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Farmers' protest: No breakthrough in talks with Centre

NEW DELHI: The third meeting between Union ministers and farmer leaders in Chandigarh ended without any agreement, leading to the scheduling of another round of talks on Sunday. Describing the meeting "positive", Union minister Arjun Munda said, "Today, a very positive discussion happened between the government and the farmers' unions." "Focusing on the topics highlighted by the farmers' union, we have decided that the next meeting will take place on Sunday at 6pm", he added. The meeting lasted for around five hours and included Union ministers Piyush Goyal, Arjun Munda, and minister of state for home affairs, Nityanand Rai, as representatives of the central government. Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann was also present. The first meeting



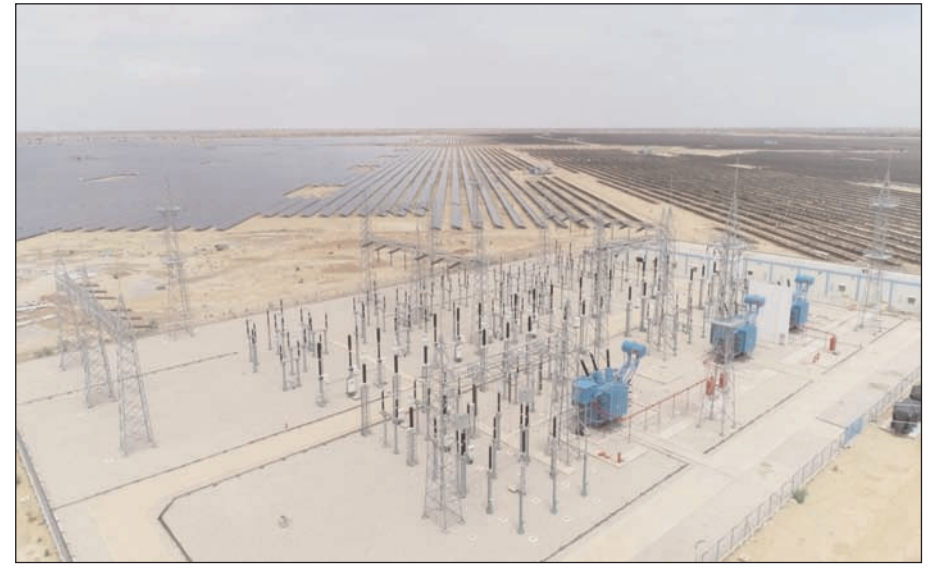
between the farmer leaders and the center took place on February 8, and the second was conducted on February 12. Previous talks were unsuccessful, prompting the farmers to organize the 'Delhi Chalo' march. The protesting farmers have presented 12 demands to the central government, including the enactment of a law ensuring MSP for all crops, a complete debt waiver, and a pension scheme

for farmers and farm laborers. They are also calling for the scrapping of the Electricity Amendment Bill 2020 and the reintroduction of the Land Acquisition Act of 2013, among other demands. The farmers are seeking justice for the Lakhimpur Kheri killings and improvements in employment opportunities and wages under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act (MNrega). This protest follows the 2020 demonstrations against the three repealed laws: The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Act, The Farmers' (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Act, and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Act. (With inputs from agencies)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate 300 MW Nokhra Solar Project in Prayagraj

New Delhi : Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi will dedicate the 300 MW Nokhra Solar Project of NTPC Green Energy Limited to the nation through video-conferencing on 16th February, 2024. Spread over 1550 acres in Bikaner district of Rajasthan, the project is being executed under the CPSU Scheme (Phase-II) with an investment of Rs 1803 crore to ensure green power to the state of Telangana. With generation of 730 million Units per year, this project will not only light up over 1.3 lakh households, it will also help restricting 6 lakh tonnes of carbon dioxide (CO2) emission every year. Going forward, the project is expected to restrict CO2 emission to the tune of 15 million tonnes in a span of 25 years. Over 13 lakh solar PV mod-



ules have been installed in this project under the flagship Make-in-India programme, thereby strengthening Govt of India's resolve of Atmanirbhar Bharat. As NTPC is actively pursuing a "just transition" by incorporating more and more clean energy into its portfolio, this project will play a key role in reducing carbon emissions, thus contributing to a more cleaner and sustainable energy future. NGEL is a wholly-owned subsidiary of NTPC and aims to be the flag bearer of NTPC's Renewable Energy journey with an operational capacity of over 3.4 GW and 26 GW in pipeline including 7 GW under implementation. NTPC Limited is India's largest integrated power utility having

74GW installed capacity that contributes 25% of total electricity produced in India. By 2032, NTPC is looking to expand its non-fossil based capacity to 45-50% of the company's portfolio that will include 60 GW RE capacity with a total portfolio of 130 GW. NTPC has partnered with Niti Aayog to strengthen India's Net Zero efforts.

'No excuse for violence...': White House on attacks against Indian students in US



NEW DELHI: In a press briefing on Thursday, the White House strongly denounced violence based on factors like race or gender, categorising such behaviors as unacceptable within the country. John Kirby, the Coordinator for Strategic Communications at the National Security Council, expressed the administration's dedication to preventing and thwarting such attacks. He underscored President Joe Biden and his team's concerted efforts to collaborate with state and local authorities in addressing the issue and ensuring accountability for those responsible. While responding to a question about recent attacks on Indian students and concerns among parents to send their children to the US, he said, "There's no excuse for violence, certainly based on race or gender or religion or any other factor. That's just unacceptable here in the United States and the President and his administration has 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." The statement comes in the wake of a sudden surge in attacks and fatalities involving individuals of Indian descent in the United States. On February 7, a 41-year-old man of Indian origin passed away in the United States, several days after sustaining life-threatening injuries in an assault in downtown Washington.

Farm stir not peaceful, armed protesters may gherao Parliament: Haryana

CHANDIGARH:

Haryana govt has claimed in its status report submitted before Punjab and Haryana HC that they had inputs regarding thousands of agitators moving in modified tractors/trolleys with weapons for camping in Delhi and laying siege to Parliament. It has also claimed that agitation was "not peaceful" and would "cause huge damage



to common citizens as well as institutions". These assertions are part of Haryana govt's status report filed by T V S N Prasad, additional chief secretary (home) Haryana,

before HC in response to a PIL against sealing of borders and suspension of Internet by state. HC has also been apprised of a communication from Delhi Police that protesters are likely to

create disruption in law and order and security situation in Delhi and requested that all persons coming with intention of taking part in protest may be identified and stopped in their area itself, and not be allowed to enter Delhi. It has also stated that several gram panchayats have given in writing that they would not support agitation. Status report claimed.

Ajit's group real NCP, so no MLAs disqualified: Speaker

MUMBAI: A little over a week after Election Commission's order granting NCP name and symbol to Ajit Pawar, Maharashtra assembly Speaker Rahul on endorsed it, recognizing the deputy CM as real head of the party as his group has a legislative majority with 41 MLAs on his side and 12 with party founder Sharad Pawar. In a verdict similar to the one in Shiv Sena MLAs' case, Speaker dismissed disqualification



pleas filed by the rival factions against each other's legislators, thus not disqualifying any MLA from either faction. Narwekar, in his order, criticised Sharad

Pawar faction, saying it could not use the Tenth Schedule of the Constitution (or anti-defection law) to stifle dissent. "I am pained to observe that in the present matter... misuse of the provisions of the Tenth Schedule by political parties becomes apparent. It appears that the intention of the proceedings is not to prevent maverick and irresponsible defection or to call an errant member.

Mamta Didi: BJP instigating Sandeshkhali violence

KOLKATA: West Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee on Thursday accused BJP of bringing in workers from outside the state to instigate violence in Sandeshkhali and fabricate a minority-vs-Adivasi dispute there. She said the area is "vulnerable to riots and has an RSS base". Speaking



in the assembly, Mamata alleged that the "primary target" was Sheikh Shahjahan, a fugitive strongman of the governing TMC

accused in attacks on ED officers last month. "Tension there is not new. We handled the situation during Saraswati Puja or else there were other plans," she said. Mamata said "she is the last person to allow injustice". The allusion was to allegations of sexual harassment of

women by Shahjahan's cronies, which had sparked clashes between police and protesting BJP workers over the past week. "Seventeen people have been arrested. State women's commission is present there. A woman-only police team is going to doorsteps to listen to grievances.

He has hurt us: Fadnavis rules out tie-up with Uddhav

MUMBAI: While Maharashtra CM Eknath Shinde and deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis preferred to be brief in their reactions to Speaker's order in NCP MLAs' case on Thursday, Fadnavis categorically stated that going forward, there will be no alliance with Uddhav Thackeray. "He has hurt us. The manner in which they criticise, the abuses they heap on Prime Minister... Political differences can be ironed out but when minds and feelings are hurt, it is difficult to work out things," Fadnavis said. Shinde said he had acted in keeping with the Constitution. "The result is out, no tension," he said. Fadnavis, on the other hand, said that he was yet to read the verdict. "I have heard that they (Sharad Pawar faction) got neither the party name nor the symbol," he said. Fadnavis said that the next Maharashtra CM will be from the Mahayuti.

BJP says electoral bonds brought in for transparency

NEW DELHI: Shortly after Supreme Court struck down electoral bonds as "unconstitutional", BJP on Thursday defended the scheme saying it was started with laudable objective of bringing in transparency in poll funding. The party, however, said it respects SC verdict. "The electoral bonds scheme was brought in for transparency in electoral funding and reduce inflow of cash during elections. Even donors want secrecy... This is not the only effort PM Modi has made to bring more transparency in the election process," senior BJP leader Ravi Shankar Prasad at a press conference. Prasad, however, said that party will give a detailed response after a comprehensive study of judgment which runs into hundreds of pages. Taking



a swipe at opposition which had alleged that the bonds could work as bribes to BJP from corporate groups, he said parties whose "DNA is based on corruption and bribery" should not level such charges. Amid claims that electoral bonds denied opposition parties a level-playing field in elections, former Union minister said it is for people to decide who are in the field and who are out of it. People have thrown some parties out of the field and they could not now win even one seat in regions which used to be their strongholds.

RBI, Nepal's central bank ink deal for UPI link

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India has signed an agreement with Nepal's central bank for integration of UPI with National Payment's interface of the Himalayan country. The agreement was inked in the presence of RBI governor Shaktikanta Das and his Nepali counterpart Maha Prasad Adhikari. The signing comes



two years after the National

Payment Corporation of India's international arm inked an agreement to facilitate the deployment of UPI in Nepal. The terms of reference of Thursday's agreement include putting systems in place for integration of fast payment systems of India and Nepal. The integration is aimed at facilitating cross-border remittances.

Introduced in 2018, electoral bond scheme allowed anonymous political funding



Delhi: Every registered party having secured at least 1% of the votes polled in a recent Lok Sabha or state election was allotted a verified account for the bonds. The electoral bond (EB) scheme of political funding, which the Supreme Court on Thursday struck down, was introduced in 2018 and allowed the purchase of bonds at any State Bank of India (SBI) branch in multiples of 1,000, 10,000, 1 lakh, 10 lakh and 1 crore. They could be bought through a KYC-compliant account with no limit on the number of electoral bonds that a person or company could purchase. Every party registered under

section 29A of the Representation of the People Act and having secured at least 1% of the votes polled in the most recent Lok Sabha or state election was allotted a verified account by the Election Commission of India (ECI) for the bonds. On October 16, the Supreme Court referred a clutch of petitions against the scheme to a Constitution bench of five judges. It started hearing the petitions, filed by Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR), non-profit Common Cause, Congress leader Jaya Thakur, and the CPI (M), among others, on October 31. The bench heard the matter on

three consecutive days when it picked holes in the 2018 EB scheme. It flagged a spate of "flaws" while the government mooted two suggestions. First, the government said the court could consider substituting SBI with the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) as the statutory bank for issuing EBs and keeping accounts. Second, the court could criminalise any instance of breach of confidentiality regarding donors. The court remained of the tentative view that the EB scheme did not appear to augur well with the need for transparency when such donations could very well be kickbacks.

BJP received highest donations amounting to 719.858 cr in 2022-23: ADR report

Delhi: The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) received the highest donations amounting to 719.858 crore from 7,945 donors in the 2022-23 fiscal year (FY), a report released by the Association for Democratic Reforms (ADR) said. With this, BJP saw an increase of 17.12% as compared to the last financial year (2021-22) when it received 614.626 crore. The total declared by the national parties for FY 2022-23 was 850.438 crore from 12,167 donations. "The Indian National Congress (INC) stood second in comparison after it received 79.924 crore which is a decrease from the previous FY 2021-22 (-16.27%). Similarly, the decrease in donations declared by CPI(M) was 39.56% (3.978 crore), and by the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was 2.99% (1.143 crore). For the 17th year in a row, Bahujan Samaj Party (BSP) declared that the party did not



receive any donations above 20,000 during FY 2022-23. State-wise donation segregation made by ADR, highlights a total of 276.202 crore was donated to the national political parties from Delhi, followed by 160.509 crore from Gujarat and 96.273 crore from Maharashtra. Of the total, as many as 3,318 donations to these parties were made by corporate/business sectors amounting to 680.495 crore (80.017% of total donations) while 8,567 individual donors donated 166.621 crore (19.592%

of total donations) to the parties during FY 2022-23. "BJP (610.491 crore) received more than eight times the total amount (70.004 crore) of corporate donations declared by all other national parties for the FY 2022-23. Prudent Electoral Trust being the top donor to parties, donated a total of 257.15 crore to BJP (256.25 crore) and AAP (90 lakh) together," the report added. The total donations of the national parties during FY 2022-23 increased by 91.701 crore, a rise of 12.09% from the previous financial year 2021-22.

Mamata Banerjee may visit Punjab on Feb 21, to meet Kejriwal, Mann

West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee may visit Punjab on February 21 and meet her Delhi and Punjab counterparts, Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann respectively, an official source said on Thursday. The Trinamool Congress supremo is expected to offer prayers at the Golden Temple also, he said. "The chief minister is likely to visit Punjab on February 21. During her visit, she will offer prayers at the Golden Temple in Amritsar. There is a high possibility of her meeting, Delhi Chief Minister and Punjab Chief Minister during this visit," the senior official, told PTI. Banerjee's meeting with the top leaders of the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) is considered crucial in the backdrop of the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections and the formation of an opposition coalition.



Kamal Kant Batra, mother of Kargil war hero captain Vikram Batra, dies at 77

Shimla: Himachal Pradesh chief minister Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu offered condolences. "Sad news was received about the demise of Mrs. Kamalkant Batra, mother of martyr Captain Vikram Batra. We pray to God to grant Mata Ji a place at His feet and give strength to the bereaved family to bear the immense sorrow," Sukhvinder Singh Sukhu posted on X (formerly Twitter). Kamal Kant Batra contested the Lok Sabha elections from Hamipur, Himachal Pradesh, in 2014 - representing the AAP. However, she resigned from the party after a few months citing "dissatisfaction" with the organisational structure of the party.

Wrestlers Punia Punia, Malik threaten fresh protest after Bhushan's son gets key post, Sakshi threaten fresh protest

India's ace wrestlers Bajrang Punia and Sakshi Malik have issued a fresh warning to start their protest again in response to the appointment of Karan Bhushan Singh, the son of former Wrestling Federation of India (WFI) president Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh, as the president of the Uttar Pradesh Wrestling Association. Both Olympic medalists are discontented with the reinstatement of Sanjay Singh, a close associate of Brij Bhushan and the BJP MP from Kaiserganj, as the WFI president to



oversee the federation's daily operations, following the United World Wrestling's (UWW) decision to lift the federation's suspension on Tuesday. The UWW lifted the provisional suspension on

India, however, they instructed the national federation to furnish written assurances that there would be no discriminatory measures taken against the protesting trio of Punia, Sakshi Malik,

and Vinesh Phogat. The suspension was imposed by the UWW in August of the previous year due to the Wrestling Federation of India's failure to conduct elections within the stipulated timeframe. The wrestlers are concerned about decision-making being vested in individuals loyal to Brij Bhushan at both the state and WFI levels, prompting them to take to social media with a threat to revive their protests. Karan previously held the position of vice president of UP wrestling.

Mangalore diocese seeks justice on St Gerosa school issue

Mangaluru: The diocese of Mangalore has requested the departments of minority welfare, child welfare and the women's commission to hold a fair inquiry into the recent incidents at a school in the city where a teacher was removed from her post for her alleged anti-Hindu remarks. In a statement issued late Wednesday night, the diocese of Mangalore said false allegations were raised against the woman teacher by BJP MLA Vedavyas Kamath who led a protest at St Gerosa school demanding an immediate apolo-



gy from her. Narrating the events that led to the issue, the diocese said it started with the circulation of two audio messages via social media accusing English teacher, Sister Prabha, of making disparaging remarks against Hindu religious practices and

political leaders during a class. As the social media messages spread, four parents approached the headmistress who assured them a thorough investigation to bring out the truth. However, a group of people gathered around the school at on

February 10. The headmistress assured them also that proper inquiry would be conducted to address the matter. The situation escalated on February 12 when officials from the education department visited the school. Local MLA Vedavyas Kamath led a protest at the school, "exhibiting disregard" for the constitutional process of a fair inquiry. He insisted on an immediate apology and suspension of the English teacher and started harassing women staff, creating an atmosphere of hostility, the diocese alleged in the statement.

House of man accused of thrashing tribal person demolished in MP

The house was demolished days after the Madhya Pradesh high court said it has become fashionable to demolish houses without complying with the principle of natural justice. The authorities have demolished the house of a man accused of thrashing a tribal person and hanging him upside down in Madhya Pradesh's Betul three months back. The assault came to light after a video of it went viral on social media. Sohrab Hussain's house was demolished a day after tea seller Ashish Parte, 24, complained to the police that six people stripped, thrashed, and hung him upside down. The demolition is the latest in a series of such actions in Madhya Pradesh. It came days after the Madhya Pradesh high court on February 1 granted compensation to two people after their



homes were demolished in Ujjain without any notice. The court said it has become fashionable to demolish houses without complying with the principle of natural justice. It said it appears that a criminal case was registered against one of the family members of the petitioners before the demolitions were carried out. "It is not the case of the respondent that in the entire area under the Municipal Corporation Ujjain, these are the only two houses that are constructed without permission to be demolished." In his complaint in the Betul case, Parte

said one Rinkesh Chauhan took him to Hussain's residence on November 15 and tried to extort money. Parte said they later asked him to pay money weekly. He added when he refused, they stripped him, tied his hands and feet, hung him from the ceiling, and beat him with a belt and a shovel. The accused also filmed the assault. Betul police superintendent Siddharth Chaudhary said that they acted immediately after the video went viral and registered a case under Indian Penal Code's sections 294 (using obscene language).

What are electoral bonds? Did they give BJP an unfair advantage?

Delhi: Supreme Court on Thursday is set to pronounce its verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the validity of the electoral bond scheme. Supreme Court on Thursday is set to pronounce its verdict on a batch of petitions challenging the validity of the electoral bond scheme.

What are electoral bonds? Electoral bonds are money instruments that act as promissory notes or bearer bonds that can be purchased by individuals or companies in India. The bonds are issued specifically for the contribution of funds to political parties. These bonds are issued by the State Bank of India (SBI) and are sold in multiples of 1,000, 10,000, 1 lakh, 10 lakh, and ₹1 crore. The donations made under this scheme by corporate and even foreign entities enjoyed 100% tax exemption



while the identities of the donors are kept confidential - both by the bank as well as the recipient political parties. **How are the donations made?** The bonds can be purchased through a KYC-compliant account to make donations to a political party. Once the money is transferred, the political parties will have to encash the donations within a given amount of time. Notably, there is no limit on the number of electoral bonds that a person or company can purchase.

Who can receive funds via electoral bonds? According to the provisions of the scheme, only the political parties registered under Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 and which secured not less than 1 per cent of the votes polled in the last elections to the Lok Sabha or a state legislative assembly are eligible to receive electoral bonds. **Electoral bonds scheme and the case** The electoral bonds

scheme was first announced by former finance minister Arun Jaitley during the 2017 Budget Session. Later, it was notified in January 2018 as a source of political funding by way of money bills introducing amendments to the Finance Act and the Representation of the People Act. In order to implement the scheme, the Centre carried out certain amendments to the Companies Act, Income Tax Act, Foreign Contribution Regulation Act (FCRA), and the Reserve Bank of India Act. However, several petitions were filed in the Supreme Court, including those filed by CPI(M), Congress, and some NGOs, against the constitutional validity of the electoral bonds scheme. The hearing into this matter began on October 31 last year. Several arguments were made by the petitioners on the scheme including its legality.

Sandeshkhali row: TMC MP Nusrat Jahan posts Valentine's Day pics on Instagram, BJP reacts

The Bharatiya Janata Party in West Bengal has hit out at returned-politician Nusrat Jahan, a Trinamool Congress MP from Basirhat, even as tension simmered in the Sandeshkhali area of North 24 Parganas district's Basirhat subdivision on Tuesday during a protest by BJP workers led by state party president Sukanta Majumder against the alleged sexual harassment of women. As clashes broke out between the police and BJP members in Sandeshkhali, Nusrat Jahan was seen celebrating Valentine's Day with her husband and actor Yash Dasgupta. Wearing an elegant crimson gown fit for royalty, she was seen in a Valentine's Day-themed photo session.

UP lawmakers' Ayodhya darshan laced with faith, fervour and politics

Lucknow

Faith and fervour intermingled with politics as Uttar Pradesh lawmakers, cutting across party lines barring the Samajwadi Party, sat in 10 luxury buses that played soft "Ram Dhun" to arrive in Ayodhya for a darshan of Ram Lalla on Sunday. This was the first such joint visit by lawmakers to the temple town, brimming with pilgrims since the January 22 inauguration of the Ram temple. More politicians, including prominent opposition names, are expected here in the run-up to the 2024 Lok Sabha polls, in which the "Ram temple" is likely to be among the BJP's major campaign themes. Delhi and Punjab chief ministers Arvind Kejriwal and Bhagwant Mann visit Ram temple on Monday. While all other opposition lawmakers — including those from the Congress, Bahujan



Samaj Party and even Rashtriya Lok Dal (though final, a formal announcement of it joining the NDA is still awaited) — hopped on to the buses packed by MLAs of the BJP and its allies, the Samajwadi Party remained an exception, having announced that its legislators would visit the temple separately, a move that provided the BJP ready political fodder. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath, who joined his ministers and all lawmakers as he landed directly from Pune to be part of the Ayodhya trip, also shared a video in which lawmakers, including assembly speaker Satish

Mahana, were seen singing and swaying to the tunes of the devotional song, "Raghupati Raghav Raja Ram." Politics resumed soon after the "divine temple experience" as BJP lawmakers targeted the Samajwadi Party leadership over its decision to stay away from the joint temple visit. "Mainey Bhagwan Ram se prarthana ki sapa samaptwadi party ho jaaye kyunki jo Ram ka nahin wo kisi kaam ka nahin (I prayed to Lord Ram to finish SP politically as one who can't be of Ram is good for nothing)," said deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya.

Number Theory: Understanding the issues ailing Indian agriculture



Chandigarh: With some farmers' unions in Punjab restarting their protests demanding a guarantee on minimum support prices (MSP), agricultural policy is back in public debate. While, there can be no rationale for a law providing a blanket guarantee for MSP, support or

opposition to this demand cannot be the be all and end all of agricultural policy debate in India. In fact, one can argue that the tragedy of Indian agriculture is that it has been caught up in sensational debates such as these and substantive issues always fail to catch the public

imagination. If Indian agriculture has to have a future — it is absolutely essential that it does — it needs to have a future-oriented policy outlook. In economic terms, this means that it should have adequate investment. Is this requirement being adequately met?

Man beaten to death over land dispute in Basti, 3 held

Basti: In a shocking incident, 67-year-old Ram Millan Choudhary was beaten to death while his son Vishal Chaudhary and his sister Mala Devi sustained severe injuries when half a dozen armed miscreants barged inside their house and attacked them. The incident took

place in village Gausi Pur Derwa under Kalwari police station of the district in Basti on Sunday. Deputy Inspector general (DIG) RK Bharadwaj along with Superintendent of Police (SP) Gopal Krishna visited the village and assured the affected family that the assailants

would be arrested soon. Police confirmed that heavy police force had been deployed in the village as serious resentment was brewing against assailants. Police have registered a case after a written complaint was filed by Mala Devi against five accused.

CAPSULES

Traffic jams mostly on Delhi periphery, barricades stay

Delhi: Vehicular movement in the Capital, especially in central and south Delhi, was significantly better on Wednesday compared to the serpentine traffic jams throughout Tuesday, despite no changes in the deployment of security personnel and barricading.

While there were fewer traffic congestions within the city, some key stretches near Singhu and Tikri borders reported snarls during morning and evening peak hours.



"The farmers were scheduled to reach Delhi on Tuesday. Although the protesting farmers were contained at the Punjab-Haryana borders, we received inputs that some political and non-political groups in small numbers may march to central Delhi. Accordingly, instructions were issued to put barricades at strategic locations in the city and intensify the checking of vehicles. The arrangements disrupted vehicular movement and caused bottleneck congestion on roads leading to the police pickets. As commuters used alternate routes to avoid traffic snarls, the volume of traffic increased on those roads as well," said a senior traffic police officer. On Wednesday, security arrangements remained in place at key borders like Singhu, Tikri and Ghazipur, as well as within the city limits. However, police moved some of the barricading to the edge of the roads, providing sufficient space for vehicular movement, while also checking fewer vehicles.

Kejriwal gives 5 months' salary to Hardayal library staff in Delhi

Delhi: Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday met the employees of Hardayal Municipal Heritage Library at his camp office and handed over pending salary checks for five months, even as he slammed the 15-year rule of the Delhi civic body by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for the crisis. The chief minister assured the staff of a long-term solution to the salary crisis in the heritage library. Addressing the library workers, Kejriwal attacked the BJP and alleged that the BJP has tried "to



snatch power from the new Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) administration by not allowing the formation of a standing committee". "A provision has been made for your salaries for the remaining period and it will also be released soon. Ours is a government of com-

mon people and we understand the pain and sufferings of the common people... Earlier there was a dishonest government that ruined the Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) over the last 15 years. You must have noticed the difference in the func-

tioning of MCD in the last year even though they have snatched our various powers... They are not allowing a standing committee in MCD. They are posing problems in running MCD and the Delhi government. If there is honest government then there is no shortage of money. The previous government lacked intention," he said. However, the Delhi BJP said the AAP government should focus on providing a one-time grant to the library rather than looking at piecemeal solutions.

Modi govt implemented management principles in governance: Piyush Goyal

Lucknow

Union minister Piyush Goyal said that the Narendra Modi government is a classic example of use of good management principles in governance. He said whenever faced with any problem Modi government did detailed 'root cause' analysis of the problem came up with robust sustainable solutions. While virtually addressing a 'Flagship Leader Interactive Session ICONS' at IIM Lucknow's Manifest-Varchasva 2024, Goyal said that Modi government used managerial skills of part-



nering with all the stakeholders. He said prime Minister Narendra Modi has prepared a roadmap (blueprint) how to take India forward. "But Modi alone didn't prepare it alone. He took ideas and feedback from 15 lakh people to make a

roadmap for future of India," Goyal said. "Partnership of all the stakeholders is another example of decisive leadership that is keen to listen to what people say. Outcome oriented action defines our government. Outlay of

money is not important but it's the outcome that holds the key," he said. Goyal said that the rule of the law is the key. "There is transparency and sincerity in every action that we take. We prioritise as we understand that everything will not happen overnight. Swachta (cleanliness) was one of the priorities of the government. Time bound execution is another focused area to define performance. Innovative financing models are being used to fund big development and welfare expenditure.

Lucknow's unique identity shines through its Nawabi delicacies, says Pant

Lucknow

Exploring the vibrant flavors of Lucknow's cuisine and its influences from afar, academician and food historian Padma Shri Pushpesh Pant and India's first Masterchef Pankaj Bhadouria tantalized taste buds in their discussion titled 'Zayake Awadh Ke.' They covered dishes originating in the region as well as those influenced by other areas. Amid discussions of Nawabi cuisine, Pant, who retired as a professor from the School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, Delhi, opined that most people do not question the roots of their food, and often what they imagine to be authentic is merely a derivation of the original dish. He exemplified this by stating that biryani was never a



dish born in Lucknow; the dish now known by that name would be called 'pulao' in this region. However, the name has since changed. "There is no cuisine like Awadh's. It has a unique identity in the world, especially with its Nawabi delicacies." Bhadouria agreed, adding that all local flavors always stand out. Bhadouria also discussed how Lucknow as a city experiences a myriad of original flavors.

"Due to the climate conditions here, the different weather patterns in Lucknow yield various vegetables and fruits throughout the year." They discussed local spices and recipes like 'nimona' and 'chhole ki kachori,' among others." The conversation delved into lost dining etiquettes, with Pant reminiscing about a time when everyone would gather on the floor in the kitchen to dine together, waiting until the elders finished.

Rajya Sabha polls in Uttar Pradesh: BJP names four OBCs on list of seven, drops eight MPs

Lucknow

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Sunday named four Other Backward Classes (OBC) leaders among its seven candidates for the February 27 Rajya Sabha polls from Uttar Pradesh while dropping eight outgoing members of the Upper House of Parliament from the state. The list also has two upper castes and a member of the Jain community. National spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi is the only one of the nine Rajya Sabha MPs from Uttar Pradesh being renominated by the BJP. The eight BJP members from U.P. not fielded this time are: Vijay Pal Tomar, who has been named election in-charge for Odisha, former Samajwadi Party heavyweight-turned-BJP MP Ashok Bajpai, Dalit leader from west



U.P. Kanta Kardam, party's OBC leader Sakaldeep Rajbhar, national spokesman GVL Narasimha Rao, veteran leader Anil Jain, businessman from west U.P. Anil Agarwal and senior leader Harnath Singh Yadav who recently demanded that the Places of Worship Act 1991 be scrapped immediately. The polls have been necessitated as the term of 10 Rajya Sabha MPs, including nine from the BJP, is set to expire

on April 2. The BJP list names former Congress leader RPN Singh, a three-term OBC (Sainthwar) lawmaker from Padrauna, who made a political switch to BJP in 2022. It also includes two women. One of them is Sadhna Singh, a former lawmaker who courted controversy due to a remark directed at Bahujan Samaj Party chief Mayawati. Former Agra mayor and businessman Navin Jain is also on

the list. The other names include Amarpal Maurya, another OBC leader and BJP's UP general secretary, who is close to deputy chief minister Keshav Prasad Maurya. Chaudhari Tejveer Singh, a three-time Jat MP from Mathura is also among the party picks. The other woman on the BJP list is Sangeeta Balwant, former lawmaker who hails from Ghazipur. She is also an OBC (Bind). "Like always, the BJP list is full of surprises. But like always the party must have done its homework well. Take RPN Singh for instance. He is a former Congress leader but also notice that his Sainthwar OBC caste is spread out in several districts of east UP like Kushinagar, Gorakhpur, Deoria and Maharajganj," a party leader said.

PM likely to open revamped T1 at Delhi's IGI airport this month

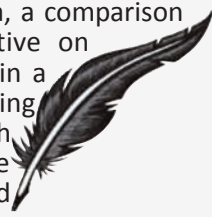
Delhi: Prime Minister Narendra Modi is set to inaugurate Delhi airport's Terminal 1, likely by February 25, two officials close to the development said, adding that the upgraded facility will bring in a slew of new convenience features for flyers and make departures and arrivals quicker. The terminal, which will be two-and-a-half times larger than the old T1, will initially begin operations with IndiGo and SpiceJet flights, one of these people said. "The revamped terminal 1 is all set to be made operational and is awaiting to be inaugurated by PM Modi. The terminal will be inaugurated around February 25," an official close to the development said, asking not to be named. Work at T1 has been underway in segments, with portions shut since 2019, to bring both T1C and T1D — previously separate sections for arrivals and departures — under one roof.

Editorial

Why agriculture sector across the world needs to break socialist trap

Ironical as it may seem, across the world, reasons for farmer protests have less to do with farming, weather, or food and more with geopolitics. The recent spate of unrest in Europe, for example, can be traced to war, tariffs, currency, fuel costs, logistics, and regulatory wokeism. Similarly, even in post-green revolution India, agriculture sector woes are less about farming and more about political brinkmanship. Therefore, the solution to these woes may not just lie within the paradigm of the farm-to-food value chain but even outside.

The world produces more food than it can eat. The quantity of food an average human being can consume in a day across all five food categories is only 300 grams. Extrapolated to 8 billion humans, it translates to a food requirement of 875 million tonnes each year. Double that quantity to feed animals to account for non-vegetarians, and the world doesn't need more than 1,750 odd million tonnes of agricultural or farm produce of any kind each year. Correspondingly, we produce 800 million tonnes of wheat, 600 million tonnes of rice, 100 million tonnes of pulses, a whopping 1200 million tonnes of corn, and much more in cereal, food grains, and oilseeds. Modern inventions like home refrigerators, commercial cold storage, and advanced food processing have further widened the gap between production and consumption. Arithmetically, we live in a world of agricultural abundance, and that perhaps is at the root of all disgruntlements. Long ago, agriculture stopped being about subsistence and became a sector of the economy. As transaction commerce moved from barter to monetary, agricultural produce became a commodity, and then cash and farming transitioned from occupation to profession to commerce. To fuel that commerce, marketing curated needs beyond just satiating hunger. These needs transcended boundaries in a globalised world, and demand got internationalised. Kiwi Fruit from New Zealand in a New Delhi breakfast and Japanese Edamame in a Johannesburg bar were not a surprise, but so was the downside. When cassava replaces wheat in African meals, war in Ukraine can impact the Congolese wallets, and civil unrest in West Africa can make Choco Latte expensive at Starbucks. What, then, is the solution to the seemingly recurring woes of agriculture? More importantly, does the farm sector deserve a solution? The agronomy, after all, accounts for a mere 5 per cent of the 105 trillion global GDP. Development economics hints at an inverse relationship with agriculture. But this can be misleading and risks taking those involved in this important sector lightly. Western Europe is perhaps doing that and facing consequences since the sector accounts for a woeful 1.5 per cent of GDP. The fact is that agriculture is the most "real" sector of the economy compared to its sectoral peers. The services sector, for example, has a disproportionate gross value add and hence skews the sectoral ratio in its own favor. If the number of people gainfully employed were a measure of sectoral contribution and importance, then agriculture would rank at the top. Besides, agriculture is the deepest foundation of the economy, nay, humanity. So, nurturing the sector should be a policy priority. And this should be the central perspective before we start dealing with the sector. Contextually for India, a comparison with China offers perspective on why it is important to lock in a long-term strategy in dealing with agriculture since both countries feed roughly the same number of mouths and employ 40 per cent of their workforce in the sector.



Election results further divide Pakistan, expose deep rot and fissures

Pakistan was already in a serious political, economic and social mess. The elections just held have deepened that mess. The functioning of all Pakistani institutions has been badly exposed and their credibility eroded further. Imran Khan defied the Pakistani military and has paid a price for that. The judiciary has pliantly played the game of the Pakistani military by sentencing Imran Khan to long periods of imprisonment for provoking violence against the army, leaking state secrets and profiting from sale of gifts he received as Prime Minister from foreign dignitaries. His wife too has been given a prison sentence for an un-Islamic marriage with Imran Khan. The Pakistani military is seen, and sees itself, as the saviour of last resort of Pakistan's survival as an ideological nation. The army, as known, has always exercised real power in Pakistan directly or indirectly. Imran Khan himself was put in power by the army as an alternative to the traditional political parties. Having fallen afoul of the army because he wanted to exercise his prime ministerial prerogative in military appointments, he was removed from power. The army then manoeuvred for Nawaz Sharif to return from London and replace Imran



Khan. The judiciary cooperated by lifting the life-long election ban on Nawaz Sharif because of his criminal conviction for dishonest practices because, it ruled, that life-bans "abridge the fundamental right of citizens to contest elections and vote for a candidate of their choice". The Election Commission of Pakistan decided to bar PTI — Imran Khan's party — from using its iconic cricket bat symbol to identify party candidates in the election on the grounds of irregularities in its internal party elections. The Pakistan Supreme Court upheld the decision of the Election Commission. Members of Imran Khan's party were barred from contesting the election under their party's

name and were compelled to run as independents. It was speculated that while the Pakistani military would manoeuvre to make Nawaz Sharif Prime Minister, it would also ensure that no party gets a majority so that a coalition government that emerges is relatively weak and can be better controlled. In the event, the military's strategy hasn't worked as expected because despite all the bans and restrictions put on Imran Khan and the PTI, his followers standing as independents have won the largest number of seats, close to 93 or so (out of 101), with PML-N winning 75 seats, the PPP 54 seats, the MQM-P 17 seats and others 12. With the delay in announcing results, the clos-

ing down of the internet and telephone networks during the counting, the accusations of rigging seem credible. A coalition government is in the offing. Nawaz Sharif has made an appeal to all parties to come together to put crisis-ridden Pakistan back on the rails, and negotiations are being conducted with PPP and others. General Asim Munir has backed Nawaz Sharif's call in stating that "Pakistan's diverse polity and pluralism will be best represented by a unified government of all democratic forces imbued with national purpose". In all this, the military as an institution has also taken a hit. The limits of its ability to control the political process have been exposed. It is not the first time though that the military has received public rebuffs, but such is its core control of power and policy in the system that it recovers from setbacks. The fact that challenged openly and persistently by Imran Khan and General Munir's determination to crush him and the PTI, the former Prime Minister's youthful supporters have resisted and emerged as the largest group-as independents-in the election, shows that the military's role in Pakistani politics is being challenged. Some believe that this show of resistance to the military's

political manipulation is a good augury for Pakistan's democracy. But then, Pakistan's political structure, the role of the armed forces, the domination of Punjab in its polity, the radicalisation of its society, the country's ideological underpinnings, the limited base of its economy and the difficulties in revitalising it because of vested interests are issues that are deeply linked to the possible evolution of a more democratic Pakistan. Leaving aside the hurdles to any genuine democracy in Pakistan that its military represents, the political leaders of Pakistan have vied for power in the country without any genuine democratic convictions. Imran Khan's vision of Pakistan is not that of a modern democracy but of an Islamic welfare state based on moral and ethical principles — a Riyasat-i-Madina — that would transform Pakistan. As for other leaders, those of PML-N and PPP, they have been in and out of power, in and out of jail, tainted by corruption. They have fought elections without seriously committing themselves to plant the roots of a stable democracy in Pakistan. Pakistan sees Turkey as a model to emulate, but Turkey itself has moved towards an Islamic state. So, what lesson is there for Pakistan in this?

Why a legal guarantee of MSP is fraught with challenges

On November 19, 2021, Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the repeal of the three farm laws. Thus ended the thirteen-month long farmers' agitation on the borders of Delhi. It took the Government about nine months to take the next step on the promise made to agitating farmers' unions. It was only on July 12, 2022, that the Union Government set up an expert committee under the chairmanship of former Agriculture Secretary Sanjay Agarwal. The committee has 29 members of which four are Secretaries to the Government of India and four represent the states. However, Punjab, Haryana and Uttar Pradesh are not represented in the committee. Several economists and experts had



opposed the farm laws but none of them was included in the committee. Due to the complexity of the issues involved it is not surprising that the committee has not been able to submit a report. Now that general elections are only about ten weeks away, it is unlikely that the committee will be able to submit even an interim report. The terms of reference of the committee do not specifically mention legal guarantee for MSP. Instead, it mandates the committee to give suggestions of the following issues relating to MSP: Suggestions to

make available MSP to farmers of the country by making the system more effective and transparent. Suggestions on practicality to give more autonomy to the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices (CACP) and measures to make it more scientific. To strengthen the Agricultural Marketing System as per the changing requirements of the country to ensure higher value to the farmers through remunerative prices of their produce by taking advantage of the domestic and export opportunities.

PM Modi's deft engagement with West Asia exposes elitist

PM Modi's deft engagement with West Asia exposes elitist, prejudiced mindset of Left-'liberals'

Prime Minister Narendra Modi with Vice President and Prime Minister of the UAE and Ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum the World Government Summit, in Dubai, UAE, on 14 February, 2024. In the last one week, India has received multiple good news from West Asia. The biggest one is Indian Navy veterans getting released and safely returning to their homes after they were put on death sentence in Qatar last year with the espionage charges against them being dropped. As the images of their happy faces after landing in New Delhi circulate all over the media, one can only thank Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his personal investment in securing their release. After all, it was a powerful meeting between him and Qatari Emir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani on the sidelines of the COP28 Summit in Dubai that set the ball rolling towards their release in December 2023. According to foreign secretary Vinay Kwatra, the prime minister not only "personally supervised" their case but he also never "shied



away" from any initiative that would ensure their safe release and return to India. In a reciprocal gesture of goodwill, Prime Minister Modi will also pay a short visit to Qatar this week after completing his scheduled visit to the UAE. What's interesting is that this news comes on the heels of another welcome development in India-Qatar ties. In early February, India and Qatar had also agreed to renew a \$78 billion deal as a part of which India will receive Liquefied Natural Gas from this West Asian nation till 2048. India will save around \$6 billion over the next 20 years due to this deal because it has been negotiated at a price lower than the current prevailing market rates of LNG. Qatar is vying to become one of the largest LNG producers in the world and a customer like India would definitely give its ambitions new wings. Besides growing energy cooperation with Qatar, there is another reason to cheer for

India as the Arab Emirate of Abu Dhabi has just witnessed the inauguration of a Hindu temple on Wednesday. In 2015, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan had generously donated a 13.5 acre of land for construction of a Hindu temple during PM Modi's visit to UAE. This donation was topped up with another 13.5 acres of land later on. A Swaminarayan temple built on this total 27 acres of land will be opened to people on 14 February after its inauguration by Modi during his two-day visit.

Interestingly in a span of just eight months, this will be Prime Minister Modi's third visit to UAE. In fact, not just the United Arab Emirates but the entire region of West Asia has witnessed closer cooperation with India in the last 10 years. India, UAE sign pact to develop trans-continental trade corridor to connect Europe with India through Middle East

Why Indian Navy is a preferred partner in Indo-Pacific

In response to recent missile and drone attacks by Houthis in the Red Sea, piracy, and hijacking attempts off the Somali Coast, there is one resident navy that has responded every time a distress call has been received and rendered assistance—the Indian Navy. Since the time these incidents in the Red Sea began, the Indian Navy has been deploying 8–10 ships in the Arabian Sea, Gulf, and Bab-el-Mandab regions. These deployments are over and above other deployments to tackle traditional threats that do not have a forecasted arrival time, particularly when we have two nuclear neighbours with whom we do not have the best of relations. Navies all over



the world understand the logistics support required for sustaining such operations, which do not seem to be scaling down anytime soon. These ships need to be fuelled at sea and supplied with other provisions, apart from replacement spare parts. Logistic support ships

have very important functions for longer deployments, though they can also become suitable targets, being lightly armed.

Ships are also required to undergo routine maintenance in the harbour, which is supported by naval dockyards and

material organisations. The Indian Navy has a very robust material management network, and there are procedures by which these spares can also be delivered at sea or in harbours in other friendly foreign countries. These eat up the running hours of engines and equipment, which could impact availability in a warlike situation. The Indian Navy has been managing this mammoth task extremely efficiently. Ships of friendly countries have also been provided with harbour support in case it is so required. India's policy has been that of a free and open sea and the right to innocent passage for vessels engaged in trade and commerce.

Germany overtakes Japan as third-biggest economy

TOKYO: Once forecast to become the world's biggest economy, Japan slipped below Germany last year to fourth place, official data showed Thursday, although India is projected to leapfrog both later this decade.

Despite growing 1.9 percent, Japan's nominal 2023 gross domestic product in dollar terms was \$4.2 trillion, government data showed, compared with \$4.5 trillion for Germany, according to figures released there last month. The change in positions primarily reflects the sharp fall in the yen against the dollar, rather than the German economy -- which contracted 0.3 percent in 2023 -- outperforming Japan, economists said.

The Japanese currency slumped by almost a fifth in 2022 and 2023 against the US currency, including around seven percent last year. This was in part because in an effort to boost prices the Bank of Japan has maintained negative interest rates, unlike other major central banks



which have raised borrowing costs to fight soaring inflation.

"The overtaking... in size in dollar terms owes a lot to the recent collapse in the yen. Japan's real GDP has actually outperformed Germany's since 2019," said Fitch Ratings economist Brian Coulton. Germany's heavily export-dependant manufacturers have been hit particularly hard by soaring energy prices in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Europe's biggest economy has also been hampered by the European Central Bank raising interest rates in the eurozone as well as uncertainty over its budget and chronic shortages of skilled labour. Japan is also heavily reliant on

exports, in particular cars, although the weak yen -- making exports cheaper -- has helped big firms like Toyota offset weakness in key markets such as China. But it is suffering more than Germany in terms of worker shortages as its population falls and birth rates remain low, and economists expect the gap between the two economies to widen. Thursday's data showed that Japan's economy shrank an adjusted 0.1 percent quarter-on-quarter in the last three months of 2023, missing market expectations of 0.2 percent growth.

Growth for the third quarter was also revised downward to negative 0.8 percent, meaning that Japan was in technical. Uber repurchases \$7 billion in shares, boosting shareholder returns. Stock surges 11% in New York. Meta and Airbnb also enhance shareholder returns. CEO Khosrowshahi sees 2023 as a turning point for Uber's financial health. Uber rolls out 1st buyback plan after profitable

RBI bars fintechs from issuing business credit cards on KYC worries

MUMBAI: RBI has asked payment networks Visa and Mastercard to stop facilitating business credit card issues by fintech aggregators, also known as business payment solution providers.

Business credit cards, unlike consumer credit cards, are issued to businesses. These are used to make vendor payments and act as a substitute for working capital for the companies.

Historically, banks have been issuing these cards to corporates. In recent years, fintechs have issued such cards, onboarding vendors to enable them to accept payments made on



credit card networks. When contacted, Visa confirmed the development. "Visa received a communication from RBI on Thursday, Feb 8 in what appears to be an industry-wide request for information

on the role of BPSPs in commercial and business payments. That communication included the direction that we hold all BPS transactions in abeyance," the company said in a statement.

Uber rolls out 1st buyback plan after profitable year

Uber repurchases \$7 billion in shares, boosting shareholder returns. Stock surges 11% in New York. Meta and Airbnb also enhance shareholder returns. CEO Khosrowshahi sees 2023 as a turning point for Uber's financial health. Uber rolls out 1st buyback plan after profitable

year Uber Technologies will buy back as much as \$7 billion in shares to return capital to shareholders after reporting its first full year of operating profit and consistent positive free cash flow in 2023. The repurchase plan "is a vote of confidence in the company's strong financial

momentum," chief financial officer Prashanth Mahendra-Rajah said in a statement. "We will be thoughtful as it relates to the pace of our buyback, beginning with actions that partially offset stock-based compensation, and working toward a consistent reduction.

CAPSULES

Passenger Vehicles wholesales up 14% in January at 3.9 lakh+ units

NEW DELHI: Passenger Vehicles (PV) sales in India kicked off on a strong note in 2024 with wholesales rising 14% year-on-year to 3,93,074 units last month, the best-ever figure for Jan, driven by robust demand for utility vehicles, industry body Siam said on Wednesday.

As per the data issued by the Society of Indian Automobile Manufacturers (Siam), dispatches of passenger vehicles from manufacturers to dealers stood at 3,46,080 units in Jan 2023.

16th financial panel starts work on fund share

NEW DELHI: At a time when states, particularly from the south, are demanding a higher share of taxes, the 16th Finance Commission started work on preparing the roadmap for sharing of resources for five years, starting April 2026. The 16th Finance Commission, headed by economist Arvind Panagariya, held its first meeting here on Wednesday. Unlike some of its predecessors, the current commission has been given an open canvas with only what is provided in the Constitution given as the mandate with even the census, which is used as the base for population related calculations, not mentioned in the terms of reference. The panel will hold wide ranging consultations over 18-20 months, which will include those with the states and other agencies before finalising its recommendations by Oct-end 2025, an official statement said.

EU mulls curbs On Indian, Chinese firms for aiding Russia: Report

The European Union is considering imposing trade sanctions on approximately 24 companies, from a host of nations, for their alleged role in supporting Russia's military activities in Ukraine, a Bloomberg report said

Driving the news

The proposed sanctions aim to prevent European entities from engaging in business with the named companies, intensifying efforts to halt Russia's procurement of sanctioned items via third-country corporations. The proposal's inclusion of companies from a diverse range of countries, including India, Sri Lanka, and Turkey, without assigning blame to their governments, illustrates the EU's cau-



tious approach in its sanctioning efforts, the Bloomberg report said.

With over 620 firms already listed, predominantly Russian, the EU continues to expand its sanctions regime to thwart the flow of banned technologies and electronics to Russia, demonstrating a multifaceted strategy to address the conflict in Ukraine.

Why it matters

India and China have been key buyers of Russian oil since the imposition of Western sanctions. This has helped Russia's economy amid the ongoing war with Ukraine. This latest move marks a significant development as it could be the first occasion the EU targets Chinese firms since the onset of the Ukraine conflict. The move underscores the EU's determination to tighten the noose around Russia's access to critical goods, amidst the backdrop of its strategic trade relations, especially with China. Germany's significant economic ties with China, particularly in the automotive sector, underscore the delicate balance the EU must navigate in its sanctions policy.

Elon Musk-led Tesla to drive into India soon? Government firms up policy for concessional import duties

Tesla in India soon? Elon Musk-led US electric automaker Tesla is on the verge of entering the Indian market as the government is finalizing a policy to extend concessional import duties on electric cars exceeding Rs 30 lakh (about \$36,000) for 2-3 years. This move comes as India aims to boost employment and reduce the prices of electric vehicles through local manu-



facturing. An report quoted sources familiar with the matter, stating that the reduced import duties may be offered

in lieu of bank guarantees by Tesla for an investment in constructing an electric vehicle factory in India.

Currently, India imposes a 100% import duty on cars with a value of more than \$40,000 (about Rs 33 lakh) and 60% for cars below that threshold. However, Tesla has expressed its willingness to invest up to \$2 billion if the Indian government offers a reduced import duty of 15% on imported electric cars during the first two years of operations.

Acclaimed neurologist Dr. Praveen awarded by the union health minister

New Delhi. These awards have been named after the father of surgery, Sushruta, whose text the 'Sushruta Samhita' is one of the oldest ancient treatises on medicine and surgery in the world. Trained at nation's premier medical institutes, AIIMS and Maulana Azad Medical College, Dr. Praveen initiated and nurtured neurosciences at Gurugram with establishment of three departments of neurology at Paras hospital, Artemis and Fortis Memorial Research Institute respectively.

He also established first stroke and DBS centres in Gurgaon. He started Autologous Bone marrow transplant for CIDP in India and has executed a large series of bone marrow transplants as a potential cure for



Multiple Sclerosis patients. Being the first to start solitaire stent-based thrombolysis in north India, he has continued to advance frontiers in Neurology. While treating about 80 to 100 outpatients and 40 to 50 inpatients every day, he has been instrumental in physician training and patient education for prevention and treatment of neurological diseases. He pioneered the development of Deep brain stimulation for drug resistant Epilepsy in

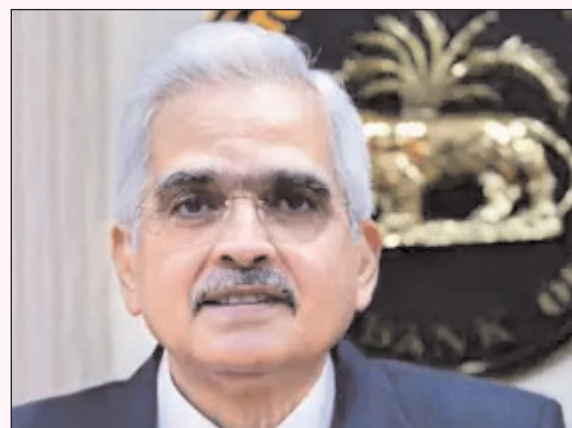
Asia and published the role of Topiramate in common ailments like migraine to bring new therapeutic options. He is a forerunner in dementia care which is becoming a major public health problem.

With his innovative approach, in-depth understanding of the human body, and commitment to heralding new frontiers in science, Dr. Praveen has redefined neuro-care for immense benefits to the sick and needy.

RBI governor asks banks to remain alert to build-up of loan risks

MUMBAI: In the central bank's first meeting since July 2023, RBI governor Shaktikanta Das on Wednesday raised the issue of outlier growth seen in personal loans segment and the exposure to NBFCs.

In Nov 2023, RBI had hiked risk weights on unsecured personal loans and lending to NBFCs to slow down bank credit to these segments, which have been seeing runaway growth. Das said that the domestic financial system was resilient, but there is no scope for any complacency, and banks should continue to maintain their vigil around the build-up of risks. The RBI governor, however, complimented bankers on their improved financial performance. Untitled design (64)



According to sources, RBI is also concerned about the quality of underwriting in loans, which are distributed through intermediaries, including digital players. Das noted the issues relating to business model viability. He also said that banks must ensure that they do not relax underwriting standards when disbursing loans through co-lending arrangements with NBFCs.

Bank credit for personal loans grew 23% year-on-year as of Dec 2023 to Rs 13.3 lakh crore. Total loans in the individual loan segment (including home, consumer and auto loans) rose 28.5% to Rs 51.7 lakh crore. Bank credit to NBFCs grew 15% year-on-year to Rs 15.2 lakh crore for the same period. The overall increase in bank credit year-on-year stood at 19.9% due to the merger of

HDFC with HDFC Bank. Without the merger, bank credit growth would have been 15.6%, while credit in the individual loan segment would be 17.7%. Das's meeting with bankers was part of RBI's ongoing communication with the top management of the banks it oversees. Deputy governors M Rajeshwar Rao and Swaminathan J and executive directors responsible for regulation and supervision also attended the meetings. The last such meeting took place on July 11, 2023. The RBI governor also spoke about the need for liquidity risk management given current market conditions and sought their preparedness to meet cyber security incidents.

Mahindra Q3 profit up 34% at 2,658 crore



MUMBAI: Mahindra on Wednesday reported a smaller-than-expected 34% increase in consolidated net profit at Rs 2,658 crore for the quarter ended Dec 2023 as weak demand for its profit-boosting tractors offset SUV sales.

While Mahindra's tractors and farm equipment sales form only about a third of total revenue, they are far more profitable than its auto business, which comprise close to two-thirds of the topline and includes the sale of SUVs and commercial vehicles.

India biggest US partner in South Asia, says American official

Washington

Afreen Akhter, Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs (SCA), told this at a news conference organised by the Washington Foreign Press Center. "With India, which of course is our biggest partner in South Asia, we launched in January of last year the US-India Initiative on Critical and Emerging Technology. We call this iCET," Akhter said. The goal is to build a resilient semiconductor supply chain, elevate space cooperation, and partner on the next generation of telecommunications — so, again, a really ambitious initiative to build cooperation on critical and emerging technologies with India, she said. The US is also advancing regional resilience to transnational threats. "We want to talk about it in terms of our work on infrastructure or — and climate change and responding to pandemics. So under the Partnership for Global



Infrastructure and Investment, which is another initiative we announced recently, we're working with India to deploy multi-billion-dollar climate infrastructure and a new fund that will include a USD 500 million investment contribution from our Development Finance Corporation," she said. "This will also include 40,000 public e-buses through an innovative payment secured — security mechanism financed by the Government of India, the United States, and our partners of philanthropy," Akhter said. "And then finally, we also launched the Climate Action Champions Work in South Asia, which is intended to invest in the next generation of

climate leaders to support climate advocacy and respond to their needs throughout the region. So as you can see, we're deeply engaged with all of our partners across the Indo-Pacific and East Asia and South Asia," she said. Akhter said the US and India have deepened a very broad and multifaceted defence partnership through joint exercises, strengthened defence industrial cooperation, and the annual 2+2 Ministerial Dialogue. "We are really focused on building out that defence relationship. It's one of the key features of our Indo-Pacific strategy," she said. The US is making huge investments throughout South Asia, she said.

It's time for Northeast to prep for floods like those that hit this winter. Climate change is why

PORTLAND, Maine (AP)

After back-to-back storms lashed the Northeast in January, rental properties Haim Levy owns in coastal Hampton, New Hampshire, were hammered by nearly two feet of water, resulting in hundreds of thousands of dollars in damage and causing him to evacuate tenants to safer ground. Many scientists who study the intersection of climate change, flooding, winter storms and sea level rise agree the kind of damage Levy experienced was more of a sign of things to come than an anomaly. They say last

month's storms that destroyed wharfs in Maine, eroded sand dunes in New Hampshire and flooded parts of New Jersey still coping with hurricane damage from years ago are becoming more the norm than the exception, and the time to prepare for them is now. Climate change is forecast to bring more hurricanes to the Northeast as waters warm, some scientists say. Worldwide, sea levels have risen faster since 1900, putting hundreds of millions of people at risk, the United Nations has said. Erosion from the changing conditions jeop-

ardizes beaches the world over, according to European Union researchers. Another storm brought flooding to Massachusetts and New Hampshire on Tuesday. In the Northeast, the problem of climate change is especially acute because of forecasted sea level rise here, said Hannah Baranes, a coastal scientist with the Gulf of Maine Research Institute's Climate Center in Portland, Maine. The state has already experienced 7.5 inches (19 centimeters) of rise since 1910 and is projected to have to manage 4 feet (1.2 meters).

Moderna-backed Metagenomi cuts US IPO valuation target to \$563 million

Washington

Genetic medicines company Metagenomi Technologies said on Thursday it is aiming for a valuation of \$563 million in its US initial public offering (IPO), a number that is at the low end of its initial target range. The company, backed by Moderna and Bayer

Healthcare, plans to raise about \$93.8 million by selling 6.25 million shares at \$15 apiece. That is the lower end of its price range of \$15-\$17 per share. At \$17 per share, Metagenomi would have had a market value of \$638 million. Metagenomi, one of a

string of healthcare companies that have recently sought to go public, is developing therapies for genetic diseases like hemophilia A. All of its revenue has been generated from three collaboration agreements, including one with Moderna, and not any product sales.

CAPSULES

Cisco to lay off over 4,000 employees; 34,000 jobs cut across 141 US tech firms this year

Cisco is strategically focusing on artificial intelligence and forming a partnership with Nvidia to stimulate growth. This is being seen as the reason behind redundancy of 5% of its global workforce. Company claims, with an employee count of 85,000, is undergoing layoffs and a broader restructuring effort to concentrate on high-growth areas. But Cisco isn't the only one. The networking equipment giant has followed suit to hundreds of other US and Canada firms which strategically moved towards AI integration in its operations to announce massive layoffs since the beginning of 2024. While job cut announcements in the U.S. more than doubled month-on-month to 82,307 in January, they were down 20% from a year earlier, according to a report by outplacement firm Challenger, Gray & Christmas earlier in February. On a broader scale, the technology sector in the United States is witnessing a wave of job cuts. In 2024, thousands of jobs have already been eliminated across various tech companies. Cisco's decision adds to the growing list of firms implementing workforce reductions. The technology industry, which experienced the highest number of layoffs in 2023, has already seen 34,000 job cuts across 141 firms in the current year, according to Layoffs.fyi. As companies across sectors in the U.S. and Canada grapple with economic challenges, the job cut announcements signal potential ongoing layoffs in 2024 as organizations strive to control costs.

Mom of 2 killed in Super Bowl parade shooting was a Chiefs fan

Kansas

A mother of two children, Lisa Lopez-Galvan, has been identified as the victim of the Super Bowl parade shooting in Kansas City. She succumbed to her injuries during surgery at a local hospital. She had suffered a gunshot wound to her abdomen, loved ones told Kansas City Star. Among the 22 other people who were injured were as many as nine children.

Who was Lisa Lopez-Galvan?

Lisa Lopez, a longtime friend, who works as The Star's newsroom executive administrative assistant, described Lopez-Galvan as the "most wonderful, beautiful person." "She was a local DJ. She did everybody's weddings. We all know her. She



was so full of life," Lopez added. Friends and family claimed Lopez-Galvan's adult son, as well as two of her minor cousins, were injured in the shooting. Lopez-Galvan was in her 40s and lived with her husband and two children in Shawnee. According to New York Post, she worked as a disc jockey for community radio station KKFI and as the co-host of Tejano, a show that focused on Hispanic music. The

president and chief executive officer of the Guadalupe Centers, Beto Lopez, is her brother. Lopez-Galvan was a huge Kansas City Chiefs fan. Lopez-Galvan's death was confirmed by her employer, KKFI 90.1 FM. "It is with sincere sadness and an extremely heavy and broken heart that we let our community know that KKFI DJ Lisa Lopez, host of Taste of Tejano lost her life today in the shooting at the KC Chiefs' rally," they said in a statement, according to PEOPLE.

"Our hearts and prayers are with her family. We encourage anyone who feels they saw something to reach out to law enforcement at 816 234 5111.

Warning signs mounted before Texas shooter entered church with her son, former mother-in-law says

HOUSTON

The former mother-in-law of the woman who opened fire at a Houston megachurch tried for years to alert authorities and others, including church staff, about her ex-daughter-in-law's mental health struggles, she said. But Walli Carranza said nothing came of her actions. Carranza said she believes systemic failures as well as lax gun laws ultimately



led to Sunday's shooting at celebrity pastor Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in which Genesse Moreno entered the church with her 7-

year-old son and opened fire in a hallway. Two people were wounded in the shooting, including Moreno's son, who

was shot in the head. Moreno was gunned down by security officers she exchanged gunfire with. Carranza said her grandson Samuel remained in critical condition, but that he was doing better. Various questions about the shooting remained unanswered on , including Moreno's motive and details about how she obtained the AR-style rifle she used.

Huma and Soros may be dating, their Valentine's Day post reveals



New York

Abedin, 47, and Soros, 38, are seen in a photo cozying up at a restaurant in Paris. There is a Happy Valentine's Day sticker on the top. A bunch of roses, as well as two jewellery boxes, can be seen on the table. Abedin served as vice chair of Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign. She was previously married to former Rep. Anthony Weiner, and filed for divorce from him in 2017.

The divorce filing came after Weiner was sentenced to nearly two years in prison for sexting with a minor girl. Their

divorce was finalised some years later. However, in April last year, the pair was seen dining together in Manhattan's Ziegfeld Ballroom during the city's Inner Circle show. This sparked rumours that they had reunited. Weiner dismissed the rumours, New York Post reported.

Page Six revealed some months later that Abedin was secretly dating Bradley Cooper. The two were introduced by Vogue EIC Anna Wintour. Meanwhile, last year George Soroshanded over the reins of his for-

tune to Soros, although he is his younger son. His eldest son is Soros' brother, Jonathan.

The fortune included nonprofit Open Society Foundation, known for funnelling to liberal causes around \$1.5 billion a year. An NYU grad, Soros claimed he was picked for being even "more political" than his father. The younger Soros' first major contribution to the Jewish Funds for Justice helped him establish himself as a philanthropist. He later also donated \$200,000 to the Jewish Council for Education and Research.

Rhinos are returned to a plateau in central Kenya, decades after poachers wiped them out

Kenya

Conservationists in Kenya are celebrating as rhinos were returned to a grassy plateau that hasn't seen them in decades. The successful move of 21 eastern black rhinos to a new home will give them space to breed and could help increase the population of the critically endangered animals. It was Kenya's biggest rhino relocation ever. The rhinos were taken from three parks that are becoming overcrowded to the private Loisaba Conservancy, where herds were wiped out by poaching decades ago. "It's been decades since rhinos roamed here, almost 50 years ago," said Loisaba security manager Daniel Ole Yankere. "Their num-



bers were severely impacted by poaching. Now, our focus is on rejuvenating this landscape and allowing rhinos to breed, aiming to restore their population to its former splendor." Moving rhinos safely is a serious challenge. The 18-day exercise involved tracking the rhinos using a helicopter and then shooting them with tranquil-

izer darts. Then the animals — which weigh about a ton each — have to be loaded into the back of a truck for the move. Disaster nearly struck early in the relocation effort, when a tranquilized rhino stumbled into a creek. Veterinarians and rangers held the rhino's head above water with a rope to stop it from drowning

while a tranquilizer reversal drug took effect, and the rhino was released. Some of the rhinos were transferred from Nairobi National Park and made a 300-kilometer (186-mile) trip. Others came from two parks closer to Loisaba. Rhinos are generally solitary animals and are at their happiest in large territories. As numbers in the three parks where the rhinos were moved from have increased, wildlife officials decided to relocate some in the hope that they will be happier and more likely to breed. David Ndere, an expert on rhinos at the Kenya Wildlife Service, said their reproduction rates decrease when there are too many in a territory.

Kansas City Chiefs team hailed for 'calming panicked kids down' after Super Bowl parade shooting

The Kansas City Chiefs team is being appreciated for its response in the aftermath of a Super Bowl parade shooting that killed one person and injured at least 22 others. Sports Illustrated's Albert Breer reported that the players calmed down kids who were panicking after the attack. The NFL insider specifically mentioned Blaine Gabbert, Trey Smith, Austin Reiter and Chris Oladukun. Law enforcement and medical personnel respond to a shooting at Union Station during the Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl LVIII victory parade on February 14, 2024 in Kansas City, Missouri. Law enforcement and medical personnel respond to a shooting at Union Station during the Kansas City Chiefs Super Bowl LVIII victory parade on February.

What needs to happen is...': AB de Villiers on Ishan Kishan's absence

NEW DELHI: Former South African batting legend AB de Villiers has weighed in on the absence of Indian wicketkeeper-batter Ishan Kishan from international cricket, emphasizing the need for clear communication between players and team management during such challenging situations.

Kishan, who last played a T20I match against Australia in November, requested a break from the Test squad during the South Africa series due to personal reasons.

Despite being in the T20I squad for the South Africa tour, he did not feature in any matches and has been absent from the ongoing Ranji Trophy as well. Reflecting on this situation, de Villiers, speaking on a YouTube channel, shared his own experiences with managing career challenges, particularly towards the end of his playing days.

He highlighted the complexity of managing career priorities



amidst the proliferation of T20 leagues like the IPL, which demand significant attention from players. De Villiers emphasized the importance of proper communication between players and team management or the board, stating, "Whether Ishan is doing it wrong or other players are doing it right or wrong, I do not know but what needs to happen is proper communication."

Acknowledging the difficulties associated with managing one's career, de Villiers extended his best wishes to all players grappling with similar challenges. "Managing the

career is something I found extremely difficult in the backend of my career," he admitted, underscoring the necessity of clear and regular communication to ensure players are aware of their standing and roles within the team.

The former South African batter's comments come in the wake of Indian head coach Rahul Dravid's statement regarding Kishan's absence, where Dravid emphasized the player's choice in deciding when to make a comeback and the importance of playing some cricket before returning to the national side.

Bengaluru Open: Ramkumar Ramanathan shocks top seed Luka Nardi to enter quarterfinals

BENGALURU: Indian Davis Cupper Ramkumar Ramanathan made a remarkable comeback to shock top seeded Luka Nardi to enter the singles quarterfinals of the Bengaluru Open here on Wednesday. Ramkumar, a wildcard entrant, prevailed over the Italian 1-6, 6-4, 6-4 in little over two hours in their pre-quarterfinal match at the KSLTA Stadium.

The match began on an ominous note for the Indian star as Nardi broke his serve in the very first game of the opening set. From that point onwards, Ramkumar was not able

to offer any kind of fight to his higher-ranked opponent, who used a heavy first serve and precise ground shots to choke his opponent. While Nardi landed a whopping 86 percent of his first serve inside the box, Ramanathan barely managed to cross the 50 percent mark. But Ramkumar seemed a totally transformed player in the second set as he engaged Nardi more effectively in rallies, exploring the deeper areas of the court to keep the Italian pinned on the baseline. After the first four games went by the serve,

Ramkumar earned a crucial break in the fifth game to go 3-2 up and he consolidated the position with a hold to make it 4-2.

The salient feature of Ramkumar's transformed game was the improvement in his first and second services, as he found more zip in them in this set.

Nardi struggled to return Ramkumar's serves that often breached the 200 kmph barrier. It was evident in the 10th game when Ramkumar served out the second set, as two big serves down the T helped the Indian go level at a set apiece.

Teen Pakistani player dies of suspected heart attack during ITF junior event in

ISLAMABAD: A teenaged Pakistani tennis player, Zainab Ali Naqvi, died of suspected heart attack after collapsing in her room following a practice session ahead of an ITF junior tournament. The 17-year-old died while being taken to hospital late on Monday

night. She was accompanied by her grandmother who sought help after the youngster fainted. "It is very sad because Zainab was a very promising player on the women's circuit and enthusiastically working hard to win the ITF junior competitions," a senior

Tennis Federation official said. A police official handling the case said doctors declared her dead after she was brought to an Islamabad hospital. "The doctors suspect a heart attack and have termed it as a natural cause of death and her parents.

CAPSULES

'Talent is universal...': Gary Foundation trans- forms lives through cricket

NEW DELHI: Renowned cricket coach Gary Kirsten has spearheaded a transformative initiative in an effort to uplift the community of Khayelitsha township, leveraging the power of cricket to inspire positive change in an area plagued by poverty and crime. Kirsten, reflecting on his return to Cape Town after guiding India to World Cup victory in 2011, expressed his vision to introduce cricket to the poorest neighborhoods of the city. "When I came back from India, I wanted to have a look at cricket in our poorest neighborhoods in Cape Town," shared Kirsten in an interview with PTI, underscoring his commitment to making a difference through the sport.

Establishing the Catch Trust Foundation, later renamed the Gary Kirsten Foundation, in 2014, Kirsten set out to provide children in Khayelitsha with an alternative to the pervasive challenges of drugs and violence. "The idea struck me... I took a tour of the area... and found that no cricket was happening... We started with two concrete nets in two schools and then included three more schools," Kirsten explained, detailing the foundation's inception and early efforts. Underprivileged children from Khayelitsha after a cricket training session in Cape Town. Operating in Khayelitsha, where access to resources and opportunities is limited, the foundation has been instrumental in nurturing cricketing talent and fostering a sense of purpose among the youth. "It is helping me to avoid street things like smoking weed and helping me keep my body and lungs fit," remarked 15-year-old Lukholo Malong, reflecting on the impact of the foundation on his life aspirations.

FA approves Jim Ratcliffe's Manchester United investment

LONDON: British billionaire Jim Ratcliffe's purchase of a 25 per cent stake in Manchester United has been approved by the Football Association.

Ratcliffe's deal had received the backing of the Premier League on Monday evening and the FA have now also given the green light to his investment. A US Securities and Exchange Commission statement revealed the FA's approval "has already been obtained" as Ratcliffe edges closer to sealing his place in the Old Trafford boardroom. Ratcliffe's invest-



ment, which will give him control of football operations at the 20-time English champions, cannot be completed until the tender offer for Class A shares is finalised. The period in which holders of Class A shares can ten-

der them for sale has been extended from February 14 until 23:59 on February 16. It was announced on Christmas Eve that INEOS chairman Ratcliffe had agreed to buy a 25 per cent stake in United from unpopu-

lar owners the Glazer family in a deal worth around £1.02 billion (\$1.3 billion). Ratcliffe will also invest a further £238 million in the club's infrastructure.

The 71-year-old has conducted a series of meetings with club staff and associates in recent days as the investment nears completion. Ratcliffe has met leaders of the independent Manchester United Supporters' Trust and spoken with local leaders, including senior representatives of Trafford Council.

Rahul Dravid will remain India coach in the T20 World Cup: Shah

NEW DELHI: The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) has confirmed that Rahul Dravid will remain in his role as India's head coach until the upcoming T20 World Cup scheduled for June 2024. The announcement was made by BCCI secretary Jay Shah, who affirmed the decision following discussions with Dravid.

Dravid's contract had initially ended after the ODI World Cup final last year, but he was asked to continue his duties along with other support staff for the tour to South Africa in December-



January, with the tenure yet to be finalized. Speaking on the matter, Shah revealed, "After the (2023) World Cup, Rahul bhai had to leave for the South Africa tour immediately. We did not get to meet in between which finally happened today." He further asserted,

"Why are you worried about a contract for such a senior person like Rahul Dravid? Rahul bhai will remain the coach in the T20 World Cup." However, Shah hinted at further discussions to be held ahead of the marquee event, acknowledging the busy schedule of

the Indian cricket team. "I will speak with him whenever there is time, there are back-to-back series happening right now," he stated. In addition to Dravid's extension, Shah emphasized the BCCI's mandate regarding workload management for centrally contracted players during the Indian Premier League (IPL) season. This is the BCCI's mandate. The BCCI is the supreme body and whatever it decides the franchisees will have to follow — we are above the franchisees," he asserted, underlining the importance.

Dhawal Kulkarni likely to retire after Mumbai's last Ranji Trophy league game of the season

RAJKOT: In what will certainly be an emotional occasion for him, veteran pacer Dhawal Kulkarni, who played 12 ODIs and two T20Is for India between 2014-16, is likely to announce his retirement from the game after Mumbai's last Ranji Trophy league match against Assam, which begins from Friday (February 16) at the MCA's ground in BKC, a reliable source in the Mumbai Cricket Association on Wednesday. While he couldn't play much for India despite obvious talent, Kulkarni enjoyed a 16-year epic long career in first-class cricket for Mumbai, during which he played 95 matches. Kulkarni, who has been a part of Mumbai's last four Ranji Trophy title triumphs -2008-09, 2009-10, 2012-13 & 2015-16,



has taken 281 wickets at an average of 27.31, with 15 five-wicket hauls and a best bowling performance of seven for 50. He has also taken 223 wickets in 130 List A matches at an average of 22.13, and 154 wickets in 162 matches at an average of 27.99 in T20s. The 35-year-old took 19 wickets (4-34 best figures) at an average of 26.73 in ODIs, and three wickets at an average of 18.33 in T20s for India. He also played for the Mumbai Indians, Rajasthan Royals and (now defunct) Gujarat Lions in the IPL. The veteran pacer has featured in

just three Ranji Trophy matches this season, in which he took seven wickets. Kulkarni made his first-class debut for India A against Australia at Bangalore in September 2008, and was immensely successful in his debut season for Mumbai, striking regularly with the new ball. While he wasn't very quick, Kulkarni was a master of beating the batsmen with his swing and movement, with his outswinger being his biggest forte.

Notably, some of Kulkarni's best performances came for Mumbai in the Ranji Trophy finals.

Diaz's solo stunner secures Real Madrid 1- 0 win over RB Leipzig

NEW DELHI: Real Madrid clinched a vital 1-0 victory away at RB Leipzig in the first leg of the Champions League last 16, propelled by an extraordinary solo goal from midfielder Brahim Diaz.

The match commenced with RB Leipzig showcasing vigor but lacking the finishing touch, while Real Madrid's goalkeeper Andriy Lunin proved pivotal with numerous crucial saves, notably after Leipzig's contentious disallowed goal for offside. In the early stages of the second half, Diaz's moment of brilliance broke the deadlock. The stand-in for the injured Jude Bellingham demonstrated exceptional skill, maneuvering past three Leipzig defenders before delivering a precision strike into the net. Reflecting on his remarkable goal, Diaz remarked, "I'm intuitive... It was a nice goal."

Toni Kroos, Real Madrid's midfielder, lauded Diaz's individual contribution, acknowledging "a piece of individual skill decided the game." Conversely, Leipzig goalkeeper Peter Gulacsi expressed frustration, stating, "a lucky punch decided the game." Despite the absence of key players like Bellingham and makeshift defensive arrangements, Real Madrid continued their impressive Champions League campaign with a seventh consecutive victory.

'Cricket has increased these days': Jadeja

RAJKOT: Since making his debut against England at Nagpur in December 2012, Ravindra Jadeja has played 69 Tests. However, he would've played plenty more Tests and white-ball games for India but for the numerous injuries that he has suffered in the course of a fabulous career during which he has taken 280 wickets and scored 2893 runs. Returning after a hamstring injury forced him to miss the second Test against England at Visakhapatnam, for the third Test of the series in his hometown Rajkot, Jadeja, now 35 and perhaps realising that he isn't getting any younger, made it clear that he now wants to protect his body, no matter how. Considering that hamstrings take time to heal, the ace allrounder's early return to action is almost miraculous.

"I would like to give my 100% and save my body and keep away from diving when not required. That's it. I don't think about that too much because it has happened before. As the match progresses, the body will get used to the flow and you will forget that there was an injury.

Manchester City beat FC Copenhagen 3-1, edge closer to quarter-finals

NEW DELHI: Manchester City showcased their dominance in a commanding 3-1 victory over FC Copenhagen in the Danish capital, positioning themselves favorably in the Champions League last 16 encounter. Kevin De Bruyne set the tone with an early opener, only to see Magnus Mattsson equalize against the run of play. However, Bernardo Silva swiftly restored City's lead before half-time, setting the stage for Phil Foden's stoppage-time goal to seal the deal. The English champions, on a scintillating 11-game winning streak across all competitions, are on course to replicate last season's historic treble of Champions League, Premier League, and FA Cup triumphs. Facing a Copenhagen side that had not played a competitive fixture for two months, City capitalized on their opponent's lack of match sharpness from the onset. De Bruyne's clinical finish from Foden's pass handed them an early advantage, signaling their intent. Despite Jack Grealish's early departure due to injury, City seamlessly adapted, with Jeremy Doku making an impactful substitute appearance.



Encephalitis control in UP is one of the most successful models in the country and the world: CM

Gorakhpur Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Thursday said that owing to the relentless efforts of the double-engine government, the scourge of encephalitis has been effectively curtailed and eradicated from eastern Uttar Pradesh within a span of six to seven years. While the formal declaration of this remarkable achievement is yet to be made, he asserted that the successful containment of encephalitis has emerged as a beacon of hope and a potential model for replication across the nation and beyond. Addressing a gathering convened to commemorate the foundation stone laying ceremony for the new administrative building dedicated to MBBS stu-



dents at BRD Medical College to be built at the cost of Rs 60 crore, along with the inauguration of a cutting-edge solar rooftop plant on the medical college premises, the Chief Minister lauded the pivotal role of BRD Medical College in Gorakhpur, "as the epicenter of this triumph against encephalitis, with the Health department serving as the

linchpin in this endeavor." Highlighting the profound impact of this milestone in saving the lives of innocent children, he said that previously encephalitis claimed 1200 to 1500 lives annually. Moreover, the CM underscored the efficient reallocation of manpower and resources, previously dedicated to combating encephalitis, towards

delivering high-quality healthcare services to all segments of society. Reflecting on the journey, he remarked, "From 1977-78 until 2017, the issue of encephalitis was tragically overlooked by successive administrations. However, upon assuming office in 2017, I resolved to confront this crisis head-on and charted out a course for its eradication." Underlining the multifaceted approach adopted, he highlighted the pivotal role of community engagement, citing the impactful cleanliness campaign conducted among the Kushinagar Musahars. "This comprehensive initiative encompassed educational endeavors on hygiene practices and the provision of essential

resources like soap, underscoring the holistic approach adopted towards disease prevention and public health promotion", he pointed out, adding that he even had to face media trial for encouraging people to use soap. He, however, said that during coronavirus pandemic, people realised the importance of soap and sanitation. CM Yogi said that cleanliness is the solution to many diseases, stressing that when attention was focused on cleanliness in mission mode, encephalitis was eradicated from the state. CM Yogi also talked about the struggle of the BRD Medical College in the past, which despite serving as the sole healthcare center of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

No poor person will face eviction in my govt: CM Yogi

Gorakhpur Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, in a resolute stance, affirmed on Thursday his unwavering commitment to protecting the rights of the underprivileged and said that in his government no poor person would face eviction. Speaking at the Janata Darshan, held at Mahant Digvijaynath Smriti Bhawan on Gorakhnath temple premises and attended by around 500 people, the Chief Minister stated that the government would ensure the safeguarding of the land belonging to the impoverished and provision of concrete housing facilities under either the PM Awas Yojana, or the Mukhyamantri Awas Yojana for those yet to secure a permanent residence. CM Yogi listened to the problems and grievances of the people attentively and directed the concerned officials present at the



Janata Darshan to address the issues raised, promptly and satisfactorily. He forwarded people's prayer letters to the respective authorities, along with instructions for expeditious and equitable resolutions of all their problems. He also assured the people that no injustice will be done to anyone during his tenure.

In response to complaints regarding land encroachment by nefarious elements, CM Yogi emphasised that the weak and vulnerable would not be subjected to oppres-

sion under his administration. He instructed both administrative and law enforcement personnel to identify the culprits and take stringent legal actions against them. Furthermore, the Chief Minister affirmed full governmental support for individuals requiring financial assistance for medical treatment. He mandated the expeditious processing of treatment-related estimates, emphasizing the necessity of transparency and impartial resolutions concerning revenue and law enforcement matters.

Chhattisgarh to bring in law to stop 'illegal conversions'

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh gov plans to bring in a legislation to stop "illegal religious conversion" in the state. During a debate on budgetary demands in the assembly on Wed, minister for religious trusts and endowments Brijmohan Agrawal said many forces were "at work to alter the demography of Chhattisgarh". In order to prevent these activities, an anti-conversion bill, titled 'Freedom of Religion (Amendment) Bill', would be introduced during the current session itself, he announced.



Around a fortnight ago, CM Vishnu Deo Sai had alleged that Christian missionaries were carrying out conversion under the garb of healthcare and education. Speaking at a school event, Sai had said the missionaries were "very active" in the state and were "dominating" the two

sectors, resulting in a rise in religious conversion. "All this will stop soon, and Hindutva will gain in strength," he had said.

BJP has repeatedly declared that it will put an end to conversion by force or allurements. In Nov 2023, a week before the second phase of voting in the assembly polls, home minister Amit Shah had alleged that there was "unfettered religious conversion of tribals in Congress rule". "We will not allow anyone to convert tribals without their consent," Shah had said at a Jashpur rally.

UP govt increases grant to daughters from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 under Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana

Lucknow Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has fulfilled the promise he made to the girls by increasing the grant amount from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 given across six categories under the Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana from the financial year 2024-25. This amount is provided from the birth of daughters up to admission in undergraduate/diploma courses. The increase in grant amount will be effective from April 1. Since assuming office in 2017, the Chief Minister has prioritized women's empowerment, dignity, and self-reliance. In April 2019, the Women's Welfare Department launched the Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana with a multifaceted agenda. This initiative aims to eradicate female foeticide, foster gender equality, prevent child marriages, enhance the health and education of girls, offer

support for their self-reliance, and cultivate a positive societal perception towards girls, among other objectives. Under this scheme, a total sum of Rs 15,000 is allocated across six distinct categories, facilitating comprehensive assistance for the beneficiaries. Director of the Women's Welfare Department, Sandeep Kaur, said that the increase in grant amount has been ordered following an announcement by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath in this regard. As per the order, the initial amount of Rs 2,000 given at the time of birth has been increased to Rs 5000 from the financial year 2024-25. For the completion of all vaccinations in one year, Rs 1,000 was given, which has been increased to Rs 2,000. Besides, Rs 2000 given for admission to the first class of a girl has now been increased to Rs 3000.

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.



Verdict to boost Ajit's efforts to woo opposition leaders before Maharashtra elections

PUNE/KOLHAPUR: Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar will now expand his party by denting opposition, especially Congress, in NCP's heartland of western Maharashtra before assembly elections later this year, experts said after Speaker's verdict on



Thursday. The fact that the original party name and symbol now stay with Ajit is likely to help him draw more leaders.

The sugar belt of western Maharashtra comprising Pune, Satara, Sangli, Kolhapur and parts of Solapur districts has remained an NCP stronghold since its inception. Experts said since the split Ajit has been focusing on this region to strengthen his party, like his uncle Sharad Pawar earlier did.

The fact that a younger generation of Congressmen has already spent the last ten years in opposition and now have the option of joining a 'secular' party in power may act as incentives to bring some of them on board.

The Maharashtra deputy chief minister had recently inducted supporters of Sharad Pawar loyalist Jayant Patil from Sangli district. He also wants to bring in disgruntled leaders from Congress like Jayashri Patil, widow of former Congress leader Madan Patil, who represents the family of former chief minister Vasantdada Patil. She had sought a ticket from Sangli in 2019 elections but was denied.

In Satara district, where Sharad Pawar's faction holds a strong position, Ajit Pawar is keen on fielding his candidates for Lok Sabha election. Political analyst Prakash Pawar told TOI, "Ajit's politics relies more on practicality than ideology. While expanding his party, he will look to attract leaders who are financially strong and capable of taking practical decisions rather than sticking to ideology. He may get some success in western Maharashtra where many Maratha leaders are well off but are not getting opportunities to contest."

Some of these leaders are bound to take into account the fact that though NCP (Sharadchandra Pawar) and Uddhav Thackeray's Shiv Sena have approached SC against EC and Speaker's orders, the verdict will take time.

Our decision to join government has been upheld, says Ajit camp

MUMBAI: State NCP president Sunil Tatkare on Thursday welcomed Speaker Rahul Narwekar's order, saying the decision taken under the leadership of Ajit Pawar to join the BJP-Shiv Sena govt has been upheld. "Our contention was that the recognition of the party depends on legislative strength. Of 53 legislators, 43 are with us. Our arguments have

been accepted by Speaker and he has delivered a verdict in our favour. Speaker's order is very elaborate and based on constitutional issues," Tatkare told. Tatkare also rebutted comments by Supriya Sule who said Speaker's order was a virtual replica of the ruling in the Shiv Sena case and showed that "an invisible power" was at work against

Pawar and his NCP. Tatkare said Sule was speaking out of mere frustration without considering past events, which establish NCP's stand. "After 2014 assembly elections, NCP had given outside support to BJP. In 2016-17, NCP decided to join govt with BJP. A discussion was even held within the party and all 53 MLAs supported it.

Nationwide strike alert: Farmers' Gramin Bharat Bandh

NEW DELHI: Farmers' unions, including the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), have called for a nationwide strike, named Gramin

Bharat Bandh, on February 16, urging the Centre to address their longstanding demands. The strike is expected to impact several sectors, with potential disruptions to transportation, agricultural activities, and rural employment schemes, among others. **Bandh timing and duration** The Gramin Bharat Bandh is scheduled from 6am to 4pm on February 16, with farmers planning massive chakka jams on main roads from 12pm to 4pm. Routes in Punjab are set to be affected for four hours, causing potential traffic diversions and delays. Delhi NCR borders, particularly Singhu (Delhi-Haryana).

Yogi govt to encourage industries to fulfill their social responsibilities

Lucknow The Uttar Pradesh government headed by Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath will engage with CSR (corporate social responsibility) heads of industries during the upcoming Groundbreaking Ceremony @ I V (GBC@IV) and encourage them to fulfil their responsibilities towards society. The conversation between Yogi government officials and the industrialists will take place on the second day of the three-day GBC@IV on February 20. It is worth mentioning here Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath has always emphasized the need for the industrial sector

to move forward and fulfil its responsibility towards society apart from addressing its business concerns. The GBC@IV will be the largest so far and see implementation of 14,000 projects worth Rs 10 lakh crores in the presence of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, which will create employment opportunities for 33.50 lakh youth. The Companies (Corporate Social Responsibility Policy) Amendment Rules, 2022 in India, links companies to their social responsibilities. Under these rules, companies have to spend at least 2 per cent of their average net profit for three financial years preced-

ing the current financial year on initiatives related to social concerns. Most of the reputed companies spend crores of rupees addressing social concerns under the initiative. The entire framework of the conference has been designed to establish collaboration between various departments of the Yogi Government and CSR heads of reputed national and international companies taking part in GBC@IV. During the conference, direct interaction will be established with CSR heads of corporations. This will give them the opportunity to gain insight into the impactful work done by rele-

vant departments and consider providing funds to support charitable work. Along with this, 6 departments of the government, including Women and Child Development, Basic and Secondary Education, Vocational Education and Skill Development, State Rural Livelihood Mission, Dairy Department and Sports Department will inform about various projects related to CSR in Uttar Pradesh. Besides, corporates will also be made aware of the steps being taken by the government as per CSR objectives. Notably, more than 3000 participants.