yields would have seen a sharp rise—elevating the cost of funds in the economy, and raising skepticism among investors about the country's already-delayed medium-term fiscal consolidation plan. Expenditure on central sector schemes/projects in railroads—one of the government's principal twin engines of growth other than roads—is up from Rs 2.4 lakh crore in FY24 RE to Rs 2.52 lakh crore in FY25 BE, showing only 5 per cent year-on-year growth. Central sector scheme/projects expenditure in the roads sector is up from Rs 2.76 lakh crore (RE) to Rs 2.77 lakh crore i.e. a measly 0.3 growth. Given the increased emphasis on the defence sector, the capital outlay on it has only increased from Rs 1.62 lakh crore in FY24 BE to Rs 1.72 lakh crore in FY25 BE, reflecting a paltry 6 per cent year-on-year growth. Despite tepid aggregate demand in the rural sector and pressure on farm incomes, fertiliser subsidies to our Aannadatas haven't been increased. Fertiliser urea subsidy is actually down from Rs 1.28 lakh crore in FY24 RE to Rs 1.19 lakh crore in FY25 BE. Nutrient-based subsidy is down from Rs 60,000 crore in FY24 RE to Rs 45,000 crore in FY25 BE. In FY24, food subsidy was budgeted at Rs 1.97 lakh crore and the revised estimate for FY24 is Rs 2.11

lakh crore. For FY25, the subsidy budget has remained almost flat at Rs 2.05 lakh crore compared to the revised estimates for FY24. In FY25, the entire food subsidy is going to be disbursed through Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Anna Yojana. In the crucial petroleum sector, the direct benefit transfer and subsidy on LPG cylinders for poor households are up from Rs 9,960 crore FY24 RE to Rs 10,594 crore FY25 BE—another measly 6 per cent increase. Government-owned oil marketing companies (OMCs) are called upon, when global crude oil prices are elevated, to refrain from increasing prices of petrol and diesel and discharge national duty. However, capital support to OMCs is down by 50 per cent from Rs 30,000 crore in FY24 RE to Rs 15,000 crore in FY25 BE. In view of the strong upmove in Indian stock markets during FY24, the government's disinvestment program, involving the sale of partial or controlling stakes in various PSUs, was under scrutiny. Miscellaneous capital receipts, a part of non-debt receipts, mainly consisting of disinvestment proceeds from PSUs, were projected to be Rs 61,000 crore in FY24 BE. However, only Rs 30,000 crore was achieved, despite Indian equities having a dream run in FY24. As hope springs eternal, the government has budgeted Rs 50,000 crore under this category for FY25 BE.

### Stanley Cups are the Louis Vuitton of reusable tumblers

If you think the act of drinking water is just for hydration, you're sorely mistaken—in the modern age of TikTok, X, and Instagram, how you drink water and what you drink it from is nothing less than a marker of social status. And the winner was the chic, powder-finish, double-insulated, and, sadly, lead-laden tumbler that is the Stanley Cup—until now. Recently, Stanley's 'Tumbler No. 1' status seems to be on shaky ground. Consumers armed with at-home lead testing kits are startled that their expensive cups contain the toxic metal. The company has admitted on their website that while the cups contain lead, it's sealed and will only be exposed if the base cap "comes off due to ordinary use". The casual admission is incongruent with the effects of long-term lead exposure

which can cause problems like high blood pressure, cardiovascular diseases and even neurological issues in children. Everyone from The Washington Post to Bon Appetit is weighing in on the safety of the Stanley Cup, and the consensus seems to be that the fears are overblown. But then, social media is a fickle friend, and the cup's cult status can be toppled like a house of cards. Stanley cups are all the rage on social media—from numerous 'a day in my life' Tiktokers to British musician Adele. Everyone is obsessed with these gigantic tumblers called 'Quenchers', which hold up to 40 ounces (1.1 litres) of water. For clarity, doctors recommend at least 2 litres of water a day, so you would only need to fill your Stanley twice to last you through the day. The stainless-steel

reusable cup is supposed to reduce wastage and encourage sustainability but its social media stardom, led by marketing by and to (mostly white, millennial) women, has ensured the Stanley Cup becomes the number one aspirational gizmo. Consumers line up to buy new editions of the \$45 tumbler (Rs 3,700), resell it for twice as much on online platforms, and proudly display their endless collection of Stanleys in different colours. Way to go for sustainability! A few months ago, a woman posted a video on TikTok of her burnt car, where the only survivor was her Stanley Cup with ice still inside it. Jumping on the opportunity, the CEO of Stanley, Terence Reilly posted his own video offering to replace her Stanley as well as her car—a masterclass in marketing.

### Judge Vishvesha's last Gyanvapi order sets his legacy. It's like Ayodhya all over again

At around 3 pm on Wednesday, Varanasi district judge Ajaya Krishna Vishvesha issued the last order of his career—directions to the district magistrate to make arrangements for pooja and raag-bhog of idols in the disputed southern tehekhanah of the Gyanvapi mosque premises by a priest specified by the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust. Minutes later, he was given a farewell by the Banaras Bar Association and the Central Bar Association. But his parting shot has potentially shaped the politics of UP for months and years to come. The 60-year-old Vishvesha was the district judge in the Varanasi court until 31 January. And the country's most important political and religious dispute—the next Ayodhya—was transferred to his court in May 2022. The Supreme Court ordered that the Shringar Gauri case pertaining to a petition for Hindus to worship in the Gyanvapi basement area be transferred from the court of civil judge (senior division) to Vishvesha's court because the social complexities of the case required a more "senior and experienced judicial officer." Vishvesha's last order,

issued just over a week after the Ram temple Pratiষ্ঠa presided over by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, set off a flurry of activity on the ground. As soon as his directive came, everybody swung into action. Wasting no time, Varanasi district magistrate S. Rajalingam ordered a 7-by-7-foot gap to be created in the mosque's double-layered barricading—erected in 1993 by the Mulayam Singh Yadav-led government—granting access to the southern cellar for priests. A priest designated by the Kashi Vishwanath temple trust quickly prepared the basement site, called 'Vyas Ji Ka Tehkhana', inside the Gyanvapi mosque and performed prayers at 3 am on Thursday. This is why retired judge Ajaya Kumar Vishvesha is With a law degree from Haryana's urukshetra University, Vishvesha entered the Uttar Pradesh Higher Judicial Service as a munsif (civil judge, junior division) in 1990. Over the next two decades, he held various judicial positions in numerous districts across undivided UP. In 2009, the UP government appointed him as a special secretary and additional legal remembrancer (LR). He served in this

role, providing legal advice to the state government, until 2014. Subsequently, he returned to the judiciary as an additional district and sessions judge in Jhansi, where he remained until 2017. After serving in similar capacities in Hathras, Budaun, Sitapur, and Prayagraj, he took over as district and sessions judge in Varanasi in August 2021, assuming a central and often controversial role in the Gyanvapi mosque dispute. The Gyanvapi mosque has long been a battleground, both politically and legally. The first lawsuit post-independence was filed in 1991, centring on the property's ownership. Back then, petitioners like Somnath Vyas 'Vyasji' argued that the land belonged to the deity Vishveshwar and should be handed over to the Hindu community. They also contended that the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act didn't apply as the mosque was built on remnants of the Adi Vishveshwar temple. Over the last few years, new cases have been filed on who could pray where and until when, along with the title ownership. The case at the centre of the renewed legal tussle is the Shringar Gauri case filed by five Hindu women.

### Over 7,000 crore budgeted for education remains unspent in current fiscal year

The Union government fell short of its targeted expenditure on education in 2023-24 by Rs 7,539 crore, with the amount spent on key schemes in the school education sector such as Samagra Shiksha and midday meal remaining below the allocation made in last year's annual budget. The shortfall in meeting the targeted expenditure in running these schemes is significant as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Education, Women, Children, Youth and Sports then chaired by BJP Rajya Sabha MP Vinay P Sahasrabudde had in 2022 asked the government to identify

the factors behind it. These details emerged after Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented the interim budget Thursday in which the government has earmarked Rs 1.25 lakh crore for education, which is 14.47 percent more than what it managed to spend so far in this sector in the current financial year. In 2023-24, the government had set out to spend Rs 1.16 lakh crore on education but spent Rs 1.08 lakh crore, the sector-wise details on expenditure incurred by the central government shows. A closer look at the fine print shows that this gap was essentially an out-

come of funds under Samagra Shiksha, midday meal (PM Poshan) and PM SHRI remaining unspent. For instance, Samagra Shiksha, which encompasses all major policies and programmes in school education, received a budgetary allocation of Rs 37,453 crore in 2023-24. However, the revised estimate which captures the actual expenditure incurred under a particular head shows that Rs 33,000 was spent to run the scheme. In the latest budget, the government has set aside Rs 37,500 to support the scheme. It is funded by the central government and states under a 60:40

ratio like in the case of PM Poshan. In 2023-24, Rs 10,000 crore was spent to run the scheme, as against the allocation of Rs 11,600 crore. This year, PM Poshan received budgetary support of Rs 12,467 crore. In the case of PM SHRI, Rs 4,000 crore was allotted, of which Rs 2,800 crore was spent. Announced in September 2022, under PM SHRI Schools (PM Schools for Rising India), as many as 14,500 schools across states and Union Territories will be redeveloped by the central government to reflect the key features of the National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

## Toyam Sports Ltd. Announces Partnership with World Championship of Legends, Roped in ITW Sports As League Consultants

**Chandigarh:** Toyam Sports Limited (TSL), India's sole BSE-listed sports company, is delighted to unveil its partnership with the World Championship of Legends (WCL) through its subsidiary, Pacific Star Sports (PSS). This noteworthy partnership signifies TSL's substantial investment in the upcoming T20 cricket league, scheduled to take place at Edgbaston, United Kingdom, from July 3 to July 13, 2024. WCL, approved by the England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB), is a creation of Zabawa Entertainment, a distinguished Bollywood film and music production company with roots in India and Dubai. Boasting an impressive lineup, the league will feature legendary cricket players from the

Yesteryear, including iconic figures such as Yuvraj Singh, Kevin Pietersen, Shahid Afridi, Chris Gayle, Harbhajan Singh, Suresh Raina, Bret Lee and many more. Adding to the star-studded ensemble, Bollywood superstar Ajay Devgn joins as the co-owner of WCL, bringing his support and enthusiasm to this extraordinary cricketing spectacle. The tournament's presentation will be spearheaded by Indian travel company EaseMyTrip. The inaugural edition of WCL promises to be a global T20 extravaganza, showcasing players from cricket powerhouses India, Australia, England, Pakistan, South Africa, and West Indies. With legendary ex-cricketers and currently non-contracted play-

ers participating, the league aims to provide fans with a thrilling experience filled with nostalgia. Harshit Tomar, Director of Zabawa Entertainment, conveyed enthusiasm about partnering with Toyam Sports Limited and Pacific Star Sports, a prominent Indian sports company actively involved in promoting cricket, tennis, and mixed martial arts on a global scale. He added that ITW Mena, lead by Vivek Chandra, is a prominent company in the sports field, and he's really thankful for their support. He believes it'll be a fruitful partnership. Mohamedali Budhwani, CMD and Chairman of Toyam Sports Limited, shared his thoughts on the partnership, stating,

## Amazon says repays \$1.9 million to workers in Saudi over unlawful fees

**DUBAI:** Online retailer Amazon said Friday it had paid \$1.9 million to more than 700 contracted workers in Saudi Arabia as reimbursements for unlawful recruitment fees, among other alleged violations. In October, Amnesty International accused Amazon of a range of abuses against workers in the oil-rich Gulf kingdom, prompting the US-based multinational to launch an investigation. "We found instances where contracted workers were required to pay fees, including recruitment fees and other costs" by Saudi recruit-

ment agents and labour supply companies, Amazon said in a statement posted on its website.

The investigation revealed other violations of its company policies including "substandard living accommodations, contract and wage irregularities, and delays in the resolution of worker complaints," it said. As a result, "Amazon paid \$1.9 million in reimbursements to over 700 contracted workers", the statement added. The Amnesty report drew on the accounts of 22 men from Nepal who worked in warehouses in

Riyadh or the Saudi coastal city of Jeddah going back to 2021, according to the London-based human rights organisation.

It found that migrant workers employed in Amazon warehouses in Saudi Arabia suffered "appalling" living conditions, on-the-job safety risks and wage theft. Amnesty accused recruitment agents and two Saudi labour supply companies of deceiving migrant workers who thought they would be employed directly by Amazon and took out steep loans to pay recruitment fees.

## Trai seeks view on enabling virtual network operators tie-up with multiple telcos

**NEW DELHI:** Telecom regulator Trai on Friday invited views on enabling virtual network operators to tie up with more than one telecom operators for providing wireless and wireline services. At present, a virtual network operator (VNO) is allowed to partner with only one telecom

operator for providing services which need numbering and unique identity of the customers like mobile connection etc. The Telecom Regulatory Authority of India has issued a consultation paper on "Connectivity to Access Service VNOs From More Than one NSO (network

service operator)" following reference made by the Department of Telecom based on representation made by VNOs. "The Authority is issuing this consultation paper for soliciting comments of stakeholders on the issues related to connectivity to access service VNOs.



## Ujjivan Small Finance Bank's 187 Unbanked Rural Centres now cater to over 5.5 lakh customers in rural India

**Jhajar:** Ujjivan Small Finance Bank (Ujjivan SFB), one of the leading small finance banks in the country, now caters to the banking needs of 5.5 lakh un-served and under-served rural customers through its vast network of 187 Unbanked Rural Centres (URCs). Through these URCs, Ujjivan SFB offers Agriculture and Crop Loans, Affordable Housing Loans, Individual Loans, and Business Loans for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises. The Bank also provides Term Deposits and Savings Account at attractive interest rates and Current Accounts. These URCs offers personalised banking services like doorstep banking and technology enabled hassle-free banking experience, reducing the need for long-distance travel for banking needs. Ujjivan SFB offers a range of Agriculture and Crop Loans starting from 26,000 to 25 lakh, catering to the banking and financial needs of the rural population operating in different segments of farming and allied occupations. Ujjivan Kisan Pragati Card (KPC), a crop loan facility, empowers farmers by providing convenient access to timely credit for their crop production needs. The KPC Kisan Abhiman loans offers enhanced credit to progressive farmers with diverse income sources, offering financial assistance for increased capital expenditure in farming activities. Affordable Housing Loan ranging from 2 lakh to 75 lakh for those looking to purchase/construct their dream home, as well as Individual loans from 35,000 to 3 lakh, Business Loans for Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises ranging from 10 lakh to 210 crores.

## Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra is proving to be a boon for the people of the state: Saurabh

**Kaithal:** State Co-ordinator of BJP Business Cell, Haryana, Saurabh Chaudhary Goyal said that under the able leadership of the country's successful Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Haryana's development man Chief Minister Manohar Lal, the 'Developed India Sankalp Yatra' is being implemented in every corner of Haryana. People are giving a warm welcome. Travel is proving to be a boon for the people and people are getting the benefits of the government's beneficial schemes at their



doorstep. Speaking in a meeting here, Saurabh Chaudhary said that during the Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra, along with making people aware about the people-friendly schemes of the Center and the state, people's problems are also being solved. Chief Minister

Manohar Lal not only monitors all the activities of the Yatra, but also directs the officials to solve the problems of the people quickly. Every needy Haryanvi should also be provided the benefits of government welfare schemes. BJP state co-ordinator Saurabh Chaudhary said that till now 52 lakh 15 thousand 965 lakh people have participated in the Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra. During the yatra, agricultural experts are organizing camps and telling farmers new methods of farming. Emphasis is also being

laid on crop diversification, so that farmers can become happy by adopting it. Apart from this, agricultural experts are also giving information to the farmers about the welfare schemes run by the Central and State Government regarding farming.

BJP leader Goyal said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision is to make India a developed nation of the world by the year 2047. To fulfill this, Vikas Bharat Sankalp Yatra was started in the country from 16 November 2023.

## Superstar Anil Kapoor Takes Center Stage in Junglee Poker's Apne Type Ke Log Campaign

**Gurigram:** Junglee Games India Pvt. Ltd, the fastest-growing skill games company, teamed up with the passionate and versatile Bollywood icon, Anil Kapoor, to headline Junglee Poker's new campaign 'Apne type ke log'. The association with Anil Kapoor aims to further enhance the spirit of inclusivity, excitement and instill relatability among a diverse audience cohort enriched with the actor's energetic charisma and intense demeanor. In a recent survey conducted among Junglee

Poker players, a staggering 26% of participants in the age bracket of 18-30 favoured the evergreen and energetic actor Anil Kapoor over younger Bollywood stars. His enduring appeal stood out prominently, a testament to his timeless charm, widespread admiration and cross-generational fan following.

His versatility, style, and ability to resonate with a diverse audience even now, made him the perfect choice for Junglee Poker. The 'Apne type ke log' campaign, spearheaded by

Anil Kapoor, aims to break stereotypes surrounding poker by showcasing it as a game accessible to everyone, irrespective of age, gender, or background. Anil Kapoor's quintessential Jhakaas attitude debunks the common stereotypes of what a poker player is perceived to be and emphasizes its universal appeal. The campaign captures the intensity and camaraderie

at the poker table while promoting a welcoming environment for players of all skill levels. Speaking about the

campaign, Bharat Bhatia, Chief Marketing Officer at Junglee Games, said, "We are thrilled to partner with Anil Kapoor and launch the 'Apne type ke log' campaign.

We are confident that his involvement will lend unparalleled credibility, a lively, charismatic energy, and his trademark 'Jhakaas' attitude to deliver our messaging. The idea is to show the audience how Junglee Poker is an inclusive game, built for people from all walks of life and skill sets in a healthy environment.

## Mahindra commences delivery of 100 Blazo 55T 4X2 to World

**Bhatinda/Amritsar:** Mahindra's Truck and Bus Division (MTBD) a part of the Mahindra Group, today handed over the keys of Mahindra BlazoX trucks to Mr. Inderpreet Anand, MD, World Wide Movers Pvt Ltd. The delivery marks a significant milestone in Mahindra's ongoing efforts to enhance logistics operations across the country. The BlazoX range of trucks are equipped with the powerful 7.2 litre, high torque, low r/min mPOWER FuelSmart engine with multi-mode switches, providing superior performance and fuel efficiency. The truck also features a Driver Information System that enables real-time monitoring of vehicle performance and driver behaviour, ensuring safe and efficient operations. In addition, it boasts next-gen features and an improved



cabin for better productivity, including ergonomically designed seats, ample storage space, and enhanced visibility. To further enhance the efficiency of logistics operations, Mahindra has also introduced its iMAXX telematics technology, which enables real-time monitoring and optimization of fleet operations. The technology provides customers with valuable insights into their fleet's performance, enabling them to make informed decisions and maximize their profits. Speaking on

the occasion, Mr. Jalaj Gupta, Business Head - Commercial Vehicles, Mahindra & Mahindra Ltd. said, "We are excited to collaborate and honoured to start the delivery of 100 BlazoX trucks to World Wide Movers Pvt Ltd. The addition of BlazoX trucks to its fleet will enable the company to further optimize its operations, improve efficiency, and reduce costs. We are devoted to providing exceptional products and services that suit the evolving needs of our clients while also contributing to the growth of the Indian economy."

## Farmers took out a tractor march under the chairmanship of farmer leader Amarendra Khara

**Kaithal:** Angered by the government's violation of promises in Siwan Nagar, today farmers took out a tractor march under the chairmanship of State Press Spokesperson of Bharatiya Kisan Union Sir Chhotu Manch and former Sarpanch representative Sardar Amarendra Singh Khara. In which a large number of farmers participated enthusiastically. MSP, Lakhimpur demanded punishment to the culprits of Kheri incident and compensation to the martyrs, giving the status of martyrs to about 750 farmers who died during the farmers' movement. Farmer leader Amarendra Singh Khara expressed his anger and said that the



way the state and central governments have made preparations to stop the farmers is wrong. In democracy everyone has the right to express their views. Amarendra Khara said that the government is not making its position clear regarding the demands of the farmers. The government is adopting dictatorial policies and is commit-

ting various kinds of atrocities on the farmers. Sometimes tear gas shells are being fired, and sometimes lathicharge is being done.

On the instructions of the government, all the link roads have been closed by the administration. Due to which the common people are facing huge problems in trans-

portation. In view of the government's tactics, the struggle has started with the tractor march. Farmers have warned that the government should immediately resolve the demands of the farmers. Hundreds of farmers including Charanjit Singh Bajwa, Uday Singh Moga, Gurpreet Singh were present on this occasion.

## Zee sets up advisory panel to tackle 'market rumours'

**MUMBAI:** Amid market rumours and media reports about its accounting and financial issues, among others, Zee Entertainment has set up an advisory committee to guide its board on how to tackle such issues. Embattled Paytm too has set up an advisory panel recently. Zee's committee will be headed by retired Allahabad HC judge Satish Chandra and two independent directors, Uttam Agarwal and P V Ramana Murthy. Zee noted that there has been a "widespread circulation of misinformation, market rumour and speculation leading to the formation of negative public opinion about the company" and as a result, impacts its share price and "erodes investor wealth". Although the company's share rose 3% to close at Rs 173 on the BSE, it has crashed 36% in the last six months and has lost 25% of its value since Sony called off a merger with Zee in late Jan.

## 4th Test: India beat England, secure 17th straight Test series win at home



**NEW DELHI:** India's dominance at home stood firm against the 'Bazball' onslaught as Rohit Sharma's squad clinched a hard-earned five-wicket victory over England in the fourth Test, marking their 17th consecutive series win on home soil. This triumph served as a stark reminder of the limitations of England's one-dimensional strategy. Starting the day at 40/0 in pursuit of 192, India overcame a few stumbling blocks to secure victory. Captain Rohit Sharma (55 off 81 balls) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (37 off 44 balls)

set a solid foundation with their 84-run opening partnership. Although there were tense moments after their dismissals, as Rajat Patidar and Ravindra Jadeja fell quickly, Shubman Gill (52 not out) and Dhruv Jurel (39 not out) steadied the ship, guiding India across the finish line with an unbeaten 72-run partnership. Left-arm spinner Tom Hartley (1/64) took the prized scalp of Rohit, while Shoaib Bashir was the most successful English bowler, scalping 3/79 in the second innings for a

match haul of eight wickets. India lead 3-1 in the series with the last game scheduled in Dharamsala from March 7. The team's last home series loss was a 1-2 defeat to an Alastair Cook-led England in 2012-13. Since then, India have won 39 out of 50 Tests at home. The host team's victory marked a stunning downfall for 'Bazball', which has been a much-hyped winning mantra for England since 2022 and is now facing all-round criticism for being too rigid and lacking in depth.

## Is Bumrah a perfect fit to succeed Rohit as captain?

**NEW DELHI:** How effective are bowlers, particularly fast bowlers, when they take the captaincy duties? The example of Australia's skipper Pat Cummins comes to mind in this ongoing debate. Since taking over the reins of the Australia team in Tests and ODIs, Cummins hasn't disappointed as a leader and has been commendable in all departments. Under his captaincy, Australia clinched the ICC World Test Championship title in 2023 by defeating India in the final, followed by a triumph in the ICC ODI World Cup, where they conquered India once again on their home turf. This victory marked



Australia's sixth ODI World Cup title. Cummins has led Australia in 41 matches across formats, while also contributing significantly with the ball, bowling 879.5 overs and claiming 121 wickets. These stats showcased the 30-year-old's exceptional ability to manage both the responsibilities of captaincy and his performance on the field,

especially with the ball. So, is India pacer Jasprit Bumrah a perfect fit to succeed Rohit Sharma, following in the footsteps of Cummins? PTI Photo The 30-year-old Bumrah has had the experience of leading the Indian national team, as he has stood-in as captain on three occasions in which he has also claimed 9 wickets.

## Sachin Tendulkar visits Aman Setu in Jammu and Kashmir's Uri

**BARAMULLA:** Cricketing great Sachin Tendulkar on Wednesday visited the Aman Setu bridge -- the last point on the Line of Control in Uri sector of Jammu and Kashmir. Tendulkar interacted with the soldiers at the Kaman Post, near Aman

Setu, during his visit that lasted around one hour, officials said. The Little Master played roadside cricket with a bunch of boys in Uri. The boys keenly watched Tendulkar's footwork and how he played the shots. Tendulkar, accompanied

by wife Anjali and daughter Sara, is on a visit to Kashmir over the past few days. He visited a cricket bat manufacturing unit at Chursoo on Srinagar-Jammu national highway. He also visited Pahalgam tourist destination in south Kashmir.

## 'Ho sakta hai ki IPL bhi na khele': Gavaskar's cheeky remark on Kohli

**NEW DELHI:** Amid Virat Kohli's absence from the ongoing Test series against England due to personal reasons, cricket legend Sunil Gavaskar pondered on Monday about the star batsman's participation in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL). The 24th edition of the IPL is set to commence with defending champions Chennai Super Kings facing Royal Challengers Bangalore on March 22 at Chepauk. Despite initially being named in the Indian Test squad, the RCB talisman withdrew before the opening game in Hyderabad. Earlier this month, Kohli and his wife Anushka Sharma announced the birth of their second child.



"Kya woh khelenge... kuch reason ke liye khel nahin rahe hain, shaayad ho sakta hai ki IPL ki liye bhi na khele (Will he play... He is not playing because of some reason, perhaps he may not play in IPL as well)," Gavaskar said rather cheekily when asked if Kohli would be hungry for runs in the IPL as he would be returning to

action after a long break. Gavaskar was interacting with the students of Indian Institute of Management, Ranchi during a Star Sports Star event. Gavaskar expressed on Monday that wicketkeeper-batsman Dhruv Jurel, part of the Rajasthan Royals, has the potential to be the standout performer in the upcoming IPL.

## 'To predetermine a way in Test cricket...': AB de Villiers on 'Bazball'

**NEW DELHI:** Former South Africa cricketer AB de Villiers has entered the conversation surrounding England batter Joe Root's struggles and the team's 'Bazball' approach. Root, known for his classical batting style, has come under scrutiny for his lack of runs in the ongoing five-Test series against India, accumulating only 77 runs in six innings. De Villiers shared his perspective on England's 'Bazball' approach, acknowledging its entertainment value while also expressing



caution about its potential drawbacks in the context of Test cricket. He highlighted the importance of adaptability and smart decision-making, particularly when facing challeng-

ing situations. "I like what Bazball represents, which is aggressive cricket, but I have said this that I want players to confront different situations and that's what Test cricket

is all about. To predetermine a way you're going to play in Test cricket is very dangerous." De Villiers pointed out the risks of a predetermined aggressive approach, especially after England's dramatic collapse in the Rajkot Test where they squandered a commanding position. The former South African cricketer emphasised the importance for England to prioritize playing the situation and adopt a sensible batting approach to enhance their chances of success in Test cricket.

## Ranji Trophy: A winning finish for Jharkhand, Saurabh Tiwary and Varun Aaron

**KOLKATA:** Though the beginning of the match as well as the Ranji Trophy campaign was not on a positive note for them, Jharkhand finished their 2023-24 domestic season on a high with an 89-run thrashing of Rajasthan in Jamshedpur. This also called for a winning farewell to domestic stars Saurabh Tiwary and Varun Aaron at their hometown -- Keenan Stadium, Jharkhand's only international venue before JSCA International Cricket Stadium in Ranchi hosted its first game in January 2013. However, as the veterans called it a day -- Tiwary from all forms of cricket and former India speedster Aaron in red-ball format -- the chief architect of Jharkhand's win was young Kolkata Knight Riders allrounder



Anukul Roy, who bagged his fifth five-wicket haul in their last Group A contest. The hosts, defending 248, had left Rajasthan tottering at 120 for six in their second innings at stumps on Day 3. And on last day, with Rajasthan still needing 128 more with four wickets in hand, Jharkhand completed the task with the 25-year-old left-arm spinner adding two more wickets to his overnight tally to complete his five-for. Meanwhile, it was outgoing pacer Aaron (1/22) who provided the first breakthrough in the morning when he returned overnight batter

Samarjit Joshi (23) in the third over of the day. Mahipal Lomror, too, could add another 18 runs to his score of 30 before falling prey to Roy, who also cleaned up rival captain Aniket Choudhary for a duck as his fifth victim to complete a memorable win on several counts. With their second victory of this edition, Jharkhand signed off at sixth spot on the group table above bottom-placed Manipur and Maharashtra. Brief scores: Jharkhand 188 & 269. Rajasthan 210 & 158 all out in 68.1 overs (M Lomror 48; A Roy 5/36, S Nadeem 3/53). Jharkhand won by 89 runs.

## 'Jin logon ko bhookh hai, hum unhi logon ko mauka denge': Skipper Rohit

**NEW DELHI:** Indian cricket team captain Rohit Sharma on Monday delivered a stern message to aspiring players eyeing a spot in the national team without demonstrating dedication and hard work. Rohit emphasised that opportunities will only be extended to individuals who exhibit a "hunger for success" in the most challenging format of the game. India secured their 17th consecutive Test series win at home by defeating England by five wickets in the fourth Test. The contributions of new additions like Sarfaraz Khan, Dhruv Jurel, Yashasvi Jaiswal, and Akash Deep were pivotal to the team's overall triumph. Rohit expressed his



satisfaction with their performances and outlined the specific qualities of talent he seeks in the team. "Jin logon ko bhookh hai, hum unhi logon ko mauka denge (We will give opportunities to only those who are hungry)," Rohit declared, making it clear that the team management is not willing to entertain players who do not display a burning desire to perform. "Agar hunger nahi hai to unko khila ke koi matlab nahi hai

(There's a point in playing those who don't have hunger)," he said. Rohi's remarks closely followed a directive from the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI), instructing players such as Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer to participate in Ranji Trophy matches. However, both players chose to overlook the message and did not comply with the directive. "I don't see anyone in the team here who is not hungry. All

the boys who are here and also those who are not, they all want to play. But the thing with Test cricket is that you get very few opportunities. If you don't utilise them, they go away," he asserted. The 25-year-old Kishan skipped the Ranji Trophy for his state Jharkhand, but was spotted in Baroda, training with Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya for the IPL scheduled next month. Asked if the cash-rich league is affecting the drive for Test cricket among young players, Rohit said, "Test cricket is the toughest format. If you want to excel and achieve success in this format, you have to show the hunger." Without naming anyone, Rohit pointed out.

## Indian men, women lose in pre-quarter-finals of World TT

**NEW DELHI:** The Indian men's and women's teams on Wednesday faced defeats in the pre-quarter-finals of the World Table Tennis Championships in Busan, South Korea. The women's team, led by Manika Batra, lost 1-3 to Chinese Taipei, while the men's team was defeated 0-3 by South Korea for the second time in the competition. Despite these losses, the Indian teams are likely to secure berths at the Paris Olympics based on their world rankings. The final confirmation will be announced on March 5 after considering the points earned from the World Championships. The event offered Olympic quotas to the quarter-finalists but the men and women from India are likely to make the cut through their world rankings. "In all likelihood, the men and women have qualified for the Olympics but we will have to wait till March for an official announcement.

## Mamata Banerjee drew a parallel between the Prevention of Money Laundering Act

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



"worked hard" to develop the district. Banerjee said incarcerating political leaders before polls had never yielded result, and would similarly not work this time around. Gandhi, she reminded her audience, had lost the 1977 Lok Sabha polls. Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee said the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) was being used by Centre to "keep political leaders behind bars for years without a trial". She was speaking at an administrative meet in Suri, Birbhum's district headquarters. "Let the law take its course and accused persons face trial. Collect evidence against them and file a charge sheet. But no one can be kept in jail for prolonged periods without a trial.... Indira Gandhi had put nearly 2,100 people behind bars during Emergency. She thought that would ensure her win, but she was defeated. Those who think that using central agencies to arrest leaders before the polls will ensure their victories are wrong." Banerjee said, refer-

## Land acquisition to build mini sewage treatment plants

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## CAPSULES

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

**NEW DELHI:**

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



### No arrest yet in accident at JLN

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

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

## Cop dies by suicide at Pudupet quarters

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



broke open his door and found him dead. They sent the body for post-mortem. Inquiries revealed that he was upset over a family dispute. There was no suicide note. (Assistance for those having suicidal thoughts is available through Tamil Nadu's health helpline 104 and Sneha's suicide prevention helpline 044-24640050) We also published the following articles recently: Man attempts suicide after strangling his wife, daughter; A man attempted suicide after strangulating his wife and daughter to death in Chakeri's Kashiram Colony. The husband, Arjun Jaiswal,

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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



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

## Dust from ballast stones suffocates railway passengers

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



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

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

## Nurses to protest on Feb 21 for regulated work hours



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

## Era of brandishing 'tamanchas' is over in UP : CM Yogi

**Kanpur** Reflecting on the significant transformation in the state, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Monday that before 2017, 'tamanchas' were brandished in UP. "Today, all six nodes of the defence corridor are actively contributing to India's self-reliance in defence manufacturing," he asserted. The Chief Minister made these remarks while inaugurating the Ammunition Manufacturing Complex of Adani Group in the Defence Corridor located in Sadh. The inauguration ceremony was attended by the country's Chief of Army Staff, General Manoj Pandey, Karan Adani,



CEO of Adani Ports and SEZ Limited welcomed the Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, presenting him with a bouquet and an 'angvasutra'. Earlier, the Chief Minister inspected the Ammunition Manufacturing Complex. Describing the moment as 'joyful', Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said: "When we organized

our first Investors Summit in 2018, Prime Minister Modi announced two defence manufacturing corridors in the country. With the objective of fostering self-reliance in the defence sector, these corridors were announced in Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh." Highlighting the Prime Minister's

announcement of six nodes in Uttar Pradesh, namely Aligarh, Agra, Kanpur, Lucknow, Jhansi, and Chitrakoot, Chief Minister Adityanath noted the commencement of operations by Adani Defence Systems and Technologies Limited in the Kanpur node. The Chief Minister outlined the involvement of various companies in different nodes, stating, "In this endeavour, BrahMos Limited has started work in Lucknow, while Armoured Vehicle Nigam Limited, Tata Technologies Limited, Global Engineering Limited, and WV Electronics India Limited have initiated their activities in

Jhansi. Ancor Research Lab LLP is contributing in the Aligarh node, and major entities like Adani Defence Systems & Technologies Limited are actively involved in Kanpur," the Chief Minister elaborated. The Chief Minister said, "IIT Kanpur and IIT BHU have been designated as Centers of Excellence for the Defence Manufacturing Corridor in UP. For this, the Defence Ministry has also shown partnership to develop infrastructure highlighted Uttar Pradesh from being perceived as a hindrance to becoming a catalyst for national development.

## PM Modi inaugurates 74 revamped railway stations of Uttar Pradesh virtually

**Lucknow** Prime Minister Narendra Modi, on Monday, inaugurated a total of 54 redeveloped railway stations under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme across the country at a cost of Rs 41,000 crore, in addition to opening/laying foundation stone of 1500 road over bridges/underpasses through virtual medium under the Amrit Bharat Station Scheme. This includes renovation/building of 74 railway stations and 267 road over bridges/underpasses in Uttar Pradesh. Emphasizing the pivotal role of Indian Railways beyond mere transportation, the Prime Minister stated, "Indian Railways is not just a passenger facility but is also the



biggest vehicle of India's agricultural and industrial progress." The Prime Minister added, "Our Railways is going to promote the products of small farmers, small artisans and our Vishwakarma friends. Under the 'One Station One Product' initiative, special shops have been established at stations to facilitate this." Reflecting on the transformation witnessed in the past

decade, PM Modi remarked, "The amenities that we aspired for are now becoming a reality in India. Over the past decade, we have witnessed the rise of a new India, evident in the transformative changes unfolding within the railways." CM Yogi expresses gratitude to Prime Minister Modi\* Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, participating in the event virtually.

## Tamil Nadu man facing five revenge-murder cases nabbed while plotting 6th hit

**CHENNAI:** A 42-year-old man, who was arrested in connection with five murders and released on bail, was stopped in his tracks on Friday while planning his sixth hit. All his six targets, including the five victims, were named as accused in the murder of the man's elder brother in 2012. In the intervening 11 years, S Suresh Kumar of PV Kalathur in Chengalpet murdered all but one. Every time he got out on bail, he killed another suspect-

ed killer of his elder brother and returned to jail. Police said Suresh Kumar's brother S Vijayakumar, a village panchayat president involved in the Palar sand mining issue with another rival gang from the locality, was murdered in 2012 on road by a gang comprising Kuppan, Duraidass, Chandru, Sekar, Nithyanandam and Venkatesan. In 2012, Kuppan was en route Chennai when Suresh Kumar blocked

Kuppan's car with his gang and hacked him to death on road, said police. In 2014, Duraidass was murdered in Guindy. Later that year, Nithyanandam was murdered at P V Kalathur outside his house. In 2015, Chandru was murdered in Chennai. In 2016, Sekar was murdered in broad daylight in Chengalpet district. The last of the gang, 'Bunk' Venkatesan, absconded, said police

## Ours is a sensitive govt, takes cognisance of all genuine news



**Lucknow** Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Monday, said that media is a powerful medium to convey the sentiments of society to the government, adding that his government takes cognisance of all authentic news reports brought out by the media, which are not propaganda. Addressing the 'Samvad' program of a media house organized at a hotel in Sushant Golf City in Lucknow, the Chief Minister said that the government today considers every piece of news as a suggestion and takes cognisance of news reports based on facts. The Chief Minister emphasized that the

media, encompassing Print, TV, and increasingly, social and digital platforms, stands as a cornerstone of a flourishing democracy, exerting significant influence on society. "Even today, the role of print media cannot be undermined. Each of these mediums has its own set of followers", he stated. He added, "Many people do not consider their day complete without reading a newspaper even today. At the same time, numerous individuals have connected with digital media through smartphones and have not turned on their televisions for years. Regardless of the platform.

## Rahul Gandhi's yatra to skip west UP, cut short by 5 days

**LUCKNOW:** Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra has been curtailed by five days and will skip most of the scheduled stops in western UP. While the party said the decision was taken because of the UP Board examinations from Feb 22, it was viewed as linked to Jayant Chaudhary's RLD quitting INDIA bloc and joining NDA. RLD's base is western UP, where it was supposed to have been the bulwark of the opposition resistance to BJP. There was also a tiff between Congress and Jayant in RS when he was called to speak about the Bharat Ratna to his late grand father and farmer leader Charan Singh, creating bitterness. The yatra will now touch upon western UP only at the exit point to MP, sources said.



## Woman ends life after husband snatches her mobile phone

Rachna Sahu died by suicide in Bhilai after her husband confiscated her phone. She was found hanging in their house. The police sealed the room and sent the body to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for post-mortem examination. Their daughter, reels, Instagram, arguments, living on the second floor with in-laws, neighbours, and passing away were factors leading to the suicide. Woman ends life after husband snatches her mobile phone A woman died by suicide in her house after her husband snatched the device, in the steel city -Bhilai. The woman is survived by a five-year-old daughter. Before the police arrived, locals had already brought down the woman's body from the noose. Subsequently, the police sealed the room and sent the body to Lal Bahadur Shastri Hospital for post-mortem examination. Supela SHO Durgesh Sharma informed that prima facie, the reason behind the suicide appears to be related to the mobile phone. Upon arrival at the scene, it was discovered that Rachna Sahu, wife of Bhupendra Sahu, a tiles worker, was found hanging. During interrogation, Bhupendra told the police that they had been married for six years and had a five-year-old daughter. On Friday afternoon, he confiscated Rachna's smartphone and left home. Only his mother, sister-in-law and their children were at home at the time. Approximately four hours later, at 7 p.m., he received a call informing him that Rachna's body was found hanging, the SHO said. Upon returning home, Bhupendra found his wife Rachna's body. She had a sari noose around her neck. Bhupendra explained to the police that Rachna would spend the entire day engrossed in her mobile phone, neglecting household chores and childcare responsibilities. She was focused on creating reels, Instagram videos, and posting them, he told the police. He had repeatedly asked her to limit her phone usage, leading to frequent arguments between them. When Rachna refused to list n, Bhupendra, in anger, confiscated her phone on Friday, her husband told the police. Rachna lived on the second floor of the house with her husband, while the in-laws lived downstairs. On Friday evening, only Rachna's mother-in-law, sister-in-law, and their children were at home. Rachna took her daughter upstairs, locked her in a room, and then went alone to another room. When the child cried, the mother-in-law and sister-in-law rushed upstairs and found Rachna hanging from the noose. They made noise, and neighbours arrived. They brought her down from the noose, but by then, she had already passed away.

## PM Modi inaugurates newly constructed AIIMS in different states

**Rae Bareli** Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Sunday inaugurated the newly constructed All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) in different states of the country, including Raebareli (Uttar Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Mangalgiri (Andhra Pradesh), Bathinda (Punjab), and Kalyani (West Bengal).

Virtually joining the inauguration ceremony of Rae Bareli, he said that he had promised AIIMS to Rae Bareli and today the guarantee was being fulfilled. He also lashed out at Congress Party for doing dynastic politics. "They only did politics in Rae Bareli, while the work was done by Modi", he stated. The AIIMS facil-

ities were inaugurated in Raebareli (Uttar Pradesh), Rajkot (Gujarat), Mangalgiri (Andhra Pradesh), Bathinda (Punjab), and Kalyani (West Bengal). Addressing the event, he said, "I had laid the foundation stone for AIIMS in Rae Bareli five years ago, and today, it has been inaugurated. Your servant fulfilled the guarantee.

## Class IV student stabbed, head smashed with iron rod, stone

**UTTARPARA:** A class IV student was stabbed with a vegetable knife, his head hit with an iron rod and then smashed with a stone idol while

he was studying in his room at Adarshnagar near Konnagar on Friday evening. The exceptionally brutal manner in which eight-year-old Snehangshu Sharma was murdered has left even hardened police officers shaken. Terming the murder "exceptionally brutal", Chandernagore Police commissioner Amit Kumar Javalgi said; "We have already sealed the house and are talking to a number of people." While the murderer could be a psychopath, criminologists said the motive could also be very personal. Sources said among those being questioned are the driver of the pool car used by the boy to commute to school.

## Yogi govt to showcase UP's rich culture to the GBC@IV participants right from their arrival

**Lucknow** In line with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's vision, the Department of Culture in Uttar Pradesh has completed its preparations to welcome guests coming for the Ground Breaking Ceremony (GBC@IV) with an array of cultural events. A total of 14 stages are being set up from the airport to the venue at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan (IGP) in Lucknow, on which 350 artistes from 22 cultural troupes will perform to give visitors a glimpse of UP's rich cultural heritage. In addition, Bollywood artistes will entertain the audience at IGP for two days. A dance drama on Ram

Stuti will also be performed by Birju Maharaj Kathak Sansthan. On February 19-20, Bollywood artistes will regale audience at the IGP with their performances. On the 19, 12 artistes from Birju Maharaj Kathak Sansthan will present a Kathak dance drama on the Ram Stuti. Popular playback singer Monali Thakur will also captivate the audience with her melodious songs. On February 20, Grammy Award-winner Ricky Kej's band and flautist Rasika Shekhar will enchant the audience with their presentations. The stages will be located at various points, including in front of the airport,

near the flyover connecting the airport to Shaheed Path, in front of the statue of martyrs on Shaheed Path, 1090 Chauraha, Women Power Line, Samata Mulak Chowk, Sangeet Natak Academy, before the flyover leading to IGP via Lohia Path, along with gate numbers one and two of IGP. Other prominent artistes to perform during the event include, Rajesh Sharma and Jagriti Pal from Mathura, who will be presenting Mayur dance and Vijay Yadav and Sheetla Prasad Verma from Ayodhya who will perform Faruwahi dance. Besides, Prakriti Yadav will be presenting

Awadhi dance, whereas Rajesh Gaur and Satish Kumar from Azamgarh will perform Kahrwa dance. Additionally, Umesh Kannaujia, Salturam will present Gazipur's Dhobiya dance whereas Preeti Singh and Kruti Srivastava will perform Prayagraj's Dhediya folk dance. Nishant Singh Bhadauria and Imran Khan Rai from Jhansi, and Khazan Singh and Mahipal Singh team will present Bamrasia folk dance from Mathura. Asha Kumari will perform Sonbhadr's Jhoomar dance while Santosh Singh's will present Adivasi dance, and Banti Rana will present Pilibhit's Tharu dance.