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## Registration of live-in relationships mandatory': UCC bill tabled in assembly

**DEHRADUN:** Chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami tabled the Uniform Civil Code (UCC) bill in the Uttarakhand assembly on Tuesday morning. The 192-page bill is divided into four parts - marriage & divorce, succession, live-in relationships, and miscellaneous. Among the bill's highlights are stringent provisions for failure to register live-in relationships. If a couple doesn't register their live-in status with district officials, they can face a maximum of six months in jail, or a fine of Rs 25,000, or both.



Notably, children born out of a live-in relationship will be considered a legitimate child of the couple and will have all legal rights applicable to children born out of a marriage. The bill provisions that if the age of any partner is less than 21 years, their parents will be informed by the Registrar's office,

adding that the termination of the relationship also needs to be intimated in a format prescribed for the same. If a woman gets deserted by her live-in partner, she shall be entitled to claim maintenance, the bill states. While presenting the bill amidst chants of "Vande Vratam", "Jai Shri Ram" and "Bharat Mata ki Jai" by BJP legislators, CM Dhami

said, "It is a historic moment for each one of us. Let us all have a lengthy and healthy discussion to bring uniformity in the society." He also simultaneously tabled a bill on 10% horizontal reservation in govt jobs to statehood agitators and their dependents. Meanwhile, opposition Congress expressed strong annoyance over the tabling and expect-

ed approval of the UCC bill on the same day. Leader of opposition Yashpal Arya said, "We fail to understand the logic behind the urgency being shown by the BJP government. They expect us to read such a lengthy document speedily and start the discussion. It looks like the government is trying to hide something."

## Budget session extended by 1 day to present White Paper on UPA's economic missteps

**NEW DELHI:** Setting the stage for another major showdown, the Centre is getting ready to table in Parliament a White Paper on how the economy fared under 10 years of Congress-led UPA-II rule. The budget session of Parliament has been extended by one day till February 10 so that the Centre can bring out a 'White Paper' on the economic mismanagement of the UPA government, several media reports said on Tuesday. Parliamentary affairs minister Pralhad Joshi later confirmed that the



budget session had been extended till February 10. "The White Paper on economic mismanagement during the UPA government will elaborate on India's economic misery. It will also talk about the impact of positive steps that could have been taken at that time," said

ANI citing sources. PM Modi launched attack during his motion of thanks for President's address, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday ripped into the Congress, declaring the party "would have taken 100 more years" to achieve what his BJP had done in the past 10

years. "Our goals are big and the world is seeing that. The pace at which work is progressing in India... Congress can't even imagine it. We built four crore houses for poor people... 80 lakh pukka houses. It would've taken 100 years for Congress to get this work done..." the Prime Minister said.

Asserting that India will become the third-largest economy during the third term of the BJP-led NDA government, PM Modi took a swipe at Congress's past claims.

## Modi govt decides to construct fence along 1643-km Indo-Myanmar border: Amit Shah

**NEW DELHI:** In a significant move aimed at bolstering border security, Union home minister Amit Shah on Tuesday announced that India will fence the entire 1,643-km-long India-Myanmar border. This decision is expected to mark a shift

from the existing Free Movement Regime (FMR) along the porous border. The FMR, which permits individuals residing in close proximity to the India-Myanmar border to travel 16 km into each other's territory without any documenta-

tion, could see a virtual end with this development. The 1,643-km-long border traverses through the states of Mizoram, Manipur, Nagaland, and Arunachal Pradesh, and the FMR was introduced in 2018 as part of India's Act East policy. The move

to fence the border has been a persistent demand from Meitei groups based in the Imphal Valley. These groups have raised concerns about tribal militants infiltrating India through the porous border.

## Sachin Dhas, Uday Saharan take India to fifth straight U19 World Cup final

**NEW DELHI:** Sachin Dhas and skipper Uday Saharan struck contrasting half-centuries in a remarkable 171-run stand as India pipped South Africa in a thriller to enter fifth straight Under 19 World Cup final in Benoni on Tuesday. Reeling at 32 for 4 after a fiery opening burst from the Proteas pacers, Dhas and Saharan put up an outstanding stand in the 245 chase as India crossed the finish line in the penultimate over. While Dhas struck a fluent 95-ball 96 (11x4, 1x6), skipper Saharan hit a 124-ball 81 (6x4) in the tricky chase. India will face either Australia or Pakistan in the summit clash to be played at this venue on Sunday, searching for their sixth trophy in the marquee event. But the beginning of India's chase resembled a debris yard, losing four wickets for just 32 runs in the 12th over. The South African new-ball bowler Kwena Maphaka jolted India in the first ball of their innings, dismissing Adarsh Singh with a nasty climbing delivery that the batter had no choice other than snicking to wicket-keeper Luan-dre Pretorius. His partner Tristan Luus soon joined the fun with the wickets of Musheer Khan, Arshin Kulkarni and Priyanshu Moliya as all three India batters were indecisive outside the off-stump while hanging their bats to dry. But the Indians found their saviours in Dhas and Saharan, who dished out innings of vastly contrasting nature and tempo. Dhas was aggressive despite the situation his team was in, but Saharan was happy to keep his end going.

Dhas' knock was a treatise on playing cross-batted shots as he cracked a six, pulled fours besides those well-placed nudges through the vacant spots on the on-side. Saharan, on the other hand, was more traditional but was not entirely hesitant to bring out an exquisite drive or rasping cut whenever an opportunity was there for him to do so. Dhas reached his fifty in 47 balls, fittingly, with a pull off pacer Riley Norton and Saharan reached his half-century in 88 balls with a cover drive off off-spinner Juan James.

## EC awards NCP symbol to Ajit; allows Pawar group to claim new party name

**NEW DELHI:** The Election Commission on Tuesday decided the National Congress Party (NCP) symbol dispute in favor of Ajit Pawar, almost eight months after the latter broke away from the Sharad Pawar camp to join the Shiv Sena-BJP government in Maharashtra with eight NCP MLAs. Maharashtra deputy CM Ajit Pawar said: "Election Commission has ruled in our favour after listening to the arguments of our



lawyers. We welcome this humbly." Regarding the tests of maintainability, such as tests of aims and objectives of the party constitution, the test of the party constitution, and the test of majority in the organizational wing, the EC found

both groups to be working outside the party constitution and the organizational elections, not in order. The occupants of the party posts were primarily assessed to be appointed by self-nominated members of the electoral college,

against internal party democracy. Also, serious inconsistencies were found in terms of timelines mentioned in the claim of the Sharad Pawar group to having the organizational majority. The claim was thus assessed by the EC as unreliable. However, keeping in view the imminent elections to six Rajya Sabha seats from Maharashtra - the notification for which is to be issued on February 8, 2024 - the EC.

## Paytm CEO meets RBI chief, finance minister amid regulatory concerns

**New Delhi** Paytm's chief executive Vijay Shekhar Sharma met finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Tuesday, days after the banking regulator ordered its payment bank to halt business leading to a share price rout, said a report by Reuters citing two sources. Earlier in the day, Reuters had reported that Sharma and a few Paytm officials had met the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) chief on Monday to discuss regulatory concerns. The



meetings come after the RBI asked Paytm Payments Bank last Wednesday to stop accepting new deposits in its accounts and its popular digital wallets from March, citing

supervisory concerns and non-compliance with rules. "Discussions are on about addressing the regulatory concerns and compliance issues with both the RBI and the ministry," said one of the sources. The company has sought an extension of the February 29 deadline from the RBI and has also been seeking clarity regarding the transfer of its licence for the wallets business and digital highway toll payment service Fastag.

## India advises citizens not to travel to Rakhine state amid deteriorating situation

**NEW DELHI:** In response to the escalating security concerns in Myanmar's Rakhine state, the ministry of external affairs (MEA) issued a travel advisory on Tuesday, urging the citizens to refrain from traveling to the region. The advisory highlights the deteriorating security situation, disruption of means of



telecommunications, including landlines, and a severe scarcity of essential commodities in Rakhine state. The MEA strongly recommended that all

Indian citizens avoid traveling to Rakhine State until further notice. Furthermore, for those Indian citizens already present in Rakhine state, the

MEA advised an immediate departure from the area. The advisory emphasizes the importance of heeding this recommendation in light of the challenging circumstances on the ground. "In view of the deteriorating security situation, disruption of means of telecommunications, including landlines.

## US appeals court rules 'Citizen Trump' does not have immunity from criminal charges

**WASHINGTON:** A federal appeals court on Tuesday unanimously ruled that former President Donald Trump does not have immunity from criminal charges related to his efforts to overturn his 2020 election loss.

In a 57-page ruling, the three-judge bench said it "cannot accept that the office of the Presidency places its former occupants above the law for all time thereafter." "For the purpose of this criminal case, former President Trump has become citizen Trump, with all of the defenses of any other criminal defendant... any executive immunity that may have protected him while he served.

## 2024 Lok Sabha elections: How NCP vs NCP, Sena vs Sena will help BJP in Maharashtra

**NEW DELHI:** Maharashtra, with 48 Lok Sabha seats, will be one of the key states for the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance if it were to achieve the ambitious target of 400-ppaar set by Prime Minister Narendra Modi for the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. In the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had won 23 seats while the Shiv Sena, which was then a part of NDA, had bagged 18. The Congress could manage only 1 seat.

Ironically, Maharashtra will perhaps be the only state in 2024 Lok Sabha elections which will see two warring factions of same party on opposing sides of the political divide. Two regional heavyweights - Uddhav Thackeray and Sharad Pawar have seen their parties split down the middle. First, it was the



Shiv Sena that split into two dislodging Uddhav Thackeray from the chief minister's post. The BJP orchestrated a smart political move by making Eknath Shinde, who led the rebellion against Uddhav, chief minister of the NDA coalition. Former BJP chief minister Devendra Fadnavis, who played a key role in wooing the rebel Sena group, settled for the post of deputy chief minister under the pressure of party leadership. Eknath Shinde faction was eventually recognised as the real Shiv Sena, both by the Election Commission and the Maharashtra legislative assembly.

## Look beyond Nehru-Gandhi family': Pranab's daughter Sharmistha says

**NEW DELHI:** Congress leader Sharmistha Mukherjee, who is daughter of former President Pranab Mukherjee, wants the grand old party to look beyond Nehru-Gandhi family for leadership citing the failure of Rahul Gandhi in the last two Lok Sabha elections. Sharmistha, whose book

'Pranab, My Father: A Daughter Remembers', sheds light on the former President's observations about the Congress and leadership qualities of Rahul Gandhi, has been critical of the party's leadership. "As a Congress supporter and a responsible citizen, I am worried about the party.

And certainly the time has come to look outside the Nehru-Gandhi family for leadership. In 2014 and 2019, party lost under Rahul Gandhi in a very bad manner, he was the face of Congress," Sharmistha said. "If a party is losing continuously under the leadership of a particular leader.



## IIT Kanpur achieves major milestone with India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility

**MUMBAI:** The Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IITK) has successfully established and tested India's first Hypervelocity Expansion Tunnel Test Facility, a major achievement that puts India amongst a handful of countries with this advanced hypersonic testing capability. The facility, named S2, is capable of generating flight speeds between 3-10 km/s, simulating the hypersonic conditions encountered during atmospheric entry of vehicles, asteroid entry, scramjet flights, and ballistic missiles. This makes it a valuable test facility for ongoing missions of ISRO and DRDO including Gaganyaan, RLV, and hypersonic cruise missiles. The S2, nicknamed 'Jigarhanda', is a 24-meter-long facility located at IIT Kanpur's Hypersonic Experimental Aerodynamics Laboratory (HEAL) within the Department of Aerospace Engineering. The S2 was indigenously designed and developed over a period of three years with funding and support from the Aeronautical Research and Development Board (ARDB), the Department of Science and



Technology (DST), and IIT Kanpur. Commenting on this, Professor S. Ganesh, Director, IIT Kanpur, said, "The successful establishment of S2, India's first hypervelocity expansion tunnel test facility, marks a historic milestone for IIT Kanpur and for India's scientific capabilities. I congratulate Professor Sugarno and his team for their exemplary work in designing and fabricating the hypersonic research infrastructure. S2 will empower India's space and defence organizations with domestic hypersonic testing capabilities for critical projects and missions." Professor Mohammed Ibrahim Sugarno, Associate Professor, Department of Aerospace Engineering and Centre for Lasers &

Photonics at IIT Kanpur said, "Building S2 has been extremely challenging, requiring in-depth knowledge of physics and precision engineering. The most crucial and challenging aspect was perfecting the 'free piston driver' system, which requires firing a piston at high pressure between 20-35 atmospheres down a 6.5 m. compression tube at speeds of 150-200 m/s, and bringing it to a complete stop or 'soft landing' at the end." "However, with our expertise, we were able to overcome this. Our team is proud to have designed, built, and tested this one-of-a-kind facility, cementing India's position in the elite global hypersonic research community," he added.

## 'Discussed our expanding bilateral partnership': Jaishankar meets Fiji Deputy PM Biman Prasad in Delhi

**NEW DELHI:** External affairs minister S Jaishankar met the Deputy Prime Minister of Fiji, Biman Prasad, on Monday and discussed the expanding bilateral partnership that exists between the two nations. Welcoming the deputy PM of Fiji, Jaishankar wrote in a post on X, "Glad to welcome Deputy PM of Fiji Prof @bimanprasad today. Discussed our expanding bilateral partnership, people-to-people ties, development cooperation and multilateral collaboration." The Deputy Prime



Minister of Fiji, Biman Prasad, arrived in New Delhi late on Sunday night, kicking off his week-long visit to India. Upon reaching the national capital, Prasad was welcomed by the Ministry of External Affairs' JS Indo Pacific, Paramita Tripathi.

Meanwhile, on Monday, the Deputy PM of Fiji also met the Minister of State for External Affairs and Education, Rajkumar Ranjan Singh and held discussions in the areas of health, renewable energy and sustainable development.

## Ajit Doval discusses Myanmar with Hasina in Dhaka

**NEW DELHI:** NSA Ajit Doval called on Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina during an unannounced visit to Dhaka last week, govt sources have confirmed. This was the first high-level visit from India to Bangladesh since Hasina returned to power in the elections



last year. Security related issues, including the deteriorating security situation in Myanmar, figured on Doval's engagements in Dhaka, according to sources. The visit also came days before Bangladesh's foreign minister Hasan Mahmud's visit to India. He is expected to arrive on Tuesday for a three-day visit.

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## Couple 'weds' near drain to protest filth in Agra

**AGRA:** Residents of more than 12 Agra localities celebrated the "wedding" of Bhagwan Sharma and Usha Devi on a waterlogged road, surrounded by a foul-smelling drain and heaps of garbage. The couple, marking their 17th anniversary, exchanged garlands in a repeat of their marriage ceremony amid sewer water, and watched by residents. They also clicked pictures to grab the attention of the local administration, highlighting 15 years of persistent issues with "dirty water, poor roads and the locality's overall cleanliness." They added that they decided to hold future celebrations - birthdays, anniversaries, or other events - amid the unsanitary conditions until their concerns were addressed. On Sunday, Uma Devi went to a beauty parlour, dressed like a new bride and arrived at the venue. Her husband Bhagwan Sharma, dressed like a groom, arrived there with the 'baratis' and the couple garlanded each other amid chants of mantras by a priest. The 'guests' thereafter enjoyed lunch standing on the muddy and stinking road. They carried placards: 'No sewer, no vote... No roads, no vote'. A community feast was also held. "We wanted to draw the attention of local authorities. All our efforts to get them to act have failed."



## Why government colleges are top choice for MBBS students

**NEW DELHI:** When it comes to choosing a medical college, high-ranking students in the entrance test overwhelmingly prefer government colleges, especially the older and well-established ones that also happen to have the lowest annual fees. That's the conclusion from National Medical Commission's data on over 1 lakh MBBS admissions across India in 2023-24. However, data for admissions to 20 functional AIIMS and

JIPMER - altogether 2,269 seats - and four other colleges that account for 420 seats isn't included. **Delhi And Kerala are top choices** analysed this megaset of NEET ranks to arrive at the median rank (midpoint - 50% of admissions are ranked lower than the median) of admissions to each college. Delhi, with several wellknown medical colleges and no post-MBBS bond, appears to be the top choice. Without data from AIIMS-Delhi or any other AIIMS, Maulana

Azad Medical College in Delhi tops the chart with the highest median rank of 1,112. Banaras Hindu University's Institute of Medical Sciences is in second place with a median rank of 1,325, followed by Vardhman Mahavir Medical College attached to Delhi's Safdarjung Hospital (median rank 2,718). Government colleges in Delhi have a median rank of 4,597.

Kerala, where government college annual fees range from Rs 20,000 to Rs

30,000, and there is no bonded service after MBBS, has the next highest median rank for government colleges (12,592). Even private medical colleges in Kerala have a relatively high median rank (96,600) as the average fee is less than Rs 7 lakh annually. In fact, their median rank would be even higher if the deemed university of Amrita School of Medicine in Kochi with an annual fee of Rs 19 lakh is left out. Demand for cheap private colleges

## What Jharkhand trust-vote win means to INDIA

### Ranchi

In a boost to the Congress-led INDIA Opposition bloc, Jharkhand's Champai Soren government on Monday comfortably won the vote of confidence, days after the ED arrested former CM Hemant Soren in a land fraud case. The ruling alliance comprises the JMM, Congress and the RJD. The lone Left MLA Vinod Singh supports it from the outside.

### The numbers

While 47 MLAs voted in favour of the confidence motion, 29 legislators opposed it in the 81-



member assembly. **Why it matters** The JMM-alliance alleged that the BJP was trying to engineer a defection in the ruling coalition, forcing it to shift about 40 MLAs to the Congress-ruled Telangana. CP Governor Radhakrishnan had given Champai Soren 10 days

to win a trust vote but he went for the floor test within three days of taking oath as the CM. After winning the trust vote, the ruling coalition legislators said "it was a big slap on the face of the BJP", which allegedly unleashed central forces to destabilise the state government. They said

Hemant Soren has shown how to defeat the BJP's alleged machinations. Hemant Soren, who is in ED custody, took part in the trust vote after securing permission from a special PMLA (Prevention of Money Laundering Act) court. "I challenge BJP to prove corruption charges against me. If someone proves that I possess 8.50 acres of land [illegally], I will resign from politics... January 31 is a black chapter in India's history... Raj Bhavan was instrumental in my arrest," Hemant Soren said.

## Why India should work to 'de-politicise' UNSC sanctions

**NEW DELHI:** A parliamentary standing committee, led by BJP's PP Chaudhary, highlighted on Monday that terrorism in India is sponsored from across the border, specifically pointing to the role of Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI).

The 28th report on 'Countering Global Terrorism at Regional and International Levels' has recommended the formulation of an action plan and mechanism to eliminate terrorist networks and safe havens in neighbouring countries. The committee urged the government to persistently work towards de-politicising the UN Security Council's sanctions regime.

The report by the panel on external affairs came against the backdrop of China blocking the listing of a number of Pakistan-based terrorists by the UNSC's sanctions committee. Recommendations from the committee include developing an action plan or mechanism for sharing resources, enhancing capacity, and pooling expertise from central agencies. Emphasising the importance of collaboration with FATF and other bodies, the committee urged the government to enhance regulatory capacity to prevent terrorist entities from finding new opportunities for financing terrorism. The committee stressed the need for

a transparent, evidence-based listing and delisting mechanism to combat terrorism effectively advocating greater transparency in the process. The committee urged India to play a prominent role in collaborating with the international community to prevent the spread of radicalisation and extremist ideologies. It said India remains a recruitment target for global terror groups such as Al-Qaeda and ISIS that are operating in South Asia.

### Emerging threats

The committee recommended joint action plans at bilateral, regional, and multilateral forums to counter the use of drones, virtual currencies, and encrypted communications by terrorists.

## IIT Madras to develop India's first indigenously-designed 155mm smart ammunition

**MUMBAI:** The Indian Institute of Technology Madras (IIT Madras) is partnering with Munitions India Limited, a Defence Public Sector Enterprise, to develop India's first indigenously-designed 155mm Smart Ammunition. This initiative will help achieve indigenization in a critical defence sector. The objective is to increase the accuracy of 155mm shell within a Circular Error Probable (CEP) of 10 metres. At present, ammunitions developed in India have a CEP of 500 m. Another key goal is to increase the lethality at the terminal impact point. Munitions India Limited comes under the Ministry of Defence, Government of India, and is India's biggest manufacturer and mar-



ket leader engaged in the Production, Testing Research and Development and Marketing of a comprehensive range of ammunition and explosives for the Army, Navy, Air force and Paramilitary Forces Prof. G. Rajesh, Faculty, Department of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Madras, and his team of researchers will be developing the smart ammunition, which has a duration of two years. Elaborating on the key aspects of this project, Ravi Kant, IOFS,

Chairman and Managing Director, Munitions India Limited, said, "Munitions India Limited (MIL), which has carved a niche for itself in global defence manufacturing and supplies within two years of its formation, is excited to join hands with IIT Madras in development of this world-class ammunition." Kant added, "This will be a giant leap forward for the country in achieving its goal of 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat'. We are confident that the might of MIL in conventional

ammunition manufacturing and the brain of IIT Madras in developing a guidance system will pave the way for MIL's foray into modern ammunition manufacturing with Niche Technologies." Speaking about this project, Prof. G. Rajesh, Department of Aerospace Engineering, IIT Madras, said, "The Special Purpose Shell will house the guidance, navigation and control system along with roll isolation strategies, canard actuation system, fuze, shell body and warhead. The smart projectile will have complex technologies such as miniaturized electronics/sensors and mechanical structures. The proposed smart projectile will use the Indian Regional Navigation Satellite System.

## CPI eyes Wayanad seat, may ask Rahul Gandhi to move out

**HYDERABAD:** CPI could be eyeing Rahul Gandhi's Kerala citadel as part of a still-to-be-sealed seat-sharing arrangement with INDIA ally Congress after the state's governing LDF, of which it is a part, picked Wayanad among four Lok Sabha seats that the party can contest. CPI general secretary D Raja said after the party's national executive meeting concluded in Hyderabad on Sunday that there was no discussion on asking Congress to leave Wayanad. But he didn't rule out the possibility either. "Wayanad is one of the four seats CPI got as part of the seat-sharing agreement within LDF. It is at that stage as of now. In West Bengal, we got three seats,". Rahul won the Wayanad seat in 2019 by a margin of over 4 lakh votes against the second-placed CPI candidate.



## MQ9-B drones will provide India with enhanced maritime security, domain awareness capability: US



WASHINGTON: The US has said the sale of 31 armed drones to India at an estimated cost of nearly \$4 billion would provide it with an enhanced maritime security and domain awareness capability and give the country outright ownership of these aircraft. Last week, the US approved the sale of 31 MQ-9B armed drones to India at an estimated cost of \$3.99 billion, an acquisition that will bolster India's capability to meet current and future threats by enabling unmanned surveillance and reconnaissance patrols in sea lanes of operation. "This sale, we believe, will provide India with an enhanced maritime security and maritime domain awareness capability," State Department Deputy Spokesperson Vedant Patel told reporters at his daily news conference. "It offers India

outright ownership of these aircraft, and this is something that we'll continue to deepen our cooperation with our Indian partners on," Patel said. The mega deal to acquire the drones from US defence major General Atomics (GA) was announced during Prime Minister Narendra Modi's historic state visit to the US in June 2023. Under the deal, India will get 31 High Altitude Long Endurance (HALE) UAVs, of which the Navy will get 15 SeaGuardian drones, while the Army and the Indian Air Force will get eight each of

the land version - SkyGuardian. While announcing the approval of the deal, Defense Security Cooperation Agency (DSCA) on Thursday said the proposed sale will support the foreign policy and national security objectives of the United States by helping to strengthen the US-Indian strategic relationship. It will improve the security of a major defence partner, which continues to be an important force for political stability, peace, and economic progress in the Indo-Pacific and South Asia region, the agency said.

## Abolish Places of Worship Act, demands BJP MP in Rajya

NEW DELHI: BJP MP Harnath Singh Yadav on Monday demanded abolition of the Places of Worship Act, 1991, alleging that the law impinges on the religious rights of Hindus, Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists as provided under the Constitution. The legislation prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on Aug 15, 1947. "Places of Worship Act is completely illogical and unconstitutional. It takes away the religious rights of Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains



under the Constitution. It is also damaging communal harmony in the country. Therefore, I urge the govt to immediately repeal this law in the interest of the nation," he said during a Zero Hour discussion in Rajya Sabha. "This law also stipulates an illogical cut-off date," Yadav added.

## Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman to move The Finance Bill 2024

NEW DELHI: Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman is scheduled to move The Finance Bill, 2024 for its consideration and passage in the Lok Sabha on Tuesday. The Lower House will also hold a general discussion on the Interim Union

Budget for 2024-25, which was presented on February 1, the second day of the Budget Session. "Finance Minister Sitharaman will move that the Bill to continue the existing rates of income-tax for the financial year 2024-2025 and to provide for

certain relief to taxpayers and to make amendments in certain enactments, be taken into consideration. Union Home Minister will move that the Bill further to amend the Jammu and Kashmir Panchayati Raj Act, 1989 (IX of 1989).

## CAPSULES

### Can't go West's way, need to save institution of marriage: Supreme Court

NEW DELHI: The institution of marriage has to be protected and preserved in the country and cannot go on the lines of western countries where children being born outside of marriage is not uncommon, the Supreme Court said on Monday while expressing its reservation in permitting unmarried women to take the surrogacy route to become mothers.

While hearing the petition of a 44-year old unmarried woman who approached the court seeking permission to become mother through surrogacy, which is not allowed under the law, a bench of Justices B V Nagarathna and Augustine George Masih said a single woman bearing a child outside marriage was not the rule in Indian society, but an exception. "It is a norm here to become a mother within the institution of marriage. Being a mother outside the institution of marriage is not the norm. We are concerned about it. We are speaking from the point of view of (the) child's welfare. Should the institution of marriage survive or not in the country? We are not like western countries. The institution of marriage has to be protected.

You can call us and tag us conservative, and we accept it," Justice Nagarathna observed. The petitioner, who works with a multinational company, approached the court through her lawyer Shayamal Kumar challenging the validity of Section 2(s) of the Surrogacy (Regulation) Act which defines "intending woman" as an Indian woman who is a widow or divorcee between the age of 35 and 45 years and intends to avail the surrogacy option.

## Supreme Court sentences man to 30 years in jail for raping 7-year-old in temple

NEW DELHI: Upholding the conviction of a man for raping a seven-year-old girl in a temple in Madhya Pradesh in 2018, the Supreme Court has sentenced him to 30 years in jail while noting that his action was barbaric. The victim girl's grandmother lodged a FIR against the man who was 40 years old at the time of the crime, for kidnapping and raping the minor. The convict took the victim to a temple and committed raped her.



After finding the man guilty, the trial court awarded him the capital punishment under Section 376 AB (rape on woman under 12 years of age) of the Indian Penal Code. The Madhya Pradesh High Court, however, com-

mutated the same to life imprisonment for the remainder of the convict's natural life. A bench of Justices C T Ravikumar and Rajesh Bindal took into account the present age of the petitioner and the fact that he has already

undergone incarceration. While modifying his sentence, the top court also imposed a fine of Rs 1 lakh on the convict. Noting how the incident may haunt the victim, the apex court said every visit to any temple may hark back to the unfortunate and barbaric action to which she was subjected to. "It is noted that if the victim is religious, every visit to any temple may hark back to her the unfortunate, barbaric action to which she was subjected to.

## Mahant Swami arrives in Abu Dhabi for BAPS Hindu temple inauguration

ABU DHABI: The spiritual leader Mahant Swami Maharaj arrived in Abu Dhabi on Monday ahead of the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu temple. The spiritual leader reached the Gulf nation as a state guest to preside over the historic inauguration of the UAE's first Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi on February 14. Prime Minister Narendra Modi is scheduled to inaugurate the BAPS Hindu temple there. Upon arrival at the airport, Mahant Swami Maharaj was warmly welcomed by Sheikh Nahayan



Mabarak Al Nahyan, Minister of Tolerance for the UAE, as stated in an official press release of BAPS Hindu Mandir, Abu Dhabi. "His Excellency said to His Holiness, 'Welcome to the UAE. Our nation is blessed with your presence. We are touched

by your kindness and we feel your prayers.' In response, Mahant Swami Maharaj warmly replied, 'We are touched by your love and respect. The leaders of the UAE are great, good, and large-hearted.' The release added. The BAPS Hindu Mandir

is set to become the Middle East's first traditional Hindu stone temple. Situated in the Abu Mureikhah area, this majestic structure embodies the spirit of cultural peace and collaboration and is a testament to the enduring friendship between India and the UAE. The Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, donated 13.5 acres of land in 2015 for the construction of the mandir.

## Union government's attitude affected our finances: Kerala finance minister KN

THIRUVANANTHAPU A day after presenting the state budget, Kerala Finance Minister KN Balagopal said that the budget was passed amid a poor financial situation owing to the Union Government's attitude which affected the state's finances. "We presented this Budget in a situation when the Union government's attitude affected our finances. There is also a trend of nationwide slowdowns for many reasons. In such a situation, we had to improve our economic activity," Balagopal said speaking to on Tuesday. The Finance Minister said that the state focussed on new employment generation, new developmental activities, and more facilities for education to attract talent within the state. "New generation employment and new developmental activities should be there. Our focus was on more employment, more



economic activity and more facilities for education for the younger generation because many are migrating for education. We have to get them back there," Balagopal said. Speaking about talent going out of Kerala due to lack of educational and employment facilities in the state, the Finance Minister said that the state should be made into an education hub. "We have to make Kerala an education hub. Many teachers are going from Kerala to other states, especially in English-medium schools...Many of our students are going

abroad for education and employment. If good education facilities are here, we can attract more students in Kerala," Balagopal said. "Employment generation is also necessary for bringing people from other parts of the country over here," he added. The Finance Minister said that a lot of developmental activities can be planned around Vizhinjam, where one of the biggest ports in the region will come up. "Vizhinjam will be one of the biggest ports in the belt. We can have a lot of developmental activities around the port.

## ED raids Delhi CM Kejriwal's personal secretary's residence, persons linked to AAP



NEW DELHI: The Enforcement Directorate (ED) on Tuesday conducted searches at the residences of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's personal secretary, Bibhav Kumar, and some people associated with the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP). According to reports, around 10 premises in the national capital are being covered as part of the ongoing investigation into alleged financial irregularities and money laundering case. Last week, Enforcement Directorate moved a special court seeking compliance to repeated summonses issued to Delhi CM Arvind Kejriwal, asking him to appear before the investigating officers of the agency probing the alleged Delhi liquor scam in which AAP government's excise policy was allegedly rigged to favour a cartel of liquor traders. After a brief hearing on the complaint filed by ED, the judge posted the matter for hearing on February 7. Kejriwal has already skipped five summonses issued to him, dubbing them as illegal on grounds that he was not an accused in the case.

## In posh Mumbai, redevelopment offers locals can't refuse

MUMBAI: Swimming pool with jacuzzi. Fully equipped fitness centre. Steam and massage room. Eco-friendly rainwater harvesting system. Security systems like intruder alarms, CCTVs, and video door phones for every flat. Centralised AC with wall units in living and bedroom. Imported marble for the washbasin... And the intoxicating smell of new. This is not a sales pitch for a Rs 20 crore apartment in a new luxury tower. These are the incentives being dangled before middle and upper-middle-class residents living in old buildings in prime areas of Mumbai that are currently being redeveloped. Across the city, in gyms and coffee shops, on promenades and public gardens, the talking point nowadays generally revolves around what the builder is offering from transit rents to compensation charges, extra square feet area, multi-crore corpus funds and a slew of luxury facilities. And Mumbai's A-lister builders are chasing and enticing society members with most jaw-dropping deals. At Breach Candy in south Mumbai, Miami Apartments, a 13-storey housing society that came up in the 1970s, recently signed a redevelopment deal with the developer, Rustomjee.

## Opposition MPs in Rajya Sabha target government over 'misuse' of central agencies

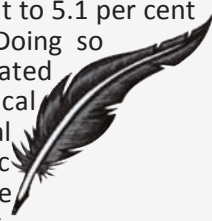
NEW DELHI: Opposition party MPs in Rajya Sabha on Monday targeted government over "misuse" of agencies like the CBI and Enforcement Directorate (ED) to target political opponents that now include a chief minister, poverty and unemployment, politicisation of the Ram Lalla temple consecration, while also questioning the silence in the President's address on the unrest in Manipur. Participating in the discussion on motion of thanks to the President's address, Congress's Digvijaya Singh and Trinamool Congress's Sukhendu Sekhar Ray led the Opposition's attack on the alleged misuse of Central agencies by the government. "A glaring example of federalism is that every state which is ruled by opposition parties, their leaders are being hounded by the central agencies. Even a Dalit chief minister has not been spared," said Ray. BJP MPs, however, countered the Opposition's charge by pointing to the huge recoveries of unaccounted cash and valuables unearthed during the ED/CBI raids against politicians under the scanner. Trivedi said leadership of parties like JMM and RJD had been facing corruption cases since the Nineties and accused the opposition of using casteism, communalism and criminalism to cover their corruption. Sushil Modi recalled the recent dismissal by the Supreme Court of the Opposition parties' plea against "misuse of Central agencies", on the ground that politicians are also citizens and thus amenable to the same laws. apart from pointing to the failure of several politicians jailed in corruption cases, including former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren and Delhi deputy CM Manish Sisodia, to secure bail from the courts.



## Editorial

### Interim Budget 2024 prioritises responsibility, avoids post-crisis mistakes

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presented her sixth consecutive budget earlier this week. History will be kind to her for a variety of reasons. The most important of them have to do with her decision-making, including the bold corporate tax cut to revive economic activity after the 2018-19 growth slowdown. Other reasons include the fact that she had to operate in an extremely challenging environment, starting with the pandemic, followed by geopolitical conflicts, and a fragmented economic environment. Perhaps very few governments in the world have successfully revived economic activity in three consecutive years. This itself should suggest the extent of external shocks that rocked the Indian and global economies through much of the last five years. There is also the issue of managing the economy in an environment of data challenges emanating from the delay in the Census due to the pandemic, data quality issues with existing surveys, and other delays in statistical exercises. Notwithstanding these challenges, India's economic recovery has been relatively strong and largely broad-based. The aforementioned discussion is important to give context to the interim budget that came in the backdrop of a persistently high fiscal deficit (and one that did not yet lead to persistently accelerating inflation or substantial worsening of the current account deficit). These are important issues, particularly as people compare and contrast different periods of economic recovery. Many have already written about what the budget brings for the middle class, for taxpayers, etc. But the budget is more than just an instrument of redistribution within existing subjects. It is as much about redistribution among different generations, including future generations. Not many budgets pay attention to the latter, particularly in election years. However, the present budget embarks on a bold fiscal consolidation path—much bolder than was originally anticipated. This in an election year makes it distinct and perhaps one of the most important aspects of the budget. “We continue on the path of fiscal consolidation, as announced in my Budget Speech for 2021-22, to reduce the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent by 2025-26. The fiscal deficit in 2024-25 is estimated to be 5.1 per cent of GDP, adhering to that path,” said the finance minister. The objective of economic policymakers is to ensure a stable and high economic growth rate (low unemployment rate) along with ensuring a low and stable price regime. The operative aspect here is to ensure that the growth process is stable. Not much attention is paid to this as there is a popular myth that growth is guaranteed, even as countless countries have illustrated how their per-capita income has reduced due to unstable growth processes. India's own experience with high fiscal deficits has been problematic, with the high deficits of the 1980s culminating in a balance of payments crisis in 1991 and, more recently, high deficits since 2008-09 leading to double-digit inflation combined with a weakening currency, resulting in the economy being termed one of the Fragile Five. It is in that context that we must welcome the bold decision to unwind a lot of the temporary fiscal stimulus introduced during the pandemic. It is therefore encouraging that the finance minister has decided to undertake a bolder fiscal consolidation path, reducing the deficit to 5.1 per cent in the coming fiscal year. Doing so mitigates the risks associated with persistently high fiscal deficits and ensures a gradual return to the pre-pandemic path, which is what the finance minister had indicated through much of her previous budgets.



## NAM at a crossroads: Analysing India's diplomatic choices and priorities

India's championing of the Global South at the G20, including the induction of the African Union as a member, brought forth the salience of existing institutions in the Global South. One of these is the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). India, though a founder of this movement, has been distancing itself due to the maverick nature of some recent chairmen. The External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, represented India at the NAM summit in Kampala, Uganda, fulfilling a promise he had made during his visit to Uganda in April 2023. Besides

him, Minister of State RR Singh led the Indian delegation at the ministerial segment. Another Minister of State, V Murleedharan, participated in the meeting of the G77 that followed. Jaishankar could not participate in the G77 meeting as he was committed to a joint commission meeting in Nigeria, where he met with the new leadership. In some ways, the participation of the EAM is, protocol-wise, the lowest since 2012. That was the last time an Indian prime minister attended a NAM summit when Manmohan Singh went to Iran.

In 2016, the summit in Venezuela saw India represented by then vice president Hamid Ansari. In 2019, the chairmanship shifted to Azerbaijan, and India was again represented by then vice president, Venkaiah Naidu. Although the EAM ranks lower in protocol than the vice president, his persona and stature reflect India's current standing in the Global South more accurately. Domestic compulsions made it impossible for Prime Minister Narendra Modi to go, but Modi has never participated in a NAM summit since 2014. Before that,

Indian prime ministers always attended NAM summits, except Chaudhary Charan Singh in 1979. When Cuba assumed the chair of NAM in 1979, eyebrows were raised. India was then requested to take up the chair in 1983 instead of Iraq, which was at war. This move restored the prestige of NAM for several years. Since the summit is held once every three years, the sequence of chairs from Iran, Venezuela, to Azerbaijan shows a lack of willingness among major countries to chair NAM. Recent chairs were not mainstream countries.

# Bharat Ratna to Advani proves yet again that PM Modi is the master of political timing



The decision to confer Bharat Ratna on party patriarch Lal Krishna Advani proves once again that Narendra Modi is the master of political timing. Even as one peels the different layers of Saturday's announcement made by the prime minister, it becomes evident that every move taken by this government is backed by meticulous planning and clear-headed thinking. First, just ahead of the general elections, this decision is expected to fire up that section of the party's (and the larger right-wing) base that had felt short-changed at the treatment meted out to the pioneer of the Ram Mandir movement, under whose aegis BJP rose from two seats in 1984 to 120 in 1991. BJP's rise under Advani, the perennial organisational man, institution-builder, and mentor to an entire generation of talented young leaders, coincided with the concomitant collapse of the Congress party's vote base from which the grand old party never recovered.

It has been a pet peeve of many within the larger 'Hindu nationalist' fold who credit the veteran leader for shifting India's political landscape and ushering in an era of cultural resurgence that Advani never got his due from the current dispensation. It wasn't just the way

Advani and his peers were superannuated into the 'Margdarshak mandal', the sense of injury emanating from the idea that the 'OG' Ram Mandir stalwart has been 'disrespected' refused to dissipate despite Advani getting the Padma Vibhushan award in 2015. It intensified, for instance, at the recent fiasco that ensued over inviting him to the Pran Pratishtha ceremony. One of the party's tallest leaders, the nonagenarian was initially denied invitation owing to his "advanced age" and later requested to attend, but the 96-year-old eventually gave the consecration ceremony a miss. With the conferring of the state's highest civilian honour on him, that feeling of affront may finally be addressed and a message sent to the rank and file that there might be internal differences, but the party remains united, respects and recognises senior lead-

ers even when the sun has set on their political careers. Second, the decision, announced just a few days of the consecration ceremony, carries forward the tempo of the Ram Mandir movement via state recognition of the senior ideologue who is responsible for transforming Indian politics through his Rath Yatra that shifted the Overton window and mainstreamed Hindutva as a political ideology.

It was Advani's yatra, launched from Somnath Temple in Gujarat on 25 September, 1990, that mobilised the masses around the idea of Ram, reinforced Hindutva's centrality in Indian politics and paved BJP's way to power at the Centre. During the yatra, Advani travelled nearly 300 kms per day and held several roadside rallies before then chief minister Lalu Yadav arrested him in Bihar a month later. Advani's chariot didn't get to enter

Ayodhya where he had vowed to do 'kar seva'. By then, however, Advani had left an indelible mark and laid the foundation for BJP's stunning rise. His clarion call of 'Mandir wahin banayenge' (the temple will be built on the site of Ram Janmabhoomi) fired up the imagination of a generation of Ram bhakts and triggered a movement that finally culminated in the Pran Pratishtha ceremony on 22 January, 2024. But for the Ram Mandir movement, the BJP wouldn't have scored a clear ideological victory over the Opposition and dictated the course of Indian politics.

The wellspring of mass support and positivity generated by the return of Ram Lalla in Ayodhya, that has galvanized the Hindu society and has perhaps given the BJP an edge over the Opposition in the upcoming elections, may now find another expression through the recognition bestowed on the man whom the prime minister acknowledged as having "made unparalleled efforts towards furthering national unity and cultural resurgence." Third, the decision is also an astute political move since it addresses two key constituencies that are of interest to the BJP — social justice and Hindutva. Saturday's announcement must be seen in conjunction

with the recent move to confer Bharat Ratna posthumously on socialist leader and former chief minister of Bihar Karpooori Thakur. Still considered as a 'jan nayak' in Bihar, two-time chief minister

Thakur's legacy remains strong, and his role to uplift the poor and marginalised, enable equitable representation for backward classes, inspired a generation of young leaders in Bihar such as Lalu and incumbent chief minister Nitish Kumar who has since abandoned the INDI Alliance fold and returned to the NDA.

The Bharat Ratna to Advani, similarly, acknowledges the contribution of Advani to the cause of Hindutva. Fourth, the move is also an example of the fact that the BJP walks its talk of putting party above self-interests. The personality clash between Prime Minister Modi and his former mentor is not a secret.

Despite their much-discussed differences, the fact that Modi heaped fulsome praise on the veteran leader, acknowledged his contribution to the party, nation and the cause of probity in public life, exemplified him as a leader who had "unwavering commitment to transparency and integrity", matters to the karyakartas and the larger electorate sympathetic to the BJP.

## Gyanvapi: Truth, reconciliation and the way forward

Recently, the pristine land of Ayodhya saw the Pran Pratishtha ceremony and the returning of Ram Lalla to the temple built at the historical site. While the event was rightfully celebrated by all, irrespective of faith and politics, it also led to many sharing the Preamble to the Indian Constitution on social media as a mark of protest to the 'injustice' committed on the Indian soil. The possible connotations ranged from 'India subverting its Constitution' to 'a nation polarised by communalism' against a particular section of the society. This needs to be understood that neither the Preamble nor the Constitution exists in a vacuum, the progressive values embedded in the Constitution are

themselves a culmination of thousands of years old tradition of learning and re-learning. The laws and the Constitution are meant for the people and not the vice versa. The truth and reconciliation within any society should always be supreme. The Gyanvapi Mosque - Kashi Vishwanath temple issue is another instance where we, as a society, need to move towards better sense and better communal harmony. In a pivotal development in the legal dispute over Varanasi's Gyanvapi Masjid, a district court has granted permission for members of a family of priests to offer prayers in one of the cellars within the mosque complex. This particular cellar, known as Vyasji ka Tehkhana,

was unsealed last night, and a puja ceremony took place around 3 am. The Gyanvapi mosque, constructed in the 17th century, features four cellars, with 'Vyas ji ka Tehkhana' being one of them. Situated in the southern area of the mosque's fortified complex, it stands opposite a statue of the Nandi bull within the adjacent Kashi Vishwanath temple premises. The cellar, measuring about 7 feet in height and covering an area of 40 square feet, allegedly contains idols that were worshipped before its sealing in 1993, as claimed by petitioner Shailendra Pathak Vyas. The Muslim side refuted this assertion in court, stating that the petitioner failed to provide evidence.

## Dragon's embrace: China's expanding footprint in Nepal triggers local displeasure

Nepal-China relations, a relatively recent development, have grown economically since 2015. In 2016, Nepal called China an "all-weather friend" and became a signatory of China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) the following year. Chinese influence on Nepal has gained momentum since 2018, with Beijing having a significant role in forming the Nepal Communist Party (NCP) and its subsequent impact on the NCP government. China's influence in Nepal's economy reached new traction as it quickly became the largest source of foreign direct investment and ousted New Delhi as Kathmandu's largest investor because of the infrastructural projects undertaken under the BRI. In 2010, a leaked audio tape revealed that Krishna Bahadur Mahara was negotiating an NRS 500 million deal from a Chinese person to secure 50 MP votes for Maoist leader Prachanda. Mahara was then the second highest-ranking leader among the Maoists and faced a rape allegation in 2019. However, the visible Chinese influence surfaced when a new alliance was formed by Nepal's two biggest leftist parties, namely, CPN-UML and CPN-Maoist Centre,

ahead of Kathmandu's provincial and federal election in 2017 and was said to be Chinese-backed to establish a political system in the Himalayan nation that would be in its favour. Later in 2019, the party-to-party alliance between Beijing and Kathmandu further deepened Beijing's role in Nepal's politics when the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) and Nepal Communist Party (NCP) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on establishing fraternal relations between both parties. A report in Global Watch Analysis in 2020 suggested China "use corrupt leaders in economically weak countries to make inroads in those nations, Nepal being a case in point."

Therefore, the penetration of Chinese companies in these countries manifests their business interests and enables the Chinese state to intrude into the nation's polity to ensure its long-term interests. The report further mentioned the increase of personal wealth of the then Nepalese prime minister KP Sharma Oli over the years, who is known to be behind the close ties between China and Nepal. Further, Oli is said to have circumvented government regulations during his tenure to

ensure that Chinese companies were awarded critical projects, which entrenched corruption in the Himalayan nation. Last year, it was reported that a close relative of former Nepalese prime minister Sher Bahadur Deuba was involved with Beijing in an arms deal conducted in violation of due process and alleged to have inflated the price of items by 30 per cent

. Notwithstanding the

party affiliation, Chinese influence, thus, is seen to be widely present. The municipal election in the Kathmandu valley saw an independent candidate named Balendra Sah winning the election in 2022. Sah was often seen with staff of the Chinese embassy and Chinese journalists in several restaurants during his election campaign and it is believed that heavy Chinese funding led him to win the mayoral race. The target on street vendors in Kathmandu, which forms part of Nepal's informal economy (about 62 per cent), is also frowned upon by citizens as part of his agenda of making space for Chinese outlets in the valley.



## PM Modi hails Goa's diversity as 'perfect example of Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat'

Goa

Addressing a gathering at the 'Viksit Bharat, Viksit Goa 2047' programme, Modi said that Goa may be small in terms of area and population, but it is rich in social diversity and that it is a great example of "Ek Bharat, Shreshth Bharat". In terms of area and population, Goa is small but when it comes to social diversity, Goa is huge. Here people of various communities and different faiths live together. They have lived together for generations. So, when these people of Goa elect BJP again and again, its message goes across the nation. BJP's mantra is of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas," Modi was quoted as saying by ANI. He further praised Goa saying that out of several of the central government's schemes, the state has achieved 100 per cent saturation in many of them. Modi said that the saturation of central gov-



ernment schemes in the states is "real secularism and social justice". "When there is a saturation of schemes, differences between people end. Every beneficiary gets the entire benefit. When there is saturation, people don't have to pay bribes to get their rights," he said, according to PTI. "Saturation (of welfare scheme where all beneficiaries get the facilities) is the real secularism and social justice. In Goa, the prime minister also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of projects worth over ₹1,330 crore. These included the inauguration of the permanent campus of the National Institute of Technology Goa and the new campus of the National Institute of Watersports. The newly built campus of National Institute of Technology Goa has various facilities such as tutorial complex, departmental complex, seminar complex, administrative complex, hostels, health centre, staff quarters, amenity centre, sports ground and other utilities to cater to the needs of students.

## Delhi Police fears communal incident in city, keeps eye on 'select group'

Delhi

The Delhi Police's special advisory to all police stations to remain vigilant and monitor those involved in major protests such as the anti-CAA/NRC stir and those involved in 2020 Delhi riots to maintain peace in the "communally sensitive" areas in the Capital, a senior officer aware of the matter said on Tuesday. According to the advisory, a copy of which HT has seen, the police have been advised to take preventive steps to avoid communal incidents in view of the recent developments such as the consecration at the Ayodhya Ram Temple, the Gyanvapi prayer order

and the demolition of various religious structures in Mehrauli. According to the advisory by the special unit, which is tasked with gathering local intelligence, some elements might try to vitiate the atmosphere. The advisory has also suggested the police officers should create list of such people who might try to foment trouble in the name of the above developments. When asked, the senior officer refused to divulge any names, but added that they take all steps to maintain peace and law and order in the city. "All police stations, districts and specialised units have been asked to prepare a list of people who participated in the

CAA/NRC demonstrations, the Shaheen Bagh sit-in protests, and the farmers protests. The members of some already known groups would also be mentioned in the list. If some police districts or units already have a list of such people, they have been directed to update them. The idea is to keep a watch on the activities and movement of such people so that they do not plan any communally-charged events," the senior officer said, asking not to be named. According to the officer, the north-east district police has a list of nearly 100 trouble mongers who often get involved in communally sensitive issues or

### Gaurav Samman: Dr Ritu has been working for ISRO

Kolkata: After arresting two traders from city in connection to a cyber fraud of Rs 1.2 crore, the bank fraud section of detective department busted a new modus operandi adopted by the fraudsters for transfer of the swindled amount. So far, six persons have been arrested in this case. The fraudsters were depositing the

swindled amounts in unconnected accounts belonging to the nabbed traders—Satish Patel of Madan Mohan Burman Street (Jorasanko) and Sekhar Balmiki of Asansol—and employees of trading and textile firms. Money was also transferred to a mobile and a garment store in Chattisgarh. Later, the amount was being dis-

tributed among the swindlers through the hawala route, cops said. This made tracking the money trail difficult for cops. The traders were arrested with the help of the information shared by a bar dancer in Kolkata, who was also arrested in the case earlier. The mastermind was previously arrested from Bengaluru.

## CAPSULES

### Indian student from Hyderabad brutally attacked by four robbers in Chicago



Student from Hyderabad was left seriously injured after an attack by four robbers in Chicago. The victim, identified as Syed Mazahir Ali, is a resident of Langar Houz who had gone to the US to pursue a Master's degree. He is a student at Indiana Wesleyan University. In a video recording shared on X, formerly Twitter, Ali can be seen bleeding profusely as he details the horrific attack. This news comes in the wake of multiple attacks on Indian-origin students in America. Recalling the incident, Ali says in the video that he was attacked by four men while he was returning home with a packet of food in his hand. The CCTV footage of the incident reveals that Ali was chased by three of his attackers on Tuesday near his house on Campbell Avenue. In the footage, which was also shared on the social media platform, Ali can be seen trying to outrun the attackers as soon as he realises something is wrong. The postgraduate student further revealed in the video recording that when he slipped near his house while running away, he was kicked and punched by those men.

## Quotas promote efficiency': Supreme Court starts hearing on SC/ST reservation

The Indian Constitution does not postulate that people belonging to marginalised groups are inefficient while those from other groups are competent, a seven-judge bench of the Supreme Court observed on Tuesday, adding reservation for Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes (SC/ST) was consistent with the need to maintain efficiency in administration. "It depends how you define efficiency. If you define efficiency in an inclusive sense, then the inclusion of people who have hitherto been excluded from governance promotes efficiency. Also, putting people from the marginalised communities in important positions of responsibility itself is receptive to the

● On the first day of hearing, Punjab's advocate general Gurminder Singh and the state's additional advocate general Shadan Farasat

needs of those communities and to the need for inclusion as a social doctrine. Therefore, it's not something that detracts from efficiency," said the bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud. On Tuesday, the Constitution bench, also comprising justices BR Gavai, Vikram Nath, Bela M Trivedi, Pankaj Mithal, Manoj Misra and Satish Chandra Sharma, commenced the hear-

ing on the permissibility of sub-classification within the SC/ST reservation as it made some significant remarks on the purpose of reservation for marginalised groups and the requirement of maintaining efficiency in administration. Article 335 of the Constitution states that the claims of the members of SC/ST groups shall be taken into consideration "consistently with the maintenance of efficiency of administration" in the making of appointments to services and posts under the Centre or states. On the first day of hearing, Punjab's advocate general Gurminder Singh and the state's additional advocate general Shadan Farasat argued in favour of subclassification within SC/ST communi-

## Lok Sabha okays bill to check malpractices in public exams

The Lok Sabha on Tuesday cleared the Public Examinations (Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, a proposed law that aims to curb malpractices in public examinations. The proposed law prescribes hefty fines and jail terms for culprits, even as it keeps students and candidates outside its remit. "Eligible young people who come prepared for exams face injustice when such irregularities take place," Union minister of state Jitendra Singh, who tabled the bill in the



Lower House a day earlier, said as the legislation was taken up for a discussion on Tuesday. "This is above politics and deals with the concerns of sons and daughters.

The law is only for those who try to tamper with the system," he said, citing a number of cases of paper leaks in

West Bengal, Rajasthan and Jammu and Kashmir. The move comes against the backdrop of cancellation of a raft of competitive tests such as the teacher recruitment exam in Rajasthan, Common Eligibility Test for Group-D posts in Haryana, recruitment

exam for junior clerks in Gujarat and constable recruitment examination in Bihar following question paper leaks. The draft legislation covers examinations conducted by the Union Public Service Commission (UPSC), Staff Selection Commission (SSC), Railway Recruitment Board (RRB), National Testing Agency (NTA), Institute of Banking Personnel Selection (IBPS), as well as central government departments and their attached recruitment offices.

## Priest among 10 held for conversion bid at church in UP's Barabanki

Barabanki Ten people, including a church priest, have been arrested for allegedly attempting to convert a large group of Hindus to Christianity through allurements in Barabanki district of Uttar Pradesh, police said on Tuesday, adding a case has been registered under the state's anti-conversion law. According to the police, they foiled the mass conversion bid at Saint Mathews Methodist Church at Deva area of Barabanki on Monday and arrested the 10 accused from the spot. A police team, along with sub-divisional magistrate Vijay

Kumar Trivedi raided the conference hall of the church and found that around 200 people, mostly from Scheduled Caste communities, had gathered on the call of the priest, said Barabanki (city) circle officer Beenu Singh. "These people were brought from Ayodhya on the pretext of treatment of their ailment through religious activity and were lured with jobs. The priest, with the help of others, was trying to convert them to Christianity by making them worship in the church," Singh said. Most of the people were illiterate and could not understand the intention behind the

gathering, the officer said. "The priest was trying to convert them by making false claims about treating them through religious activity," she added. Besides the church priest, Father Dominic, others arrested from the spot were identified as Sarju Prasad Gautam, Pawan Kumar, Sunil Pasi, Ghanshyam Gautam, Surendra Paswan, Rahul Paswan, Ramcharan Rawat, Dharmendra Kori and Suraj Gautam, police said.

On Tuesday, the accused were produced before the court, which sent them to judicial custody, the officer said.

## PM Modi to chair meet today to select new election commissioner

New Delhi

The new law enables the PM, a Cabinet minister and an Opposition leader to recommend a name for EC to the President

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will on Wednesday chair the first meeting under the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 to select a new election commissioner (EC) to replace Anup Chandra Pandey, who is due to retire on February 15. The new act, which came into effect on January 2, stipulates that the President will appoint CEC and ECs upon the recommendation of a



Selection Committee consisting of the Prime Minister, a Cabinet minister, and the leader of Opposition or leader of the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha. Government functionaries aware of the matter said that law minister Arjun Ram Meghwal and the Congress's floor leader in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury

were expected to attend the meeting that will be held at the PM's residential office at 7.30pm. The selection process consists of two committees -- the three-member selection committee headed by the PM and a three-member search committee headed by the law minister and two secretary-level officers. Though the search

committee recommends five names to the selection committee, the latter is empowered to pick commissioners from outside the list as well. Before the new law came to existence, CEC and ECs were appointed by the Prime Minister and the council of ministers under the seal of the President. The Supreme Court, in an order in March last year, called for a law on how the CECs and ECs should be picked, saying no such mechanism existed at the time. In the meantime, it formed a three-member panel consisting of the PM, the leader of the largest Opposition party in the Lok Sabha, and the Chief Justice of India (CJI).

## Jaya Bachchan loses calm in Rajya Sabha

Delhi

Opposition members on Monday created a noisy scene in the Rajya Sabha when question number 18 related to the aviation sector was skipped inadvertently by Deputy Chairman Harivansh during the Question Hour. Jaya Bachchan (SP), Deepender Singh Hooda (Congress) and other opposition members sought to know the reasons for skipping question number 18 and taking up question number 19 related to Polavaram irrigation project. The deputy chairman said it happened inadvertently but the opposition members were not convinced. Then Rajya Sabha Chairman Jagdeep Dhankhar asked the members to calm down and told them the question number 18 will be taken up after question 19. "Please take your seat. I have already indicated that after I am through with Question 19, I will take up this issue. ...I will try to find a way out," Dhankhar said.



## GAIL and ADNOC sign a deal to ensure the supply of LNG

The largest natural gas company in India, Limited, has successfully completed a long-term LNG purchase agreement with ADNOC Gas to purchase about 0.5 MMTPA of LNG. This is in accordance with an agreement

**Delhi:** The largest natural gas company in India, Limited, has successfully completed a long-term LNG purchase agreement with ADNOC Gas to purchase about 0.5 MMTPA of LNG. This is in accordance with an agreement between GAIL and Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) P.J.S.C. dated October 30, 2022, wherein the parties agreed to investigate potential areas of collaboration, including the purchase of LNG by GAIL from ADNOC for a duration that can be short, medi-

um, or long term. GAIL and ADNOC's noteworthy partnership will strengthen the strong cultural and commercial ties that exist between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE). According to this arrangement, deliveries will start in India in 2026 and last for ten years. Sanjay Kumar, Director (Marketing), GAIL, highlighted the agreement's wider implications by saying that the long-term LNG transaction will assist India in achieving the goal of the Indian government to

increase the country's natural gas consumption to 15% of its total energy consumption. Additionally, this agreement will assist GAIL in expanding its quite sizable LNG portfolio to better meet the needs of its wide range of customers. It is expected that the long-term LNG purchase deal between GAIL and ADNOC Gas will strengthen India's energy security, promote economic cooperation, and advance both companies into new areas of strategic partnership.

## Morgan Stanley buys 244 crore Paytm shares

**Delhi:** Morgan Stanley bought One97 Communications shares for Rs 244 crore on the open market. Through its affiliate Morgan Stanley Asia (Singapore) Pte ODI, Morgan Stanley bought One97 Communications shares on the NSE. Morgan Stanley Asia (Singapore) Pte bought 50 lakh Paytm shares, or 0.8%, according to NSE bulk deal data. At an average price of Rs 487.20 per share, the purchase was worth Rs 243.60 crore. No vendor information was available. One97 Communications Ltd., which owns Paytm, fell 20% on Friday after the RBI ordered Paytm Payments Bank Ltd.



(PPBL) to stop taking deposits or top-ups in client accounts, wallets, FASTags, and other instruments after February 29. One97 Communications Ltd. (OCL) owns 49% of Paytm Payments bank but considers it an associate. One97 Communications shares fell 20% to Rs 487.20 on

the NSE. Another bulk deal on the NSE had Mauritius-based private equity fund 2I Capital PCC selling Swan Energy Ltd shares for Rs 164 crore. 2I Capital PCC sold 25 lakh Swan Energy shares on the NSE at Rs 657.27 each, according to data. The transaction totaled Rs 164.32 crore.

## Zee demands ₹700 crore from Sony for meeting merger requirements.

**Delhi:** Zee spent 700 crore to meet Sony's stipulations, according to legal documents acquired by the business line. Zee will argue at the National Company Law Tribunal that it has spent around ₹700 crores on divestment, frivolous claims, guarantees, tail insurance, and business discontinua-

tion on Sony's instructions. Zee will contest Sony's termination notification asking \$90 million in damages for alleged breaches. Zee denies any meaningful detrimental effect on the merger agreement, per Sony's termination notification. Legal sources said Zee would establish that it had

many meetings with Sony, including on the joint business plan, where Sony received month-by-month profit and loss and cash flows. Zee and Sony discussed the combination for a long time. Sony repeatedly recommended Zee to take specific steps to finalize the deal quickly, and Zee did so.

## CAPSULES

### RBI orders Paytm Payments Bank to suspend most services after Feb. 29.

**Delhi:** The Reserve Bank ordered Paytm Payments Bank (PPBL) to suspend taking deposits or top-ups in user accounts, wallets, FASTags, and other instruments after February 29. Customers may receive interest, cashbacks, or refunds at any time. The central bank stated that chronic non-compliances and serious supervisory concerns prompted the direction. The RBI barred PPBL from enrolling new customers immediately on March 11, 2022. Paytm group firm PPBL did not comment on the RBI's bank-related direction. After February 29, 2024, customer accounts, prepaid instruments, wallets, FASTags, NCMC cards, etc. cannot be deposited or topped up, except for interest, cashbacks, or refunds, which can be credited whenever "RBI. Up to their available balance, users can withdraw or use balances from savings bank accounts, current accounts, prepaid instruments, FASTags, and National Common Mobility Cards without limits. "No other banking services, other than those ... like fund transfers (irrespective of name and nature of services like AEPS, IMPS, etc), BBPOU and UPI facility should be provided by the bank after February 29, 2024," said. RBI also ordered the termination of One97 Communications Ltd. and Paytm Payments Services' 'nodal accounts' by February 29, 2024. One97 Communications owns 49% of Paytm Payments Bank Limited but considers it as an affiliate rather than a subsidiary. RBI noted that any pipeline and nodal account transactions commenced on or before February 29, 2024 must be settled by March 15, 2024, and no further transactions will be allowed.

## RBI advises against KYC fraud, provides guidelines

**Delhi:** Scammers posing as customer updaters have been warned by the RBI. The central bank advised scam victims to report them to the cybercrime hotline (1930) or the National Cybercrime Reporting Portal (www.cybercrime.gov.in). RBI also lists dos and don'ts. The central bank has warned twice. RBI published a note in 2021 after online KYC scams increased during the Covid lockdown, where users were misled into providing their banking information. Fraudsters took advantage of the pandemic when many banks warned consumers they may not be able to utilize their accounts until December 2021. RBI relaxed the deadline and KYC. RBI stated KYC fraudsters utilize calls, SMS, and emails to



get clients to reveal personal information, account/login information, card details, PIN, or OTP. Fraudsters use links in messages to get users to install unapproved KYC apps. These messages may threaten account freezing, blocking, or closure. RBI warned that crimi-

nals can access customers' accounts and commit fraud if they share information. "Such communications often employ tactics of creating a false urgency and threatening account freezing/blocking/closure if the customer fails to comply," said RBI.

## Vecros signs Rs 20 lakhs contract with Aman Gupta

In the latest episode of 'Shark Tank India' season three, Delhi-based robotics business 'Vecros' signed a Rs 20 lakh agreement with BOAT co-founder and CMO Aman Gupta. 'Vecros' has developed a technologically improved solution to obtaining complex data in construction, oil and gas, and utilities, which previously needed human operators to enter dirty, dangerous, and hazardous regions. By costing money, time, and lives, Athera, India's first autonomous spatial AI drone, was created to



build 2D-3D maps in difficult settings. Besta Prem Sai (CEO) and Rajeshree Deotalu (CTO) pitched their cutting-edge autonomous aircraft technology on the business reality show for

Rs one crore for a 2.5 percent ownership stake in their enterprise. They agreed to pay Aman Rs 20 lakh for 1% stock and Rs 80 lakh loan for three years at 10% interest (repayment can begin

after a year). Besta on 'Shark Tank India': "Vecros' Shark Tank appearance was a roller coaster of emotions and opportunity. As a small town kid, representing Vecros on Shark Tank is a dream.

I improved my pitch and storytelling skills." It has also helped me handle high-stakes situations. I'm ready for similar obstacles next time. Besta said the event taught him the value of coolness in high-stakes circumstances and made him a resilient and articulate entrepreneur.

## The first month of 2024 saw over 30,000 tech jobs lost worldwide



**Delhi:** In January 2024, more than 122 IT companies and startups laid off more than 30,000 workers, and the job cutbacks continue. Layoffs.fyi reports that 122 tech companies have laid off 31,751 workers as of February 3. Tech businesses, including startups, fired over 425,000 employees worldwide between 2022 and 2023, including over 36,000 in India. Nearly 150 Zoom employees—less than 2% of the company—are being laid off. In

addition to Zoom, cloud software vendor Okta announced 400 layoffs, or 7% of its workforce. PayPal (NASDAQ:PYPL) began layoffs last month, affecting at least 9% of its workforce, or 2,500 workers. Colin Angle, founder and CEO of consumer robot maker iRobot, will resign and lay off 350 employees (31% of the staff). Salesforce is the latest IT business to lay off 700 workers. Swiggy, an online food delivery service, is slashing 350-400 positions. eBay

(NASDAQ:EBAY) is firing 1,000 full-time employees and an undefined number of contractors "over the coming months." YouTube owner Google laid off at least 100 creator management and operations staff. Google (NASDAQ:GOOGL) was apparently cutting "a few hundred" additional advertising sales roles as part of a restructure. Sundar Pichai, CEO of Google, has also warned employees of further job losses this year.

## Now you can book visit to Eiffel Tower through UPI

**Delhi:** UPI platform has entered France through a collaboration between NPCI's international arm NIPL and Lyra, a company specialising in online and proximity payments across 11 countries. The initial application for UPI involves booking visits to the Eiffel Tower. Indian tourists can securely conduct online transactions using UPI-powered apps to scan the QR code on the merchant website and initiate payment. While the Eiffel Tower is the first merchant to offer UPI payments in France, this service will soon extend to other merchants in tourism and retail, making it significantly easier for Indian tourists to remotely book hotels, museum visits, etc, during their stay in France, according to an NPCI statement.



According to NPCI, Indian tourists rank as the second-largest group of international visitors to the Eiffel Tower. In Jan 2024, UPI recorded over 1,220 crore transactions. We also published the following articles recently

UPI in France: Indians can now pay in rupees at Eiffel Tower Unified Payments Interface (UPI) was launched at the Eiffel Tower in Paris by NPCI International Payments (NIPL) in partnership with Lyra.

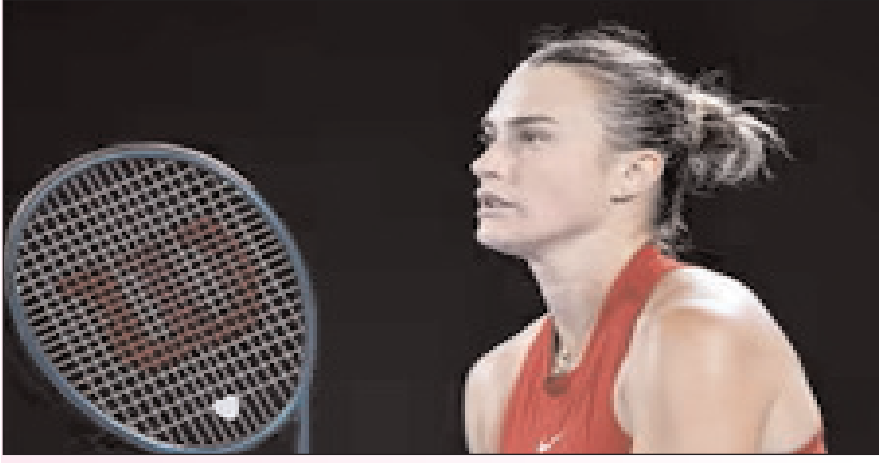
Indian tourists at the Eiffel Tower can now use UPI to purchase tickets online. NIPL aims to promote NPCI's payment solutions globally and collaborate with financial institutions worldwide. Union Budget.

## Maldives ties shaky, India doubles aid

**Delhi:** Despite strained relations with the Maldives, Delhi will prioritize Indian Ocean development projects. India increased its 2023-24 Maldives budget from Rs 400 crore to Rs 770 crore. Second only to Bhutan and Nepal, it has allocated Rs 600 crore for the Maldives in 2024-25. India has not let disputes with Male, particularly in defense and security cooperation, impede the \$500 million Greater Male Connectivity Project, its largest infrastructure project. Maldives allocations are grants, not loans. Bhutan retained its top budgeted allocation, with India allocating Rs 2,068 crore to Thimphu. Nepal gets Rs 700 crore. Including Bhutan's loan, India's 2024-25 estimate for grant and loan assistance to foreign governments is Rs 5,667 crore. This is 874 crore less than last year's revised projection. In 2024-25, India allocated Rs 250 crore for conflict-torn Myanmar, down from Rs 370 crore last year.



## Qinwen Zheng is a problem solver in the mould of one who breaks it down



**MELBOURNE:** Qinwen Zheng is a problem solver in the mould of one who breaks it down before putting it together. An artist, who loves the lines. The 21-year-old Chinese, in her maiden Grand Slam final, has sparked the happy vibe of the Australian Open. Talking about her opponent in the final, defending champion Aryna Sabalenka, the 12th seed said the world No. 2 was a complete player. "I would say, most big hitter in the tour right now. She got the most-big serve, most

big forehand, big backhand," Zheng said. Just as well that the backhand isn't 'most big'. Zheng, from Shiyan in north-western Hubei, is 5 ft 10 and is happy to karaoke in three languages - English, Spanish and Chinese. "I haven't faced a big seed in the tournament yet, she's the first one I will face," Zheng said. "But it is a match, so let's see what is gonna happen."

Sabalenka and Zheng practiced together before the start of the tournament.

They've played once before, in the US Open in quarterfinals four months ago, and the 25-year-old triumphed in straight sets. The title match promises to be an explosive contest, both players will look for openings. 14 Zheng, in her maiden Grand Slam final, said this has been her dream all her life. Her face mirrored the ecstasy. "My dream is not just (making) the final," she told the media. "I'm almost there, but I know this little distance, still far away."

## The departure is not limited to Klopp alone

**Juergen Klopp**, who recently guided Liverpool to the final of the League Cup, has communicated his decision to the club's leadership, bringing an end to his eight-and-a-half-year tenure at Anfield. The departure is not limited to Klopp alone, as assistant managers Pepijn Lijnders and Peter Krawietz will also be leaving Liverpool simultaneously, according to the club's statement. The trio, who have played integral roles in Liverpool's recent successes, will be bidding farewell to the club at the end of the ongoing campaign. In a significant announcement,

Liverpool confirmed on Friday that Manager Juergen Klopp will be departing the club at the conclusion of the current season. Klopp, who recently guided Liverpool to the final of the League Cup, has communicated his decision to the club's leadership, bringing an end to his eight-and-a-half-year tenure at Anfield. The departure is not limited to Klopp alone, as assistant managers Pepijn Lijnders and Peter Krawietz will also be leaving Liverpool simultaneously, according to the club's statement. The trio, who have played integral roles in Liverpool's recent successes, will

be bidding farewell to the club at the end of the ongoing campaign. This announcement marks the end of an era for Liverpool, and Klopp's departure will undoubtedly be a significant moment for the club and its supporters. "It is that I am, how can I say it, running out of energy," Klopp, 56, said on Liverpool's website. "I can understand that it's a shock for a lot of people in this moment, when you hear it for the first time, but obviously I can explain it - or at least try to explain it. "I love absolutely everything about this club, I love everything about the city.

## Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp plans to take a break from football for a year

**LIVERPOOL:** Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp plans to take a break from football for a year once his time in charge at Anfield finishes at the end of the season. Klopp said he lacked the energy to go on as he made a shock announcement on Friday that he will step down in May. The 56-year-old German has previously been linked with the German national team. But Klopp, who has won the Champions League and Premier League among seven trophies since taking over at Liverpool in 2015, said his immediate plan was for a break and that he would never manage another English club. "Whatever will happen in the future I don't know now but no club, no country for the next year. No other English club ever, I can promise that," said Klopp at a press conference.

The former Borussia Dortmund coach could go out on a high with Liverpool five points clear at the top of the Premier League and in the running for three other trophies.

Thanks to a series of summer signings, the Reds have bounced back to form this season after a turbulent 2022/23 campaign and Klopp said he was leaving with a squad in place that would succeed even without him.

"It's too important to do it with 50 percent, it is just too important and this team is set up for the future," he added on his reasoning for stepping down.

"When I said Liverpool 2.0 that didn't include me obviously for the next 10 years, but the team is there, the basis is there.

"Whoever comes in, you cannot ever guarantee to win trophies, but has a really good chance to play really good football."

## Australian Open: Medvedev outlasts Zverev to book Sinner showdown in final

**NEW DELHI:** Daniil Medvedev staged a remarkable comeback from the brink to defeat Alexander Zverev 5-7, 3-6, 7-6(4), 7-6(5), 6-3 in a captivating semi-final match on Friday, securing his spot in the Australian Open title clash.



The third seed is now vying for his second

Grand Slam trophy after facing heartbreak in consecutive final defeats at Melbourne Park in 2021 and 2022 against Novak Djokovic and Rafael Nadal. Medvedev aims to turn his fortunes around when he faces Italian youngster Jannik Sinner in the final on Sunday.

## Jasprit Bumrah's delivery to uproot Ben Duckett's off-stump

**NEW DELHI:** After bowling out India for 436 in their first innings, England went to lunch at 89/1 in their second innings with Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope fighting it out in the middle. Duckett was particularly swift in run-scoring and along with Pope, took England's deficit under 100. Duckett and Pope put up a fifty-run stand off just 43 deliveries. On the last ball of the second over after lunch, Jasprit Bumrah bowled a superb ball from round the wicket that had sharp seam



movement from a length cramping Duckett for room. Duckett stayed in his crease to dab it into the off-side and didn't account for the inward movement and was trapped in front of mid-

dle. The Indians appealed but the umpire turned it down and captain Rohit Sharma didn't go for the review. But ball-tracking in the replays showed that the ball was hitting leg stump.

An undeterred Bumrah in his next over got his man with a more vicious delivery that didn't need the umpire's nod. The Indian pace spearhead bowled a snorter at 142.4kph that swung in at good length and further nipped back in off the seam. Duckett (47) went for a shot away from his body without accounting for the movement, got beaten on the inside edge and the ball uprooted the off-stump, much to the delight of Bumrah, his teammates and the Hyderabad crowd.

## What kind of a shot was that! - When Gavaskar fumed at Gill's shot-selection

**Gill** commenced the second day of India's first Test against England on his overnight score of 14. However, debutant spinner Tom Hartley managed to dismiss him, getting him caught at mid-wicket on 23. Gill's painstaking innings of 66 deliveries included only two boundaries. The way Gill got out, after putting in the hard work, left Gavaskar, who was doing commentary at that moment, frustrated. India eventually scored 436 to take a first-innings lead of 190 runs. "What kind of a



shot was that! - When Sunil Gavaskar fumed at Shubman Gill's shot-selection Shubman's Gill's rash shot that led to his departure on day two of India's first Test

against England in Hyderabad annoyed batting legend Sunil Gavaskar, who questioned the young Indian batter's shot-selection. Gill took a fresh guard

to begin the second day on his overnight score of 14 but was dismissed by debutant spinner Tom Hartley, caught at mid-wicket on 23 having played 66 deliveries in his laborious knock, which included just two boundaries. The manner of Gill's dismissal after having done all the hard work annoyed Gavaskar, who was doing commentary at that point. "What kind of a shot was he looking to play! One can understand if he was looking to play it in the air, but it was just a badly executed on-drive.

## Ponting's reminder to Kemar Roach - 'Still owes me about 1.5 million dollars'

**Perth** The discussion in a 'Channel 7' segment traced its origins to the 2009 Australia vs West Indies Test in Perth, where Roach subjected Ponting to a relentless series of bouncers. That memorable spell ultimately contributed to Roach securing an Indian Premier League (IPL) contract shortly thereafter.



The ongoing day-night Pink Test between Australia and West Indies saw some healthy banter between veteran West Indies pacer Kemar Roach and former Aussie skipper Ricky Ponting at the end of the second day's play in Brisbane, where the Australian batting legend joking said that the pacer owes him 1.5 million dollars. The conversation in a 'Channel 7'

feature found its context dating back to the 2009 Test in Perth when Roach tormented Ponting with a barrage of bouncers, and the spell eventually played a role in Roach bagging an Indian Premier League (IPL) contract soon after. "I have actually said forever, Kemar, he still owes me about 1.5 million dollars because on the back of that (spell), he was picked up in the IPL auction

## The spin duo of Ashwin and Jadeja became the most successful bowling pair for India in Test cricket

**NEW DELHI:** The spin duo of Ravichandran Ashwin and Ravindra Jadeja became the most successful bowling pair for India in Test cricket. During the opening day of the first Test against England in Hyderabad on Thursday, they scalped four wickets together, surpassing the legendary partnership of Anil Kumble and Harbhajan Singh.

Ashwin and Jadeja now boast a remarkable record of 504\* wickets in 50 Tests, surpassing the previous milestone of 501 wickets in 54 Tests held by the iconic Kumble-Harbhajan duo. This remarkable feat solidifies their place as one of the most prolific bowling combinations in Indian cricket history. Harbhajan Singh and pacer Zaheer Khan occupy the third spot with 474 wickets in 59 Tests.

Overall, the list is led by England's pace duo of James Anderson and Stuart Broad, who have accumulated a staggering 1039 wickets in 138

## In the ongoing Test match in Hyderabad, Ashwin and Jadeja combined forces to dent England's progress after an initial aggressive start by the visitors. England, having opted for the "Bazball" approach, reached 108/3 at lunch

matches, followed by Australian legends Shane Warne and Glenn McGrath with 1001 wickets in 104 Tests.

In the ongoing Test match in Hyderabad, Ashwin and Jadeja combined forces to dent England's progress after an initial aggressive start by the visitors. England, having opted for the "Bazball" approach, reached 108/3 at lunch, with Joe Root (18) and Jonny Bairstow (32) at the crease, providing stability after losing three wickets in quick succession. But soon after lunch break, Axar

Patel and Jadeja removed both the batter to reduce them to 125/5.

England's bold strategy includes three specialist spinners, and with Root contributing as a part-time bowler, Mark Wood stands as their sole fast bowler in the five-match series. The Ashwin-Jadeja partnership is expected to play a pivotal role as the Test match progresses, setting the stage for an intriguing battle between bat and ball. Wisden picks 2023 men's ODI team of the year, includes 7 Indians in the XI.

## Ravichandran Ashwin's brilliant delivery to dismiss Ben Stokes

**NEW DELHI:** Off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin led India's surge to victory on the third day of the first Test against England in Hyderabad by dismissing their captain Ben Stokes.

After bowling out India for 436, England were 140/4 at the dismissal of Jonny Bairstow when Stokes arrived at the crease.

With the situation demanding to stay at the wicket, Stokes was cautious in his strokeplay and England's first innings top-scorer had scored just 6 runs when Ashwin struck.

Ashwin tossed up a delivery on the middle, the ball hit the top and disturbed the surface, the length drew Stokes forward, but it then gripped and turned past the outside edge - crashing into the off-stump.



## Ram Lalla's 'darshan' overwhelms Arunachal CM, cabinet members

**Ayodhya** The Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh Pema Khandu, along with the members of his cabinet, MLAs and officials were visibly overwhelmed after having the darshan of Ram Lalla in his grand temple on Tuesday. The 70-member delegation, headed by the CM, is the first political delegation from a state to visit Ayodhya after the consecration ceremony. At the outset of their visit, the dignitaries were accorded a Guard of Honor upon their arrival at Maharshi Valmiki Airport, symbolizing the rich tradition of "Atithi Devo Bhava" (Guest is equivalent to God). Subsequently, they visited the Ram Temple and offered prayers. The welcoming committee, led by Agriculture and Ayodhya In-charge Minister Surya Pratap Shahi, alongside Roli Singh, the District Panchayat President, Mayor Girish Pati Tripathi, former Mayor Rishikesh Upadhyay,



and District Magistrate Nitish Kumar, extended heartfelt greetings to Chief Minister Pema Khandu, his Cabinet Ministers, MLAs, and officials and presented floral bouquets and Angvasstras as tokens of hospitality to them. In a display of cultural richness, local artists enthralled the audience with traditional folk dances in honor of the esteemed guests.

Under the vigilant supervision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, meticulous security arrangements were made to ensure the safety and comfort of the Arunachal Pradesh delegation. Talking to the media, Chief Minister Pema Khandu said that the delegation comprising 70

members, including cabinet ministers, MLAs, and officials, had come to offer prayers at the Ram temple. Recalling his visit to Ayodhya two years ago during the temple's construction phase, he expressed elation at witnessing the completion of the historic Ram temple. Chief Minister Khandu further disclosed plans for establishing Arunachal Bhawan in Ayodhya, underscoring the significance of the Ram temple's completion after five centuries as a momentous occasion for the nation. "We have written a letter to Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath regarding the construction of Arunachal Bhawan in Ayodhya", he said.

## Pakistani police disperse pre-election rally by supporters of former leader Imran Khan

**KARACHI:** Pakistani police fired tear gas to disperse supporters of former Prime Minister Imran Khan in the southern city of Karachi on Sunday, less than two weeks before a national parliamentary election that Khan was blocked from running in because of a criminal conviction. An Associated Press reporter at the scene saw between 20 and 30 people getting arrested at the rally. A dozen workers from Khan's political party were arrested for attacking officers and blocking the road, police said.

Although Khan will not be on the ballot for the Feb. 8 election, he remains a potent political force because of his grassroots following and anti-establishment rhetoric. He says the legal cases against him were a plot to sideline him ahead of the vote. Senior police superintendent Sajid Siddozai said workers from Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf, or PTI party organized the rally without obtaining permission from authorities and blocked the road. Siddozai confirmed the use of tear gas. "When

police officials attempted to negotiate and persuade them not to block the road, they attacked the police," he said. "This resulted in injuries to five police officials, including a female officer. One of the wounded is in a critical condition." The police operation was ongoing, Siddozai added. PTI worker Waheedullah Shah said Khan had called for rallies across the country and that Sunday's event in Karachi was peaceful. "But police dispersed our rally and arrested our workers,"

## The Delhi govt. will create a useful curriculum for special education schools

**Delhi:** The Delhi government has made the decision to give special education instructors access to a comprehensive digital resource library that is linked to the functional curriculum on an inclusive and accessible learning management system in state-run schools. This would enable teachers to

undertake continuing formative evaluations of children with special needs. Officials say that the Delhi government's inclusive education section is developing a functioning curriculum that will allow students with special needs to get instruction and learning from the

same source in all of the school's locations. "The functional curriculum's goal is to meet the needs of students with special needs enrolled in state-run schools. It particularly includes the development of life skills outside of the classroom," a Delhi government official stated.

## Announces plotted development Hero Earth

**SONIPAT:** Real estate major Hero Realty Pvt Ltd (HRPL) has entered Sonipat real estate market with its flagship premium plotted development brand Hero Earth with a strategic tie-up with Spiti Group from Gurugram. This new tie-up will be the second project under Hero Earth after the astounding success it received for 'The Ark' in Gurugram Sector 85 where all the premium plots were sold out in a single day. Cushman & Wakefield was the transaction advisor for this deal.

"Hero Realty's entry into the Sonipat real estate market will prove to be a game-changer. The company's commitment to excellence, innovation, and community development set a new benchmark for the industry. HRPL not only builds premium homes but also creates a thriving community that fosters a sense of belonging and togetherness," said Dr Dharmesh Shah, CEO, Hero Realty Pvt. Ltd.

This premium land on the outskirts of NCR surrounded by lush green fields and picturesque landscapes, Hero Earth offers a wide range of plots in Sector 33 Sonipat, with plot sizes ranging from 1115 sqft to 1615 sqft. The project boasts abundant common open spaces, creating a harmonious environment for residents. Hero Earth presents an enticing opportunity for individuals seeking their dream homes or investment opportunities. This location was chosen meticulously to provide residents with a serene and peaceful environment away from the chaos of the city. Speaking on the occasion, Mr. Rohit Dalal and Ashish Dalal, the Promoters of Spiti Group said "We are excited to partner with an iconic brand like Hero Realty."

## More Palestinians displaced as Israel battles Hamas in south Gaza

**DOHA/GAZA:** Medical facilities are at risk of collapse in Khan Younis, the southern Gaza city now at the focus of Israel's offensive, the Gaza health ministry warned on Sunday, as fighting raged across the Palestinian enclave. Residents said Israeli planes and tanks also pounded areas in Gaza City to the north, where Israel has slowly been pulling out troops. The fighting could be heard in the nearby towns of Beit Lahiya and Jabalia, near to Gaza City. Israel's military said it was engaged in "intensive battles" in Khan Younis, where it said troops "eliminated terrorists and located large quantities of weapons". The armed wing of Hamas and the Islamic Jihad said fighters clashed with Israeli troops in several areas across the

enclave overnight. Hamas' armed wing said its fighters destroyed two Israeli tanks in Khan Younis. The latest fighting came as UN officials and aid groups urged countries to reconsider their decision to pause funding for the UN refugee agency for Palestinians, a vital source of aid in Gaza.

At least nine countries have paused funding following allegations by Israel that some of UNRWA's staff were involved in the deadly Oct. 7 Hamas attacks on Israel. Gaza Health Ministry spokesperson Ashraf Al-Qidra said 165 Palestinians were killed and 290 wounded in the past 24 hours, bringing the total killed in Israeli strikes since the war began to 26,422. Officials in the Hamas-ruled territory do not distinguish

between militants and civilians in their count. One strike on a house in a suburb of Gaza City killed eight people, health officials said. Israel launched a war it says aims to eliminate Hamas after the militants' unprecedented cross-border assault, in which 1,200 people were killed and 240 abducted, according to Israeli officials. HEALTHCARE SYSTEM FAILURE Palestinian medics and residents said Israel continued to bomb areas around the two main hospitals in Khan Younis, hindering efforts by rescue teams to respond to desperate calls from people caught in the Israeli bombardment.

"There is a complete failure of the healthcare system at Nasser and Al-Amal hospitals," said Qidra.

## Donald Trump will be the Republican Party's nominee for the US presidency,

The more likely it seems that Donald Trump will be the Republican Party's nominee for the US presidency, the louder the voices become that warn Europe to prepare itself for a second Trump term in the White House. In an interview with French public broadcaster France 2, Christine Lagarde, president of the European Central Bank, described the possible election of Donald Trump as a "clear threat" to Europe. Belgian prime minister Alexander De Croo told the European

Parliament in mid-January that "if 2024 brings us 'America First' again, it is really more than ever 'Europe on its own.'" In a paper published by the European Council on Foreign Relations (ECFR) think tank, former Swedish Prime Minister Carl Bildt predicted far-reaching global consequences if Trump were reelected. "The US would abandon climate policy and expand investments in fossil fuels. Nato would be — at best — dormant. There would be cozy get-togethers with buddies Putin and

Orban. Trade would harden," he wrote. How to prepare for a Trump 2.0 scenario Sudha David-Wilp, the director of the Berlin office of the German Marshall Fund, a think tank funded by the US government, the German government and the EU Commission, told DW that her main concern was over Europe's military capabilities. "It's very important that Europe becomes a strong actor, militarily, in a conventional sense, that it's able to take care of security issues in its

immediate neighborhood," David-Wilp said. In addition, she said, Europe must also "be a strong partner for Asia, for Europe, when it comes to warding off external threats from authoritarian forces, and also get strong economically to prepare for potential protectionist measures from a second President Trump term." Jürgen Hardt, a conservative lawmaker with Germany's federal parliament, the Bundestag, said he fears that Germany is ill-prepared for a second term with Trump.

## First meeting of US-China working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals to be held

**WASHINGTON:** The first joint meeting of the US-China working group on fentanyl precursor chemicals will be held on in Beijing, a senior US official. "This is a key part of the implementation of our bilateral cooperation on this

effort," the US official told reporters. The official added the United States has information that China started action against Chinese precursor chemical companies around the time of the summit of US President Joe Biden and Chinese President Xi Jinping last November. The United States will pursue law enforcement actions and impose controls on the precursors. The meeting is a pivotal moment for the issue, the official said.

Top Chinese and US officials held candid talks in Bangkok aimed at lowering tensions between the United States and China on Taiwan and other subjects,

ahead of an expected springtime call between President Joe Biden and Chinese leader Xi Jinping. Fentanyl is a leading cause of drug overdoses in the United States, and the two leaders discussed efforts to reduce its flow at a summit in California last year. The US is already seeing fewer seizures of illicit chemicals used to make fentanyl at US airports after China moved to shut down companies that make them. China has started some conversations with Mexico about the issue, the official said. "It is really important that this is a multilateral issue," the official said.

## Samadhan Portal becomes the medium to address every issue of students

**Lucknow/Prayagraj February 6th** The Samadhan Portal, launched by the Yogi government a month ago, has emerged as an efficient platform to address and resolve issues facing examinees in Uttar Pradesh. The portal, which was launched for the convenience of students participating in the examinations conducted by the Uttar Pradesh Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad (Uttar Pradesh State Board of High School & Intermediate Education) has successfully addressed 1694 out of 1847 cases uploaded on the portal through the regional offices of the board, with only 153 cases remaining due to incomplete document submissions by students. It is noteworthy

that on January 6, 2024, the innovative portal was launched by the Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad, providing 13 types of facilities, including rectifying errors in students' certificates, issuing copies of certificates, correcting errors in results and ensuring timely resolution of various complaints. According to the Secretary of the Madhyamik Shiksha Parishad Dibyakant Shukla, a daily review of the resolution of cases related to student welfare is being conducted on this portal. Additionally, clear instructions have been sought from all regional secretaries of the board's regional offices to ensure there is no laxity in addressing students' issues. As a result,

a large number of cases are being received and resolved fast, benefitting students, he pointed out. Among the 13 services, resolution timelines for all except four have been set at 15 days, with the remaining services to be resolved within 30 days, including issuing duplicate certificates and making corrections in the modified certificate/birth certificate, revised marksheet etc, he mentioned further. Varanasi records highest number of cases. Regional offices have diligently addressed cases from various districts, with Varanasi topping the list by uploading 750 cases, of which 691 have been resolved. Similarly, Meerut, Bareilly, Prayagraj, and Gorakhpur have made

notable strides in resolving cases within their jurisdictions. From Meerut, a total of 363 cases were uploaded, out of which 338 have been resolved while from Bareilly, 124 cases were received of which 115 were disposed of. Similarly, from Prayagraj, 500 cases were received of which 453 were resolved whereas out of 110 cases received from Gorakhpur, 97 were resolved. Box Appointment of Static Magistrates within 2 Days In a recent review meeting focused on exam preparations, the Director of Madhyamik Shiksha, Mahendra Dev, and Secretary Dibyakant Shukla emphasized the urgent appointment of 'external centre administrators', Static Magistrates.

## Pistol shooter Anuradha Devi starts over at 33

**Delhi:** Anuradha Devi, 33, broke a barrier by winning a World Cup silver in Cairo while pistol shooting. Teens have joined the sport recently. They have dominated several tournaments so much that a 30-year-old could consider they are too old for the sport. Devi pondered about quitting the sport, but she persisted because of her tenacity. Devi, 33, earned silver behind Greece's Anna Korakakki in her international debut. It was perfect timing as India searched for a second air pistol shooter to qualify for the Paris Olympics. Devi is optimistic about another Paris Olympics qualification tournament. "I wanted a medal at my first international tournament, the World Cup. I want to go to the Paris Olympics, but first I want a quota spot," said.