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

Freed by Qatar only because of PM's personal intervention: Navy veterans

NEW DELHI: Relief was writ large on the faces of the seven naval veterans who landed at Delhi airport in the early hours of Monday after over 17 months of incarceration in a prison in Qatar, with spells of solitary confinement and a death sentence hanging over their heads for a few months. The veterans, who chanted slogans of 'Bharat Mata ki Jai' and 'Hip Hip Hurray' while exiting the airport, were full of praise for the Indian govt's sustained diplomatic efforts and PM Modi's personal intervention in securing their release. "I feel delighted to finally be back in India safe and sound. I wish to thank PM Modi because this would not have been possible had it not been for his personal intervention. I also wish to express my gratitude to the Emir



of Qatar," Captain Navtej Singh Gill (ret'd) said. Added Commander Sanjeev Gupta (ret'd), "Without the intervention of PM Modi, we would not have been standing in front of you today...intervention at that highest level to get us freedom, and the untiring and consistent efforts of the government of India." The other veterans echoed similar sentiments. Commander Purnendu Tiwari is

now the only veteran left in Qatar, though he too has been released from prison and is back at his Doha home. His sister Meetu Bhargava said her happiness was "slightly dampened" since Commander Tiwari was yet to return home. But, she added, she was sure it would happen very soon. Retired officers and friends, who all along had maintained that the seven officers and a sailor arrested in Qatar in August

2022 had exemplary and unblemished track records in the Navy, also heaved a sigh of relief. Former naval aviator and test pilot Commander K P Sanjeev Kumar (ret'd), who counts Commanders Sanjeev 'Chote' Gupta and Amit 'Naggy' Nagpal as his academy course-mates, said, "A rollercoaster over the last 17 months finally ends with the best outcome possible. A note of thanks is definitely due to leaders and diplomats from both sides who brought a case shrouded in secrecy to its culmination in a short period." "While the naval veterans rehabilitate and heal from this trauma, a larger question arises, the answer to which we may never know: Why were they incarcerated and who will compensate them for a career and life derailed?" he asked.

No roads lead to Delhi for farmers as cops seal borders

NEW DELHI/GHAZI-ABAD: Delhi's borders at Singhu, Tikri and UP Gate – three vertices of 2020-21 farm agitation – were sealed on Monday and fortified with concrete walls and barbed wires as the spectre of a rerun of farmers' protest loomed large and police went into overdrive to stop them from entering the capital on Tuesday. For commuters at UP Gate – busiest of the three borders and main artery to capital's east – the barricades brought back memories of the



yearlong traffic nightmare that unfolded as the Delhi-Meerut Expressway turned into a protest stage for farmers with tents, kitchens and hundreds of tractors on one side of the barricades and heavy police deployment on the other. In Chandigarh, late

evening talks by Union ministers Piyush Goyal and Arjun Munda with farm leaders to dissuade farmers from their march to Delhi ended in failure as deadlock between two sides over the issue of MSP persisted. The farmer groups were represented by Sanyukt

Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee general secretary Sarwan Singh Pandher in this second round of talks. Farm leaders said after the talks that 'Delhi Chalo' was on as "govt is not taking our demands seriously". The first round was held last week and didn't yield any result. At all three Delhi borders, commuters were forced to take detours with police sealing off the main highway.

More than a dozen Maharashtra Congress MLAs may resign

Mumbai: After Ashok Chavan, more than a dozen Congress legislators are preparing to resign from the party, sources said. However, they are yet to decide whether they will join the CM Eknath Shinde-

led Shiv Sena, BJP or the Ajit Pawar-led NCP. Along with Chavan, his trusted aide and former legislator Amar Rajurkar has also quit Congress. On Monday, deputy CM Devendra Fadnavis said a number of Congress

functionaries with grassroots connect are in touch. He, however, claimed ignorance about the possibility of Ashok Chavan joining BJP. Fadnavis was at BJP headquarters on

Monday to welcome former BMC corporators from Congress, Jagdish Amin from ward no 82 (Gundavali in Andheri East) and Rajendra Narvankar from ward no 216 (Reay Road), who have switched to BJP.

Mass rape of Hindu women in West Bengal under state aegis, says BJP

NEW DELHI: BJP on Monday highlighted allegations that Hindu women at Sandeshkhali were raped by "goons" having allegiance to TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan, wanted in the case of recent attack on an ED team, to claim that Hindus were facing persecution under Mamata govt. Union minister Smriti Irani alleged that West Bengal CM Mamata Bannerjee is responsible for "genocide" of Hindus and has now given patronage to those raping Hindu women. She referred to the allegation of Sandeshkhali women that they were raped in the presence of police to say that criminals enjoyed state patronage. "In Sandeshkhali, some women narrated their ordeals to the media... They said TMC goons visited door to door to identify the most beautiful woman in every house and the young. The husband of identified women were told that they had no right on their wife. They didn't leave them till they were satisfied..." "TMC goons will take women to the party office... Night after night they would be kept there... till they were satisfied," alleged a group of women in a video that has since gone viral. In a sharp attack on Mamata, Irani alleged that she is known for facilitating "genocide of Hindus" and is now allowing her party's workers to sexually attack women. The attack from the Irani came following allegations by a group of women in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district that Shahjahan and his supporters captured swathes of land by force and sexually assaulted them.

Another exit raises doubts over INDIA bloc's viability

NEW DELHI: RLD's decision to ditch the opposition alliance in favour of NDA, the second party to do so after JD(U), has reinforced doubts about viability of INDIA bloc, which was conceived to be the challenger to PM Modi-led BJP. Jayant Chaudhary's exit, coming on the heels of BJP announcing Bharat Ratna for Chaudhary Charan Singh, has not only brought seat-sharing



dialogue between Samajwadi Party, RLD and Congress in UP to a grinding halt, but has also dealt a prestige blow to the national-level pre-poll alliance of anti-BJP parties in light of their assertion that state-level

alliances were "on course" and "stable". Though Congress maintained that RLD's departure would not impact the bloc, and a section sought to see a silver lining in the move - a larger pie in seat-sharing talks with SP - its last-minute decision to alter the route of Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra to skip western UP districts belied its misgivings over the implications of the latest split for Congress' flagship march. For the group of opposition parties that was banking on building state-level alliances to upset BJP, RLD's move compounded the alliance's troubles across states.

Jayant Chaudhary confirms RLD switch to NDA, deals opposition alliance a body blow

NEW DELHI: Rashtriya Lok Dal chief Jayant Chaudhary on Monday confirmed that his party would join BJP-led NDA, asserting that the decision was unanimous. "I took this decision after speaking to all MLAs and workers of my party. There was no big planning behind this decision, or had we decided this a long time ago. We had to take this decision within a short time because of the situation.



We want to do something good for the country, for our people," Chaudhary told reporters here in what marked another setback to INDIA bloc. Chaudhary said the

consultations with MLAs and workers took place after his grandfather Chaudhary Charan Singh was recently bestowed Bharat Ratna. He denied that there were misgivings in the party over the move which saw him coming under attack in Rajya Sabha on Saturday from leader of opposition & Congress chief Mallikarjun Kharge and his colleague, former Union minister Jairam Ramesh.

Urban joblessness rate dips marginally in Oct-Dec 2023

NEW DELHI: Unemployment rate in urban areas in the 15 years and above category in the Oct-Dec quarter of 2023 slowed marginally to 6.5%, lower than the 6.6% in the July-Sept period as economic activity remained robust. Joblessness rate in the Oct-Dec quarter of 2022 was at 7.2%.



Data released by National Statistical Office on Monday showed the unemployment rate for females in the 15 years and above cat-

egory in Oct-Dec remained at 8.6%, similar to the previous quarter but lower than the 9.6% recorded in the Oct-Dec quarter of 2022. For males in the 15+ years category, the rate eased to 5.8% in the Dec quarter, slower than the 6% in the July-Sept period and below the 6.5% in the Oct-Dec

quarter of 2022. Labour force participation rate, the percentage of persons in the labour force (working or seeking work) in the population, improved to 49.9% in the Oct-Dec quarter from 49.3% in the July-Sept period and above the 48.2% in the Oct-Dec period of 2022.

ED busts cyber scam in India on Irish complaint

NEW DELHI: In a first of its kind money laundering case, a complaint lodged by an Irish woman in Dungarvan, a coastal town in Ireland, was taken up for investigation by Enforcement Directorate in India, triggering a series of searches across Bihar and West Bengal. It resulted in busting of a syndicate of cyber criminals – mostly school dropout desi boys speaking accented British English – swindling people in UK and Ireland by remotely taking control of their phones and computers and transferring several crores of rupees from their bank accounts into their own. Searches in Patna and later in Kharagpur and Kolkata unearthed a 70-seater call centre operated by the crooks that had conned at least 40 victims. The Irish woman complained of receiving a call from one 'Stephanie'.

Congress without a prominent face in Marathwada now



MUMBAI: Ashok Chavan said he had left Congress to "explore other options", adding that he did not have a grudge against anyone in the party. While Chavan's exit is the third in quick succession after those of ex-LS MP Milind Deora and ex-Bandra MLA Baba Siddique, it is a far bigger setback for Congress, given his bona fides as a veteran. He was CM twice between 2008 and 2010 and is a powerful and influential Maratha leader with a big following in the Marathwada region, largely owing to the goodwill enjoyed by his father S B Chavan,

who was also CM twice and was Union home minister as well. There had been speculation for some time that Chavan may be on his way out of Congress, but he had earlier strongly denied all such reports. His exit has left the party without any prominent face in the Marathwada region. While Marathwada Congress unit was stunned by Chavan's decision, according to the senior leadership of the party, they sensed it coming. On Monday, Chavan, 5-term MLA and elected from Bhokar assembly constituency in Nanded district in 2019.

Farming out: From 32 in 2020 to 50 now, the groups behind the protest

Unity among farmers in Punjab powered protests on New Delhi's outskirts in 2020-2021, pressuring BJP-led central govt to revoke three controversial farm laws. However, it has undergone significant shifts in two years, with groups fragmenting and new alliances forming. Fresh permutations and combinations



surfaced among farm groups,

diverging pathways as farmers began returning home in Dec 2021 following annulment of the farm laws. Disagreements intensified, resulting in multiple splinters within groups. Number of active farmer organisations have surged close to 50, a stark contrast from 32 that united in Nov 2020 to collectively challenge

SC nod for ArcelorMittal Nippon Steel, IOCL to appoint arbitrators in Essar case



The top court further held that both sides would have the liberty to argue on the aspect of whether the dispute was arbitrable or not, adding all rights and contentions of the parties are kept open. The Supreme Court on Monday cleared the decks for the initiation of arbitration proceedings by Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India Limited (AMNSIL) and Indian Oil Corporation Ltd (IOCL) for resolving their dispute relating to Essar Steel India Limited (ESIL). ESIL was acquired by AMNSIL in 2019 through the corporate insolvency resolution process. A bench, led by Chief Justice of India Dhananjaya Y Chandrachud, took on

record the joint agreement of IOCL and AMNSIL regarding appointment of an arbitrator each within a week. "The parties have agreed to nominate two arbitrators within a week. The two arbitrators so appointed will nominate the third arbitrator. In view of the agreement of the parties, the Delhi high court's judgment dated October 10, 2023, is rendered infructuous," stated the bench, which also included justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra. Also Read: ArcelorMittal venture executes India's first 'paperless bill discounting transaction' The top court further held that both sides would have the liberty to argue on the aspect of whether

the dispute was arbitrable or not, adding all rights and contentions of the parties are kept open. While solicitor general Tushar Mehta represented IOCL, senior lawyers Harish Salve and Abhishek Manu Singhvi appeared for AMNSIL in the matter. On February 5, the Supreme Court had reserved its judgment in the appeal filed by IOCL against the October 2023 judgment of the Delhi high court. In its ruling, the high court had dismissed IOCL's plea to appoint an arbitrator to adjudicate a dispute that emanated from a gas supply agreement (GSA) that it entered with ESIL in 2009. The contract was terminated by ESIL in 2017.

Kerala to soon unveil country's first state-owned OTT

Kochi: C-Space, the first state-owned over-the-top (OTT) platform in India, is expected to be unveiled by the Kerala government next month, said a top state government official. Shaji N Karun, national-award-winning director and chairman of Kerala State Film Development Corporation, said the over-the-top (OTT) platform would stream the kind of "varied" or "different" films made in Malayalam that deserve to reach a global viewership. The platform, built under the banner of the Kerala State Film Development Corporation (KSDFC) using funds from the state government, has been envisaged to provide a fillip to award-winning films, short



films and documentaries as well as open possibilities for low-budget independent cinema to reach a wider audience. "Currently at our film festivals, the local Malayalam flicks are viewed only by the delegates. Even if they go on to be released theatrically, only people in Kerala are able to watch them. For example, the films presented at the International Film Festival of Kerala (IFFK) or those winning state awards

should get a wider audience. We need to bring cinema to people, that's our responsibility," Shaji N Karun, national-award-winning director and chairman of KSDFC, platform as a 'parallel cultural move', Karun said it would stream the kind of 'varied' or 'different' films made in Malayalam that deserve to reach a global viewership. "Our objective is to improve the quality of our audience."

Hyderabad woman falls to death in paragliding crash in Himachal Pradesh

A woman tourist from Hyderabad fell to her death in Himachal Pradesh's Kullu in a paragliding accident on Sunday, according to the police. The pilot has been arrested by the police in the case of the 26-year-old woman's death. Police, in their reports, said that the pilot in the paragliding facili-

ty failed to properly secure the safety belt of the tourist, which led her to fall to her death from a considerable height during the paragliding session. The tourism officer, Sunaina Sharma, mentioned that the pilot was registered and the equipment used was approved, attributing the tragedy to negligence in

securing the safety of the woman tourist. Speaking to PTI, tourism officer, Kullu Sunaina Sharma said investigations suggest that a "human error" led to the unfortunate accident. She said the site and equipment were approved, the pilot was registered and there were no weather-related issues.

CAPSULES

Woman, infant ousted from village over superstition get court's relief

Bengaluru: The residents of Kuntanahalli Gollarahatti village in the Tumkur district expelled a 25-year-old woman and her month-old child from the village over age-old superstitions. On Saturday, district judge Gitanjali directed the police to safely escort the woman and the infant back home. The case came to light after social workers



filed a police complaint after finding Bamma living in a makeshift hutment outside the village's limits. Officials said, the Golla community residing in the village traditionally keeps new mothers outside the village for three months. They deem it inauspicious for the new mothers and infants to live in the village. Three months ago, a one-month-old died after being left in a hut as an offering to a deity. Despite subsequent hospitalisation, the infant succumbed to extreme cold. While Tumkur tehsildar and revenue department officials have made efforts to intervene, entrenched beliefs persist. "We have conducted numerous awareness programs, yet a few illiterate individuals practice such customs under the guise of tradition," said Shira women and children welfare officer B Rajan. The judge issued a stern warning to the villagers, emphasising repercussions should such incidents recur.

DMK rule in Tamil Nadu reminds me of Emergency days: Nadda

Chennai The governance of the Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (DMK) in Tamil Nadu is reminiscent of the Emergency days, Bharatiya Janata Party national president J P Nadda said. Speaking at a public meeting in Chennai, Nadda accused chief minister MK Stalin of poor leadership and the INDIA bloc of being a coalition of dynastic politics. "Mr Stalin, days are not far when you will be out," Nadda said, seeking people's support for the BJP in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. The meeting was held as part of Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai's "En Man En Makkal" (my soil my people) yatra. Nadda had launched the yatra on July 28 last year to cover the 234 assembly constituencies in Tamil Nadu. On Sunday the yatra reached 200th assembly con-



stituency of Harbour in Chennai. This is retirement like it should be, exciting & fulfilling. We can't wait for you to call it home. Before the public meeting, Nadda first participated in a rally in Chennai's Mint and said that when he came, the market was shut down, streets lights were switched off, and there was a huge platoon of police. "This leadership lacks wisdom," Nadda said. "It made me remem-

ber the Emergency days. See how police have made them to shut markets. Is this democracy? Is this the tradition of Tamil Nadu. When it is not the tradition of Tamil Nadu, such leaders should not be there in Tamil Nadu. Now time has come when DMK's lights will switch off." Nadda sought to remind the audience of the sengol (sceptre) put up in the new Parliament in Delhi last year. He talked about honouring M S Swaminathan, known as the Father of the Green Revolution, with the Bharat Ratna posthumously after he died last September in Chennai. "For Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji, Tamil Nadu is very special," Nadda said. "We all know how our Prime Minister and BJP always recognise the rich contribution of Tamil Nadu in nation building."

'AIMIM has always been against CAA, will continue to oppose it': Owaisi

After Union Home Minister Amit Shah announced that the Citizenship Amendment Act will be implemented before the Lok Sabha polls, All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) president Asaduddin Owaisi said on Sunday that the law is wrong and against the essence of India and is purely based on religion. "This is the wrong law. It is against the essence of India and is formed purely based on religion. CAA cannot be seen alone. It has to be seen with NPR-NRC. Those Hindus and Sikhs living in Pakistan and Afghanistan can come here; we have never opposed them. A long-term visa allows them to



become Indian citizens through a process. It aims to harass Muslims, Dalits and the poor. During the Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) government, we also got a resolution passed in the assembly that the government will conduct a census but NRC-NPR will not be allowed here," he said. Meanwhile, Union Home Minister Amit Shah said on Saturday that the Citizenship Amendment

Act, which was passed by Parliament in December 2019, will be notified and implemented before the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. "CAA is an act of the country; it will definitely be notified. It will be notified before the polls. CAA will be implemented by the polls, and there should be no confusion around it," Shah said, speaking at the Now-Global Business summit here in the national

capital. "CAA was a promise of the Congress government. When the country was divided and the minorities were persecuted in those countries, Congress assured the refugees that they were welcome in India and that they would be provided with Indian citizenship. Now they are backtracking," Shah said. The CAA, introduced by the Narendra Modi government, aims to confer Indian citizenship to persecuted non-Muslim migrants, including Hindus, Sikhs, Jains, Buddhists, Parsis, and Christians, who migrated from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan and arrived in India before December 31, 2014.

Hold elections to J-K Assembly and Lok Sabha simultaneously: politician



Jammu and Kashmir Apni Party president Altaf Bukhari on Sunday urged the election commission to hold assembly elections and parliamentary polls in Jammu and Kashmir simultaneously. Addressing a one-day workers meeting in Bishna here, the former minister said people of the Union Territory have been denied an elected government for the last five years. "We demand holding of legislative

assembly polls in J&K with forthcoming parliamentary elections to end the bureaucratic rule," he said, also demanding immediate restoration of statehood to Jammu and Kashmir. He said the Supreme Court has also directed the Centre to hold elections in Jammu and Kashmir before September 2024. "The atmosphere in Jammu and Kashmir has changed since the day when the people of the erstwhile

state were stripped of their special status (under Article 370) on August 5, 2019. They are eagerly waiting for an opportunity to elect their representatives who can protect their rights," he said. The Apni Party leader congratulated Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah for adding four more communities to the list of scheduled tribes in J&K.

Foreign student alleges sexual assault, police say complaint is false

Bengaluru: A 17-year-old international yoga student residing filed a complaint of sexual assault by four men in November last year. However, even after over two months, police have taken no action, said her mother. According to the girl, on November 20, 2023, when she was alone at her home, four men barged into her home and molested her. In her complaint, she identified the men as M o u l a h u s s a i n Babusab Karani, the main accused, his brother Khajahussain Babusab Karani and two other accomplices. She accused circle police inspector (CPI) Manjunath Kusugal and sub-inspector (SI) Suma Gorba of the Mundargi police station of protecting the four perpetrators. The survivor's



mother said the main accused Moulahussain had even raped her elder daughter three years ago. He has also recorded video of the assault and used it to blackmail the family. Perturbed by the repeated harassment, the girl fainted at a bridge in the city due to which she got seriously injured and was hospitalised, said the mother. A case was then filed against Moulahussain who was sent to jail subsequently. He is currently

out on bail. Last year, he molested the younger sister in order to take revenge, alleged her mother. However, despite bringing this matter to the attention of the deputy commissioner (DC), superintendent of police (SP), and the district in-charge minister, justice remains elusive. Instead, the police threatened the minor, dismissing her claims to be false, alleged the girl's mother. Meanwhile, the police

claimed that the girl changed her statements frequently. "The girl filed a complaint on November 20 last year regarding assault by the accused. We filed a case under Section 326 (voluntarily causing grievous hurt by dangerous weapons) of the Indian Penal Code. However, she later changed her statement and filed another complaint of sexual assault. During the investigation, we found the complaint to be false."

HC adjourns to Feb 15 hearing on plea against order allowing puja in Gyanvapi mosque cellar

Justice Rohit Ranjan Agrawal passed the order on the appeal filed by the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid committee, which looks after the affairs of the mosque adjacent to the Kashi Vishwanath temple. After hearing the counsels for the Muslim side -- Punit Gupta and SFA Naqvi -- at length, Justice Agrawal fixed February 15 as the date for further hearing in the matter on Naqvi's request. Appearing on behalf of the mosque committee, SFA Naqvi submitted before the court that what right the plaintiff (Vyas) has in the disputed property is not decided yet and therefore without ascertaining the right of the plaintiff, the order to permit puja in the cellar is illegal. The Muslim side also filed certified copies of court orders which were not filed earlier, which were taken on record.

Capitalise on PM Modi's popularity to increase votes: Shah in Karnataka

Mysuru

The Karnataka unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party must capitalise on Prime Minister Narendra Modi's popularity and translate it into increased vote share, Union home minister Amit Shah said in a strategy meeting in Mysuru on Sunday ahead of the 2024 parliamentary elections. There is a favourable political environment for the BJP across the country, Shah said at the meeting attended by BJP core committee leaders and cluster leaders of Mysuru-Kodagu, Mandya, Hassan and Chamarajanagar Lok Sabha seats. Shah also issued a stern warning to members against making any loose statements regarding the alliance between the BJP and the Janata Dal (Secular), said a party leader who declining being named. It was important to maintain unity and refrain from airing opinions, Shah is



understood to have said, aimed at curbing discord within the party ranks. He underscored the significance of a cohesive approach towards alliance matters. During the meeting, Shah presented a comprehensive plan ahead of Lok Sabha polls, said state party chief BY Vijayendra. State leaders have assured Shah that the allies will fight the elections unitedly in all 28 constituencies and make efforts to win. "There has been no discussion on the seat sharing. It will take place in Delhi between the senior leaders of both parties. But it has

been made clear that whoever is the candidate, all efforts should be made to ensure their victory," said Vijayendra. "... He said that in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls the situation is favourable for the NDA to win all 28 seats in Karnataka. He gave suggestions regarding our plan of action in converting Narendra Modi's popularity into votes," Vijayendra said. Shah pointed to 45 assembly seats across five districts and asked MLAs to intensify public outreach efforts starting from Monday, another leader said, seeking anonymity.

Haldwani riots: 25 more arrests take total to 30; Jamiat delegation visits area

Haldwani

Twenty-five more people have arrested in connection with the February 8 riots after the demolition of an "illegal" madrasa in Haldwani in Uttarakhand, police said on Sunday, as a delegation of two Muslim bodies visited the area and alleged that protesters are treated differently on the basis of religion. Nainital Senior Superintendent of Police Prahlad Meena said the fresh arrests took the total number of people arrested so far to 30, and added that key accused Abdul Malik would be nabbed On Thursday,



violence broke out over the demolition of an illegally built madrasa in the Banbhoolpura area, with locals hurling stones and petrol bombs at municipal workers and police, forcing many police personnel to seek refuge at a police station, which the mob then set on fire. In the violence, six rioters were

killed and more than a hundred, including police personnel and mediapersons, were injured, according to the police.

Curfew remained in force in Banbhoolpura but was lifted from the outer areas of the town. Shops were still shut and roads deserted in Banbhoolpura.

Gujarat CM stays overnight at village, urges youth to stay away from addiction

With the strong leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, everyone should work to strengthen the party so that the slogan of a 'developed Gujarat with a developed India' can be realised, Patel said. He had dinner with the family members of local

leader Dineshbhai Bhatola, said a government release. Through the initiative, the BJP aims to strengthen all the booths in Gujarat ahead of the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. A total 56,700 party workers, including ministers and MLAs, were

assigned different booths across the state under the 'Gaon Chalo Abhiyan. On morning, CM Patel met farmers, youth, women, and leaders of different communities and discussed various government schemes, said the release.

Yamuna Expressway mishap: Bihar-Delhi bus carrying 40 collides with car in Mathura; 5 dead

Five people were killed after a passenger bus with 40 people onboard and a car collided in Mathura on the Yamuna Expressway on Monday morning, senior superintendent of police Mathura Shailesh Dubey said. According to the police, While all the passengers in the bus jumped out safely, all persons traveling in the car were burnt alive inside the car. Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath condoled the deaths in the incident and directed officials in Mathura to make suitable arrangements for the kin of the victims. The incident took place at Mile Stone 110 near Village Kishanpur, under the Mahavan police station area in Mathura. According to Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP), Shailesh Pandey, "Five people have died in the road accident that took place on the Yamuna Expressway. The incident took place when a bus enroute to Noida from Agra hit a divider, lost control and collided with a car." After the collision, both vehicles caught fire, the official said. While the passengers on the bus managed to escape, those in the car were charred, the police official said. According to eyewitnesses, the fire brigade did not arrive at the scene of the incident, even after half an hour. Fire officials later reached the spot and efforts are on to douse the blaze. Police are investigating the matter and further details are awaited. Last month, at least 40 people sustained injuries after two buses collided with each other on the Yamuna Expressway.

BJP seeks CBI probe into 40% commission charges

Bengaluru:

The Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has demanded an investigation by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) into allegations made by the president of Karnataka State Contractors Association, D Kempanna, regarding a 40% commission charge.

The leader of the opposition in the Karnataka assembly R Ashok said, considering the gravity of Kempanna's allegations, Siddaramaiah doesn't have the moral authority to remain in office and should resign.



"What are they (Congress) going to do now... ₹50 crore each was seized when the I-T department had conducted raids on the residences of two Congress leaders...What mask will the CM wear now? He has no moral authority

to remain in the office for a moment longer," he said while addressing the press on Sunday. Ashok reminded that the Congress party vehemently protested similar allegations during the tenure of the BJP government. He asked whether Siddaramaiah would paste ATM Siddaramaiah posters now as he had done with former chief minister Basavaraj Bommai by pasting PayCM posters. He said the developers and builders are claiming that a commission of ₹75/sq feet is

being collected by them and challenged Siddaramaiah to take action against corrupt practices within his administration. He suggested that failure to do so would warrant public condemnation akin to what the BJP faced in the past. The opposition leader highlighted that Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has released a White Paper assessing both the 10-year tenure of the Modi government and the 10-year governance of the Congress-led United Provinces Alliance (UPA) regime.

India may get cluster of servers mirroring internet root servers

If the efforts are successful, this will be the first time India will get a cluster mirroring all 13 root servers that underpin the internet. India could potentially get a cluster of servers that mirrors the thirteen root servers in the world after "major negotiations" with ICANN, the organisation that carries out key functions of the internet, the director general of Indian Computer Emergency Response Team (CERT-In) informed the Parliamentary Standing Committee on External



Affairs in March 2023. If the efforts are successful, this will be the first time India will get a cluster mirroring all 13 root servers that underpin the internet. The submission was mentioned in a report on countering global terrorism at regional and international levels

tabled in the Lok Sabha on February 5 by the committee, which had asked about the outcome of negotiations with ICANN for having internet root servers in India. According to it, Sanjay Bahl, the director general of CERT-In, had replied: "We had a major negotiation on

the root server. They have agreed for putting up a cluster. We are negotiating with them... Probably, we will get a cluster of 18 servers which will be now based somewhere in India. That is a good beginning."

Assigned Names and Numbers, is a US-based non-profit that plays a crucial role in the management and coordination of the global internet's domain name system (DNS) and the allocation of IP addresses. An ICANN executive confirmed the discussions.

Tamil Nadu governor skips customary address of DMK govt over factual grounds

Chennai

The House was convened on February 12 by the Tamil Nadu government for the customary Governor RN Ravi's address to the Assembly.

In yet another instance of his confrontation with the DMK dispensation in Tamil Nadu, Governor RN Ravi on Monday concluded his customary address to the House within a few minutes, asserting he disagreed with the government over the content of the address and played the regime for 'not respecting' the national anthem.

In his inaugural address for the year to the House, Ravi said his repeated requests and advice (to the state government) to show due respect to the national anthem and play it at the



beginning and the end of the address has been ignored. The House was convened on February 12 by the government for the customary Governor's Address to the Assembly. The Governor said the address has numerous messages with which 'I convincingly disagree, on factual and moral grounds.' Hence, Ravi said 'lending his voice' to such aspects that he disagreed with the government, would

constitute 'Constitutional travesty.'

"Hence with respect to the House, I conclude my address. Wish this House a productive and healthy discussion for the people's good." Ravi, after offering his greetings in Tamil to Speaker M Appavu, Chief Minister M K Stalin and Legislators ended his speech within a few minutes after conveying his disagreement with the government.

Ayodhya to get mega tourism push, 5-star hotel near Ram temple

Ayodhya

Ayodhya has been witnessing a massive influx of devotees, who are arriving at the city daily to offer prayers at the Ram temple. Online travel company EaseMyTrip has announced a five-star luxury hotel project in the temple town of Ayodhya, eyeing a 10x growth in wake of the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony of the Ram temple. Rikant Pitti, the co-founder of EaseMyTrip said that the hotel will be situated less than a kilometre from the Ram Lalla temple. "This venture represents a significant investment of up to 100 crore through Jeewani Hospitality Private Limited, leading this visionary project," he was quoted by ANI as saying. EaseMyTrip aims to 'redefine' the hospitality experience for pilgrims and tourists in Ayodhya, the holy town situated on the banks of



Saryu river in Uttar Pradesh. "This project, a collaborative effort between EaseMyTrip's extensive know-how in travel and Jeewani Hospitality's hospitality excellence, aims to elevate the standard of luxury lodging in Ayodhya. It signifies EaseMyTrip's strategic expansion and its commitment to enhancing India's tourism sector," Pitti added. The company is dedicated to delivering 'unparalleled travel experiences' and improving the country's tourism

infrastructure, Pitti added. "Our upcoming 5-star hotel in Ayodhya is a reflection of our commitment to offering a blend of opulence, comfort, and cultural engagement to those visiting this historical city," the co-founder added. 'Ayodhya to play key role in making UP a trillion dollar economy': UP govt On January 22, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had presided over the 'pran pratishtha' or the consecration ceremony of the Ram Mandir. Ayodhya has been

witnessing a massive influx of devotees from various parts of India and the world. Chief minister Yogi Adityanath has set a target of making UP a trillion-dollar economy in the next five years. According to a government spokesperson, the state government has projected tax collections at 25,000 crore in the upcoming financial year. The state government in its latest budget announced ₹100 crore for the all-round development of Ayodhya.

Return 50 pc of tax amount paid by Maharashtra: Uddhav to Centre

Mumbai

Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray has said the Centre should return 50 per cent of the funds collected from Maharashtra as taxes for the development of the state. Speaking at a local event in Mumbai on Sunday, the former Maharashtra chief minister also referred to the recent protest rallies held in New Delhi by southern states like Karnataka and Kerala over similar demands. Thackeray claimed that when Maharashtra sends Re 1 to the Centre as tax, it gets back only seven paise (Re 1= 100 paise). "What happens to the remaining amount? What kind of revadis (freebies) you distribute?" he asked. "I am stating that when Maharashtra gives you Re 1, give us half of it back to develop the state. You are looting our state. When we (opposition INDIA bloc) come to power, I will assert on changing the current tax-sharing formula to increase Maharashtra's share," Thackeray said.

Editorial

Navigating India's choppy geopolitical waters

India appears beset on all sides by disruptive forces. China remains a toxic element. Pakistan, fresh off a turbulent election, is a loose cannon. Small fry like the Maldives are irritants. Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka blow hot and cold. Beyond the neighbourhood, strategic partners like the United States use the deep state, packed with neo-cons, to needle India when New Delhi's autonomous foreign policy rankles beyond a point. Canada hasn't recovered its poise from India evicting 41 Canadian diplomats from the country. First World nations aren't used to such peremptory treatment from the Third World. The second anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine falls on February 24, 2024. Western sanctions haven't worked on Moscow. The rouble has recovered. Defying expectations, Russia's GDP grew 3.6 per cent in 2023. India continues to buy Russian crude, refine it, and sell it back to Europe as diesel. India's economy meanwhile powers on at above 7 per cent a year while Europe's largest economy, Germany, slips into recession. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) projects average global growth in 2024-25 at just over 2 per cent. It projects India's GDP growth at more than thrice the global average. With China caught in a downward economic spiral, President Xi Jinping recently met with the country's top finance authorities to stem China's fall into Japan-like stagflation. Beijing last week sacked Yi Huiman as chairman of China Securities Regulatory Commission (CSRC). He has been replaced by Wu Qing, a former head of the Shanghai Stock Exchange. The US economy, in contrast, is growing faster than expected at 2.5 per cent a year. Inflation has dipped to 2 per cent. The Federal Reserve is likely to start lowering interest rates from May 2024. Three rate cuts of 0.5 per cent each — from the current level of 5.25 per cent down to 3.75 per cent — are likely in calendar 2024. If that happens, India's already bullish stock market will be on steroids. Foreign funds have few places to invest profitably once the Fed's rate falls to 3.75 per cent. China remains an outcast. In a presidential election year, US politicians, Republicans and Democrats, will vie with one another to be tough with China.

Cutting China Off

Technology sanctions on Beijing are likely to widen. The US-led ban on selling advanced chips to Beijing has already set China's semiconductor industry back by half-a-decade. China has meanwhile shot itself in the foot. It passed draconian criminal laws on foreign companies sharing their data with headquarters outside China. This has caused an exodus of foreign executives from China fearing prosecution and jail terms if they transmit their own corporate data back to Washington or London. With JP Morgan including India in its widely tracked Government Bond Index-Emerging Markets (GBI-EM) from June 2024, over \$20 billion is expected to flow into Indian securities, boosting overall sentiment and integrating Indian financial markets into the global ecosystem. India's stock market capitalisation of \$4.3 trillion overtook Hong Kong's stock market cap last month. It is now the world's fourth largest stock market by capitalisation after the US (\$50.86 trillion), China (\$8.44 trillion) and Japan (\$6.36 trillion). With CIA agents thick on the ground in India, Washington knows exactly what this data means. For America's deep state, dealing with one Asian power — China — is bad enough. Dealing with another rising Asian power — India — which is supposed to be America's strategic partner requires more nuanced policy-making.

No proof

For a country that assassinates targets on foreign soil at will, it takes exceptional hubris for the US to move a New York court over an unproved allegation of a murder-for-hire plot by Indian businessman Nikhil Gupta.



India's temple diplomacy in the UAE

India's temple diplomacy has seen the most astounding diplomatic success overseas under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. There are several examples of his diplomatic skill, but the building of the biggest temple in the UAE is the most outstanding among them. On behalf of the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Hindu temple, Swami Ishwarcharandas, and Swami Brahmviharidas have invited PM Modi to inaugurate the massive Hindu temple in Abu Dhabi on Basant Panchami on 14 February 2024. The location where the temple stands is exactly called the Abu Mureikha area. The preparation for this temple building and, most importantly, the land allocation began in 2015. The area for its construction constitutes around 5.4 hectares, combining features such as a large amphitheater, a gallery, a library, a food court, a majlis, a garden, a children's play area, and two community halls with an accommodation capacity of nearly 5,000 people. The temple strictly follows the sacred Hindu methods and traditions of temple building. Indian artisans have gone to Abu Dhabi in thousands to make statues and carvings following the Hindu sculptural and architectural traditions. The stonework is most intricate to add an authentic aesthetic taste and visual exceptionalism. This explains the depth of the India-UAE bilateral relationship and the strength of the Indian diaspora in the UAE. Abu Dhabi is the fourth-largest investor in India and the third-largest trading partner. The 3.5 million Indian diaspora in the UAE is arguably the largest by the standard of an individual country. India's soft power diplomacy has been instrumental in reinvigorating the sense of the Indian diaspora's great pride in Indian heritage, culture, and civilisation and promoting the global resurgence of 'Bharatiya-Indianness' as a dharmic process that believes in universal well-being, mutual respect, and peace.



The 'Ahlani Modi' meaning 'Hello Modi' is scheduled for 13 February at the Sheikh Zayed Sports City Stadium in Abu Dhabi, just a day before the temple's inauguration. It also explains the popularity of the Indian Prime Minister among the Indian diaspora. The zeal and enthusiasm of the diasporic community in

the inauguration of the BAPS Hindu Temple in Abu Dhabi amplified this dharmic and civilisational wave. The spirit of enthusiasm from both sides is reflected through the recent signing of four MoUs in the areas of healthcare, renewable energies, food park, aerospace, port, and other technologies between the Ministry of Investment of Dubai and the Government of India, and between the Government of Gujarat and (Dubai Port) DP World. Apart from the recent ones, the India-UAE bilateralism in export-import, port infrastructure, real estate, agriculture, space technology, defense equipment, herbal medicine, etc., has made remarkable achievements in various areas of engagement. The India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC) to connect Europe involving India, UAE, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel, and Greece is a connectivity project in this direction. It embodies the

potential to revolutionise the import-export architecture between Asia and Europe. It will also decouple singular reliance on the Suez Canal to transport the cargo to the Mediterranean Sea to connect with Europe. In the event of an IMEC corridor, the stress and congestion emanating from the traffic in the Suez Canal linking the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden will be significantly eased. These developments keep India at the center of things, displaying India's diplomatic depth and soft power engagement in the region. No doubt, India is poised to be the Vishwaguru (World teacher), profoundly expanding the transnational knowledge space crisscrossing the territorial spatiality while reinforcing a strong sense of confidence among the Indian diaspora. BAPS Hindu Mandir in Abu Dhabi is a remarkable example of the diasporic rootedness in India's culture and its dedication to developing centers of Sanatan culture and spirituality overseas. Apart from BAPS Hindu Mandir, the UAE also has several Hindu and Buddhist temples and Gurudwara that include Shiva Temple (Dubai), Shree Krishna Haveli (Dubai), Shrinath Temple (Dubai), Shirdi Sai Baba Mandir (Dubai), Geeta Shangha (Sharjah), SMWS Mandir (Dubai), Gurdwara Mata Sahib Kaur ji (Abu Dhabi), Guru Nanak Darbar Gurudwara (Dubai), Mahamevnawa Buddhist Temple (Dubai), Lankaramaya

Buddhist Temple (Dubai), etc. This shows the strength of India-UAE bilateralism. It does not remain confined to commerce alone. It goes to the sphere of culture. On the scheduled inauguration of the BAPS Hindu temple, the Ambassador of the UAE to India, Abdulnasser Alshaali said, "It's going to be a phenomenal monumental day, a special occasion to celebrate tolerance and acceptance, and to further strengthen this relationship." The persistence of confidence and collaborative work has tirelessly contributed to building India's strong presence in West Asia through the UAE and other regional partners, which gives good dividends. The rise of India as a global player, its vibrant diaspora, civilisational value, and ethical gravity have cumulatively worked in its favor to emerge as a bankable partner. Its rich culture, inclusive outlook, youth energy and talent, significant strides in science and technology, art and culture, accommodative and enterprising people, and, more importantly, its ethical and spiritual value and unparalleled antiquity have attracted attention everywhere. The inclusivity that the Sanatana Dharma has shown to the world has generated significant interest across the globe. Bharat is the future and a global guide through virtue and spirituality. Its Yoga and Ayurveda have taught the world the incredible therapeutic dimensions they embody.

How another weak coalition in Islamabad will open a flood-gate of issues for India

There is complete confusion among the ranks of analysts, both inside and outside Pakistan. Much-debated television debates and so-called expert commentators predicted that Imran Khan was destined to get a whopping vote and that the rest of the parties were history. As always, reality proved them wrong. What Pakistan is looking ahead to is yet another coalition, which means instability and, surprise, more space for army manoeuvring. Everyone now knows the extent of pre-poll match fixing. Not just Imran Khan and an entire cohort of his party leaders jailed, but the sheer overkill in even charging his wife

Bushra Bibi to seven years in jail, along with a Rs 0.5 million fine each, for "contracting marriage during the 'iddat' (period of waiting)" of the former first lady. That was the third conviction of the former Prime Minister in a week, and the 'iddat' case was widely seen as an attempt at character assassination when really nothing else was available. That's the key to Khan's success. No matter how much the army tries, it has not been able to prove personal corruption, other than a case on taking gifts meant for the prime ministerial office at a fraction of their price. That's peanuts in South Asian politics. **The rigging thereafter**

Post-poll fixing is not that easy, though there were no shortage of attempts. The most widely discussed case is that of Nawaz Sharif himself, whose win at the Lahore seat (NA-130) and the Mansehra seat are both highly suspicious. In the first, the numbers don't match on Form 47, which the Election Commission of Pakistan issues, and in the latter, a fact check seems to conclude that Nawaz bagged 80,382 votes to PTI's Gushtap Khan, who secured 105,249 votes and won the seat. There's more, which this author noticed while watching emerging numbers. In Multan, where PTI leader Shah Mehmood Qureshi's family.

White paper on the Indian economy: From fragility to stability

The "White Paper on the Indian Economy", tabled by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman in the Lok Sabha on February 8, 2024, outlines the inheritance of loss and the economic misadventures faced by India due to the policies of the previous UPA government. According to the document, the UPA's tenure from 2004 to 2014 was characterised by economic mismanagement, financial indiscipline, and widespread corruption, which significantly hindered India's growth prospects. The paper claims that these issues relegated India to one of the "fragile five" economies globally, creating hurdles that impeded economic activity and growth. Prime Minister Narendra Modi delivered a stark critique of the decade preceding 2014, characterising it as a period that gravely endangered India's economic stability. He also alluded to the White Paper on India's economic conditions, which has since ignited widespread discussions. PM's remarks were not just reflections but a scathing indictment of the previous administration's governance, which, according to him, was marked by egregious financial mismanagement, riddled with scams, and paralysed by indecisive policy-making. This eroded

investor confidence but also brought the nation perilously close to a precipice of distrust and despair. There are four areas in which the current administration has worked to deal with the fiscal misadventures between 2004-14. First one of this is the practice of "phone banking" was identified as a contributing factor to the Non-Performing Assets (NPA) crisis in India during the NPA era. This term refers to the alleged influence exerted by politicians over banking decisions, where it is claimed that phone calls from influential figures could sway lending decisions of public sector banks. This led to the approval of loans for certain businesses without proper due diligence, contributing to the accumulation of NPAs within the banking system.

Under the NDA government led by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee, the Gross NPA ratio in public sector banks was reduced from 16.0% to 7.8%, but during the UPA era, it escalated to 12.3% by 2013, partly due to political meddling in bank lending decisions. The crisis deepened by 2014 with the banking sector grappling with a substantial increase in bad loans, much of which were not recognized in official accounts. A Credit Suisse report from

March 2014 highlighted that top companies with poor interest coverage ratios contributed significantly to the unrecognised NPAs, suggesting a systemic underestimation of the banking sector's distress during this period. This period saw a massive escalation in gross advances by public sector banks from Rs 6.6 lakh crore in 2004 to R 39.0 lakh crore by 2012, with a large portion of loans turning problematic, particularly those originated between 2006 and 2008, as noted by a former RBI Governor in a 2018 parliamentary panel response. The Modi government addressed the NPA crisis through a strategic approach termed the '4R' strategy, encompassing recognition, resolution, recapitalization, and reforms. This strategy led to a significant reduction in bad loans, with public sector banks (PSBs) witnessing a decline of Rs 89,189 crore in their gross non-performing assets (GNPAs) during the financial year 2018-19. The efforts were part of a comprehensive plan to clean up the banking system, which included the implementation of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code (IBC) and the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest (SARFAESI) Act, among other measures.

Russia-Ukraine war: How Zelenskyy's sacking of his General shows brewing conflict in the Kyiv regime

The Ukrainian forces under General Zaluzhnyi had contained the initial Russian onslaught. Image courtesy: Reuters On 8 February, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy announced that he was removing General Valerii Zaluzhnyi from command of the military and promoting General Oleksandr Syrskiy, the Commander of the Ukrainian Ground Forces, to replace him. "I thanked him for two years of defence of Ukraine," President Zelenskyy said on social media, adding: "We also discussed who could be in the renewed

leadership of the Armed Forces of Ukraine." General Zaluzhnyi had gained enormous credit for spearheading the successful effort by Ukraine's forces to halt and then reverse Russia's initial attack launched on 24 February 2022. He was appointed Commander-in-Chief in July 2021, just half a year before Russia launched its all-out invasion. The Armed Forces of Ukraine, under his leadership, had succeeded in pushing back initial Russian advances near the capital, Kyiv, and then led successful counteroffensives later in 2022,

freeing parts of eastern and southern Ukraine. Both General Zaluzhnyi and General Syrskiy played key roles in those campaigns. The dismissal ended weeks of speculation about the fate of General Valery Zaluzhnyi, whose relationship with President Zelenskyy had deteriorated, and there were strong rumours regarding his exit.

Brewing friction

The Ukrainian forces under General Zaluzhnyi had contained the initial Russian onslaught. That was a great achievement, because almost

everybody expected the Russian forces to steamroll their way across the plains of Ukraine. But lately, his record has been tarnished by the failure of last year's counteroffensive, which ran into well-prepared Russian defences. Last year's highly anticipated Ukrainian counteroffensive, using soldiers trained by NATO allies and Western weapons and equipment, reclaimed little territory, falling far short of expectations. General Zaluzhnyi and his American counterparts disagreed sharply over tactics.

Murthy's regret: Infosys founder says did not reward employees better



Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy expresses regret over not being able to reward early employees as much as the cofounders. Murthy acknowledges the contribution of smart early adopters and wishes he had given them more stock. Narayana Murthy's regret: Infosys founder says did not reward employees better "Their contribution was more or as much as mine" Infosys founder NR Narayana Murthy has expressed regret over not being able to reward many of Infosys' early employees as much as the cofounders. Narayana Murthy states that there were several extremely smart early adopters of Infosys who he could not award the kind of stock he gave to the other co-founders. "Their contribution was more or as much as mine. I only wish I had thought about it very carefully and those extraordinary people also benefited," he was quoted as saying. He further emphasized that during his time at Infosys, everyone's views were considered

before making any decisions. However, he acknowledged that democracy has its limitations. "Infosys would have done much better than what it did because we had created an enlightened democracy," he said when asked about regrets in life. Murthy made these remarks at an event celebrating his and his wife Sudha Murthy's anniversary, as well as book launch. Sudha Murthy, the founder-chairperson of Infosys Foundation, shared her experience as the first woman engineer at Tata Motors (formerly Telco) and expressed her joy at seeing the increasing number of women working there. Narayana Murthy also expressed his regret for not allowing Sudha Murthy to formally join Infosys, a sentiment he had publicly expressed

earlier. Sudha Murthy, who recently received the Padma Bhushan award, revealed that she initially felt disappointed about not joining Infosys but later found purpose in starting Infosys Foundation to engage in social work, following the advice of her daughter Akshata Murthy. Narayana Murthy reminisced about the challenges they faced while establishing Infosys, with Sudha Murthy managing the household responsibilities while he handled the company's operations - from obtaining loans and office space to acquiring telephone and computer licenses, they encountered the cumbersome procedures entangled in bureaucratic red tape. "There was a joke in India in those days that technology changes every three months.

SpiceJet to lay off 1,400 employees in cost-cutting measure

Cash-strapped budget airline SpiceJet is planning to lay off 1,400 employees, which accounts for about 15% of its workforce. This move is aimed at reducing costs and attracting investors. Despite delays in salary payments and funding concerns, SpiceJet is in the process of securing a fund infusion of Rs 2,200 crore. SpiceJet to lay off 1,400 employees in cost-cutting measure Employees have already started receiving termination calls, as the airline has been delaying salary payments for several months. Cash-strapped budget airline SpiceJet is plan-

ning to lay off 1,400 employees, which accounts for about 15% of its workforce. This move is aimed at reducing costs and attracting investors. Currently, SpiceJet has a total of 9,000 employees and operates around 30 planes, out of which eight are leased from foreign carriers, along with their respective crew and pilots. According to report, SpiceJet has officially confirmed the job losses, stating that it is necessary to align company wide costs with operational requirements. The carrier's salary bill, amounting to Rs 60 crore, has led to the

need for staff cuts. Employees have already started receiving termination calls, as the airline has been delaying salary payments for several months, with some employees still awaiting their January pay. Although SpiceJet is in the process of securing a fund infusion of Rs 2,200 crore, there have been reports of certain investors becoming hesitant. However, the airline spokesperson has clarified that there are no funding delays and that they are progressing well with the fund infusion. The spokesperson also mentioned that additional announcements

Fragile-five days long gone as funds pile into India, Indonesia

India's bonds have rallied over the past four months on the prospect of global index inclusion. India and Indonesia were once famously lumped together as part of Morgan Stanley's "Fragile Five." A decade later they are investor favorites. The outlook for the bonds and curren-

cies of the two Asian behemoths has brightened following successful programs of reforms and fiscal restraint, according to fund managers including Fidelity International, Robeco Group and abrdn. Even elections in the two countries this year are unlikely to spook

investors. The original Fragile Five — which also included Turkey, South Africa and Brazil — referred to nations perceived to be most at risk due to their heavy reliance on foreign investment to drive growth. Improving finances — as reflected in credit-default swaps.

Indonesia scraps plan to buy Mirage fighter jets from Qatar

JAKARTA: Indonesia has ditched a controversial plan to buy 733 million euros (\$790 million) worth of Mirage 2000-5 fighter jets previously used by Qatar, the defence ministry spokesperson said late on Saturday. "There is no purchase of Mirage jets. Even though it was planned, it has been cancelled ... meaning there is no active contract," spokesperson Dahnil Anzar Simanjuntak said in a statement, but did not elaborate. Last month, the ministry said the deal to



purchase the 12 fighter jets was delayed due to fiscal constraints and that the military would order a retrofit for its existing Sukhoi and F-16 aircraft instead. The planned purchase garnered controversy when it was

announced last year, as lawmakers said the secondhand jets were old. Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, the frontrunner to win Indonesia's presidential election on Feb. 14, has been criticised about the deal

by rival candidates during campaigning. But he defended the purchase during one of the presidential debates, saying the secondhand jets were still good for another 15 years and were needed while the country waits for its new jets to arrive. Prabowo has overseen the military's efforts to modernise its ageing fleet, which include purchases of Rafale fighter jets, drones from Turkish Aerospace and fighter jets and transport helicopters from U.S. companies Boeing and Lockheed Martin.

IMF's Georgieva says Mideast growth to slow in 2024 on oil cuts, Gaza

DUBAI

The International Monetary Fund said on Sunday Middle East economies were lagging below growth projections due to oil production cuts and the Israel-Gaza conflict, even as the global economic outlook remained resilient. Despite uncertainties, "the global economy has been surprisingly resilient," IMF managing director Kristalina Georgieva told the Arab Fiscal Forum in Dubai,

while warning of a potential wider impact on regional economies of continued conflict in Gaza. In a regional economic report last month, the IMF revised its GDP growth forecast for the Middle East and North Africa down to 2.9% this year, lagging below October projections, due in part to short term oil production cuts and the conflict in Gaza. The IMF last month edged its forecast for global economic growth higher,

upgrading the outlook for both the United States and China and citing faster-than-expected easing of inflation. Georgieva said economies neighbouring Israel and the Palestinian territories saw the conflict weighing on tourism revenues, while Red Sea attacks weighed on freight costs globally. Those factors compounded "the challenges of economies that are still recovering from previous shocks,"

she told the forum on the sidelines of the World Governments Summit in Dubai. The Iran-aligned Houthis in Yemen have been targeting commercial vessels with drones and missiles in the Red Sea since mid-November, and say their attacks are in solidarity with Palestinians as Israel strikes Hamas militants in Gaza. But the U.S. and its allies characterize them as indiscriminate and a menace to global trade.

Decoding China: Deflation scare in the year of the dragon

This Lunar New Year, also known as Spring Festival or Chinese New Year, is an annual celebration of the first lunar cycle of the new year. It's a weeklong national holiday in China, and this year it starts on February 10. This is the Year of the Dragon, according to the Chinese zodiac, and it's a symbol of "luck, wisdom and success." But the optimism these words inspire has been overshadowed by the current state of the Chinese economy, with many experts projecting a downturn. In the run-up to the holiday, media reports highlighted a drop in demand for pork — a crucial ingredient in traditional dishes made around the festive times — despite falling prices. Although a rebound in prices soon followed due to consumers' stockpiling of pork amid harsh weather, economists believe the uptick is not sustainable. Stock market slump a



bad omen? Meanwhile, officials have imposed a series of measures to steady the continuing slump in the country's stock market. Many investors and traders see this as a bad omen. In China, what happens on the state-controlled stock exchanges is always seen as a harbinger of economic growth and development. The Shanghai SSE Composite Index has slumped by almost 13% in the past year. "If the year doesn't get off to a good start and consumers don't spend their money, China will remain in deflation for a long time," Wang Guo-Chen,

an economist focusing on China at Chung-Hua Institution for Economic Research, told DW. While deflation suggests goods were cheaper, it poses a threat to the broader economy as consumers tend to postpone purchases, hoping for further reductions. A lack of demand, in turn, can force companies to cut production, freeze hiring or lay off workers, while potentially also having to discount existing stocks — dampening profitability even as costs remain the same. Economists consider deflation even worse than its opposite, inflation, when prices rise. The Lunar New Year is usually the busiest time of year in China. Traditionally, this is a time for family gatherings, with money spent on purchasing new household items, preparations for feasts and buying gifts for relatives and friends.

Rising credit card debt signals trouble for lower and middle-income Americans

NEW DELHI: As the US economy shows signs of overall health, a concerning trend emerges among lower and middle-income Americans, who, after enduring over two years of inflation, find themselves depleting their savings and accruing significant credit card debt. This financial strain is particularly pronounced among renters within these income groups, who are increasingly struggling to keep up with their debts, a situation exacerbated by the recent resumption of student loan payments. Why it matters While the US economy is broadly healthy, pockets of Americans have run through their savings and run up their credit card balances after battling inflation for more than two years. Experts worry that



members of these groups -- mostly lower- and middle-income Americans, who tend to be renters -- are falling behind on their debts and could face further deterioration of their financial health in the year ahead, particularly those who have recently resumed paying off student loans. The big picture Americans held more than \$1.05 trillion on

their credit cards in the third quarter of 2023, a record, and a figure certain to grow once the fourth-quarter data is released by Federal Deposit Insurance Corp next month. A recent report from the credit rating company Moody's showed that credit card delinquency rates and charge-off rates, or the percent of loans that a bank believes will

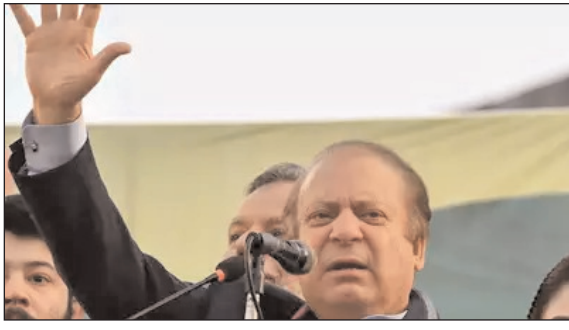
never be repaid, are now well above their 2019 levels and are expected to keep climbing. These worrisome metrics coincide with the average interest rate on a bank credit card of roughly 21.5%, the highest it's been since the Federal Reserve started tracking the data in 1994. By the numbers Most analyses of Americans' financial health tend to tell a tale of two consumers. On one side are the roughly two-thirds of Americans who own their homes and those who've invested in the stock market and done substantially well. They generally had the savings cushion necessary to weather high inflation. Delinquency rates on single-family homes remain at near historic lows and home prices have continued to climb.

S&P 500 ends above 5,000 points for first time

On Friday, the S&P 500 achieved a historic milestone by closing above the 5,000 mark for the first time, buoyed by robust earnings and economic indicators that bolstered confidence in the US economy's ability to sidestep a recession. Investor enthusiasm remained particularly high for major tech firms like Alphabet, Google's parent company, and Amazon, propelling the Nasdaq upward as well. Adam Sarhan of 50 Park Investments highlighted the current market dynamics, saying, "This is an environment that emphasizes the importance of following the leaders." He further elaborated, "When you look at the leading stocks in Wall Street, clearly you can see technology continues to lead time and time again." The S&P 500 concluded the day at 5,026.61, marking a 0.6 percent increase and recording its 10th record close of the year.

Ex-Pakistan PM Nawaz Sharif's PML-N floats idea of 'participatory coalition government': Report

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) led by former three-time prime minister Nawaz Sharif has pitched the idea of a "participatory coalition government" to rival parties to end the logjam following the split verdict in the February 8 election, according to media reports on Monday. PML-N has 75 seats in the 266-member National Assembly, the single largest party. Independent members, mostly backed by jailed former prime minister Imran Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party, have secured 101 seats. Former law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar termed this scenario 'Hobson's choice' and said not a single political party had secured a majority in the National Assembly, insisting that elections were "fair". The senior PML-N leader was talking to the media



after a meeting of the party's top brass at Jati Umra in Lahore during which consultations were held regarding the future course of action. The ex-minister said the PML-N had started consultations with its former allies to form a unity government in the Centre. "There's only the possibility of forming the (federal) government with the backing of the PML-N. It will be a participatory coalition government," he said, adding that it was in "the largest interest of the country that all should join hands" to form the federal government, the Dawn newspaper reported.

According to PML-N sources, the initial formula stipulates that if the coalition parties agree to give the post of prime minister to the PML-N, then the post of president and speaker will be given to the Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP). Similarly, the post of deputy speaker can be given to the Muttahida Qaumi Movement-Pakistan (MQM-P) or any of the independent members joining the coalition. Besides, the PML-N may keep the finance ministry, and other ministries will be distributed among allies with mutual consultation.

'We are not Russia's ally' in war against Ukraine,' says Armenian PM Nikol

Armenian PM Pashinyan clarifies Armenia's stance in the war between Russia and Ukraine, emphasizes cooperation without targeting any country, discusses the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict, security alliances, and prospects for peace with Azerbaijan amid recent statements by President Aliyev. Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan said in an interview published on Sunday that his country was not Russia's ally in its war against Ukraine, but stressed its military cooperation projects were not directed against any single country. Pashinyan also said he hoped that Armenia's neighbour and long-standing rival, Azerbaijan, remained committed to the conclusion of a durable peace treaty despite statements by its president about demarcating borders. Armenia and Azerbaijan fought two major wars in the past 30 years over the disputed territory of



Nagorno-Karabakh. The region has long been recognised as part of Azerbaijan and Azeri troops secured full control over it last September. Pashinyan has said in recent months that Armenia could no longer rely on Russia to ensure its defence needs as his country had not secured the help it had needed from Moscow. In his remarks to Britain's Daily Telegraph, Pashinyan said he had said from the outset of Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine that it could not stand alongside Moscow as an ally. "I said, in the Ukraine situation, we are not Russia's ally. And that's the reality," Pashinyan told the daily. "But I want to also tell you

that with the US or France or other partners, our security cooperation is not targeted against our other security sector partner." He said Armenia was approaching the notion of relationships on its security alliances "by utmost transparently speaking with our partners about their shared agendas". And Armenia, he said, had no intention of considering membership of Nato -- as Ukraine has reaffirmed and Russia has denounced as unacceptable. Nato membership "is not a question we have discussed or are discussing". He repeated that Armenia was considering whether to stay in the Russian-led Collective Security Treaty Organisation. On the prospects for a long-term peace deal with Azerbaijan, Pashinyan said "the basic architecture" of an agreement had been reached last year "and at the end of last year, it seemed to us that we were very close."

Centre-right's Alexander Stubb wins close-fought Finnish presidential election

HELSINKI: Alexander Stubb of the centre-right National Coalition Party narrowly won Finland's presidential election on Sunday, defeating liberal Green Party member Pekka Haavisto, who conceded defeat. Stubb is pro-European and a strong supporter of Ukraine who has taken a tough stance towards Russia. He declared himself winner in the run-off vote after securing 51.6% of the votes as 99.7% of ballots had been counted, against Haavisto's 48.4%, justice ministry data showed. Finland new head of state will be responsible for its security and foreign policy, including the recently approved Nato member's stance towards Russia, with which it shares a long border. In televised remarks Stubb called his victory "the greatest honour" of his life. "The feeling is calm, humble but of course at the same time I am extremely happy and grateful that the Finns in such large numbers have voted and that I get to serve as president of the Republic of Finland," he said. Stubb, a former prime minister, had won the first round on Jan. 28 with 27.2% of the vote ahead of Haavisto on 25.8%. He has also led Haavisto in opinion surveys, most recently by 6-8 percentage points. Haavisto congratulated Stubb as "the 13th president of Finland". "I believe Finland now gets a good president for the republic. Alexander Stubb is an experienced, competent person for the job. No more babble," he said. The vote marks a new era in Finland, which for decades has elected presidents to foster diplomacy, in particular with neighbouring Russia, and opted not to join military alliances so it could soothe tensions between Moscow and Nato. But Finns changed their minds after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, in a rapid U-turn that led to the country joining Nato in April last year.

Now under the Western alliance's security umbrella, Stubb will replace Sauli Niinisto, who is retiring after two six-year terms in which he earned the nickname "the Putin Whisperer" for his previous close ties with the Russian leader

US defence secretary hospitalised again with 'emergent bladder issue'

WASHINGTON: US defense secretary Lloyd Austin, who was diagnosed with prostate cancer in December, has been hospitalized once again due to an emergent bladder issue, according to a statement by the Pentagon. Austin was taken to the Walter Reed National Military Medical Center on Sunday afternoon by his security detail. Initially, he was expected to continue with his responsibilities, but later in the day, he transferred his authorities to deputy



secretary of defense Kathleen Hicks. As of Sunday, Austin remained hospitalized, said Pentagon Press Secretary Maj Gen Pat Ryder. The Joint Chiefs of Staff chairman, as well as the White House and

Congress, have been notified about the situation. Austin had all the necessary communication systems with him during his transfer to the hospital to ensure that he could perform his

duties. Austin was supposed to travel to Brussels on Tuesday for a meeting of the Ukraine contact group, which he established in 2022 to coordinate military support for Kyiv after Russia's invasion. He also had plans to attend a regular meeting of NATO defense ministers. It is uncertain whether this hospitalization will affect those plans. In December, Austin was diagnosed with prostate cancer and underwent a procedure called a prostatectomy on December 22.

Shooting at megachurch: Assailant dead, 5-year-old boy who entered with her critical

NEW DELHI: A shooting incident occurred at Joel Osteen's megachurch in Texas, where a woman opened fire during Sunday services. Two off-duty officers intervened, resulting in the woman's death and preventing further harm. The church was evacuated as worshippers fled between services. The woman entered the Houston church with a 5-year-old boy, who was critically injured by gunfire. Another man, aged 57, was also wounded.



The child is in critical condition, while the man's injuries are stable. The off-duty officers swiftly engaged the assailant, minimizing the potential for more casualties. Despite the tragedy, the situation

could have been worse, according to Houston Police Chief Troy Finner. The shooting occurred during a break between services at the megachurch, which sees thousands of worshippers weekly. Pastor Joel

Osteen expressed devastation over the incident, emphasizing resilience in the face of adversity. Witnesses described hearing gunshots just before the scheduled Spanish language service. Attendees sought refuge until authorities declared the area safe. Texas Governor Greg Abbott extended condolences to those affected, acknowledging the sanctity of places of worship amidst the chaos.

Trump-Biden election rematch promises economic pain for China

Donald Trump's China trade war frayed economic ties between the two global superpowers. His second-term plans risk cutting them entirely. The former president is pitching a 60% tariff on all Chinese imports. That would shrink a \$575 billion trade pipeline to practically nothing, Bloomberg Economics analysis shows. And it's not the only escalation Trump has in mind if he converts a narrow poll lead over incumbent Joe Biden into victory in November. For China's economy and its slumping stock market — down more than 40% from its 2021 high — that's bad news. Worse, Trump's rhetoric may add pressure on Biden to take harsher measures in the run-up to election day. The president knows that China is on the ballot, and tough-on-China



a proven vote winner. Biden may not be floating anything as drastic as Trump's tariffs, and his administration has said it doesn't want decoupling. But he has a raft of new restrictions on everything from data flows to electric vehicles to pick from, and doesn't have to wait till Americans go to the polls before rolling them out. Whichever way you cut it, three months after Biden's San Francisco summit with his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping lowered the temperature, US elections mean the heat is

on again. For investors, Trump's latest proposals may trigger flashbacks to his first term — when trade policy announcements tweeted at all hours could whipsaw markets around the world. In Beijing, officials say they have no clear preference on who takes power. While Trump is unpredictable and often aggressive, he also likes to strike deals and could undercut Biden's efforts to work with US allies, according to Chinese officials who asked not to be identified speaking about sensitive topics.

Trump claims credit for Taylor Swift's success, discourages Biden endorsement

NEW DELHI: Taylor Swift's swift journey across the Pacific to attend the Super Bowl culminated in a jubilant victory for her partner Travis Kelce and his team, the Kansas City Chiefs, after an exhilarating overtime win. Having performed in Tokyo evening, Swift took a private plane to witness the NFL's grand finale in Las Vegas, where she experienced a mix of joy and tears as the Chiefs clinched a 25-22 win over the San Francisco 49ers, marking only the second Super Bowl to be decided in overtime. Swift, fresh from securing her unprecedented fourth Album of the Year Grammy earlier in the month, made a fashionable entrance at Allegiant Stadium. She sported a custom Kansas City Chiefs jacket



over her shoulder and a gold necklace featuring Kelce's jersey number, 87. Dressed in a black corset-style blouse and black jeans adorned with crystal-embellished slits down the sides, Swift was accompanied by a host of celebrity friends, her parents Andrea and Scott Swift, her brother Austin, and Kelce's family members Ed and Donna, along with his brother Jason, who is a member of the Philadelphia Eagles. Meanwhile, in the hours leading up to Super Bowl LVIII, Trump took

credit for Swift's prosperity, suggesting that her backing Biden would be a betrayal to "the man who made her so much money." He highlighted his role in the enactment of the Music Modernization Act in 2018, aimed at updating copyright laws, and criticized Biden's lack of contributions to Swift's career. "I signed and was responsible for the Music Modernization Act for Taylor Swift and all other Musical Artists. Joe Biden didn't do anything for Taylor, and

never will," Trump said, implying Swift's endorsement of Biden would be disloyal. He added, "There's no way she could endorse Crooked Joe Biden, the worst and most corrupt President in the History of our Country, and be disloyal to the man who made her so much money. Besides that, I like her boyfriend, Travis, even though he may be a Liberal, and probably can't stand me!" Additionally, Trump mentioned his fondness for Swift's boyfriend, Travis Kelce, a tight end for the Kansas City Chiefs, despite suspecting Kelce's liberal leanings and potential dislike for him. Speculation about Swift's political stance intensified following a New York Times article suggesting Biden's campaign sought.

Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf chairman says firm 'no' to power-sharing

ISLAMABAD: At a time when there is growing discontent among people in Pakistan over delay in election results, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) chairman Barrister Gohar Khan has said a firm no to having power-sharing talks with political parties of Nawaz Sharif and Bilawal Bhutto Zardari, Dawn reported. However, he has said that PTI has decided to merge with another political party as the lack of reserved seats would hinder their chances of forming a government. But, Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) or Pakistan People's Party (PPP) is what they are not looking forward to. While speaking to Dawn, Barrister Gohar Khan revealed on Sunday, "We don't feel comfortable with both of them. There will be no talks with anyone to make a government or to make a government together with them."

How Maxwell recovered from night out fiasco to smash record-equalling T20I hundred

NEW DELHI: Australian swashbuckler Glenn Maxwell said that ending up in the hospital during a late-night party in Adelaide was "less than ideal" in regards to the widely reported incident last month, stating that his family was more impacted than he was by the unexpected turns of events.

Last month, Maxwell was feeling ill and was taken to the hospital in an ambulance while he was out drinking and attending a performance by the band "Six and Out," which featured former Australian fast bowler Brett Lee. It was alleged that during the journey, he passed out. "I think probably it affected my family a little bit more than it affected me. I knew I had that week off. And obviously that incident was less than ideal, and the timing," Maxwell was quoted as saying by the 'Australian Associated Press'. "But I had that week (during which



the incident took place) off, I knew I had that week off away from the game," he said. The 35-year-old, who tormented the West Indies for a stunning 120 not out off 55 balls on Sunday, demonstrated why he is still Australia's most potent batsman in the shorter formats. For him, it was a fifth T20I hundred, a record. "...I came back and got back into my running, my gym program and it felt really good and refreshed once I got back. And it's all been focused on getting myself ready for this (T20) series and what's to come," he said.

He was not included in the last ODI series against the West Indies because Cricket Australia (CA) had opened an investigation into the incident. Subsequently, the big-hitter was advised by head coach Andrew McDonald to "take care of himself" and "hold up his end of the bargain." "He needs to obviously have a look at what he's doing at his end and is that the right thing to be doing at that time?" McDonald had stated. Maxwell said he moved on quickly from the incident in Adelaide. "I just moved on pretty quickly.

3rd Test: Dhruv Jurel likely to replace KS Bharat in Rajkot

MUMBAI: Will 'keeperbat Dhruv Jurel make his Test debut in the third Test against England at Rajkot in place of the struggling KS Bharat? Well, that could very well be the case when action resumes in the series, currently tied at 1-1, from February 15. As per well-placed sources in the BCCI that TOI spoke to, the key decision-makers in Indian cricket may have run out of patience with wicketkeeper Bharat, who hasn't done anything significant in the seven Tests that he has played so far in. "Bharat's batting has been well below-par, while his 'keeping hasn't



been great either. He isn't making use of his chances. Jurel, on the other hand, is talented, has a good attitude and has a bright future. He has done well for Uttar Pradesh, India A and the Rajasthan Royals in the IPL. Don't be surprised if Jurel makes his Test debut at Rajkot," a source . BCCI unveils new squad for remaining 3 tests against England,

Virat Kohli to miss out Bharat, by all accounts, has lost a golden opportunity to make a Test comeback. In two Tests in this series, the Andhra man has made 92 runs in two Tests@23.00. Overall, he has scored just 221 runs in seven Tests@20.09, while not even scoring a fifty. Before this series, Bharat had last played for India in the World Test Championship final (he was out for 5 & 23) against Australia at The Oval in London in June 2023. In 15 First-Class matches, Jurel has scored 790 runs@46.47, with one century and five fifties, with a top score of 249.

Yamal rescues ragged Barcelona against Granada, Atletico Madrid stumble

Xavi Hernandez's side, third, shared the spoils with their relegation-battling opponents, 19th, after a thrilling battle at the Olympic Stadium, but now trail leaders Real Madrid by 10 points. Meanwhile, Atletico Madrid's faint hopes of challenging for La Liga

deflated further with a 1-0 defeat by Sevilla . Barcelona's 16-year-old prodigy, Lamine Yamal, scored twice to salvage a 3-3 draw for the struggling Catalans against Granada in La Liga on Sunday. Xavi Hernandez's team, currently third in the league standings, set-

led for a share of points against their relegation-threatened opponents, who sit in 19th place, following an intense showdown at the Olympic Stadium. However, they now find themselves trailing league leaders Real Madrid by a margin of 10 points.

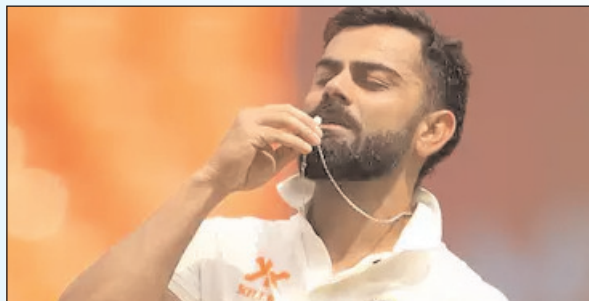
CAPSULES

Victory eludes JFC, BFC in thrilling 1-1 draw

KOLKATA: While Jamshedpur FC and Bengaluru FC played out a thrilling draw at The Furnace on Sunday, the team to take a sigh of relief would be their northeast rivals NorthEast United FC. The Khalid Jamil-coached home side showed a lot of confidence in their fightback after going down to a Suresh Wangjam strike early in the 14th minute at the JRD Tata Sports Complex in Jamshedpur. But even the sublime combination between scorer Javier Siverio and the young Imran Khan for the 70th minute equaliser was not enough to improve their prospects for a play-off berth. The 1-1 draw meant that Jamshedpur had to be content on eighth spot with 14 points, two positions below the cutoff for the playoffs. The Sunil Chhetri-led visitors, meanwhile, remain on seventh spot, a rung beneath NEUFC, whose win over East Bengal on Saturday helped them leapfrog the other two for the lucrative sixth position. Both teams began the game with gusto but Bengaluru were the first to breach the goal through a stunning strike from Suresh in the 14th minute, with an assist from Chhetri. While conceding the goal remunerated the home side, the visitors maintained their narrow advantage till half-time. However, Jamshedpur piled on the pressure on their rivals with Rei Tachikawa came close on multiple occasions - one hitting the bar and another superbly saved by Gurpreet Singh Sandhu. With the onus was on Jamshedpur to respond in the second half, Siverio found the net in the 70th minute - the new recruit's first goal for the ISL club. A well-executed corner by Imran found Siverio, who headed the ball into the bottom right corner, to draw the hosts level and set up a tense final few minutes.

Shame for the series that Virat will be missing, says Broad

After withdrawing from the first two Tests of the ongoing five-match series against England, Virat Kohli will continue to remain unavailable due to personal reasons and will not feature in the last three Tests as well. The Ben Stokes-led side registered a thrilling win in the first Test of the series by 28 runs after overcoming a 190-run first-innings deficit and then went down fighting in the second Test while chasing 399 to win. Asked about his views on



'Bazball', Stuart Broad told IANS: "I love it. The series is one-all (1-1) at the moment, but I think 'Bazball' has proven that it can work in every country. I think Hyderabad's performance is the most impressive performance

of the England team." "We won in Pakistan 3-0, we played well in New Zealand. So 'Bazball' is a mentality that is driving the game forward. That's very entertaining for the crowd too." "Well, I think, it

was a wonderful spectacle watching the Test in Hyderabad and watching West Indies beat Australia at Gabba; that was just spectacular Test match cricket," he added.

Talking about Virat Kohli's absence in the series, he said, "It's a shame for the series that he will be missing but India have won the last Test. Kohli is such a quality player, his passion, his fire, but obviously personal matters always take precedence.

Marathon world record-holder Kelvin, coach die in a car crash

While driving from Kaptagat to Eldoret around 11 pm (2000 GMT) on Sunday, the 24-year-old Kiptum and his Rwandan coach Gervais Hakizimana tragically lost their lives in a car crash. Kiptum made a significant impact on the marathon scene with his outstanding achievement of setting a new world record of 2:00:35 in Chicago in October. With his exceptional performances and ambitious goals, Kiptum was widely recognized as



the frontrunner for marathon gold at the Paris 2024 Olympics. Marathon world record-holder Kelvin Kiptum, coach die in a car crash. Kelvin Kiptum, the world record holder in marathon and a favorite for the Paris Olympics, tragically

died in a car accident in western Kenya, according to police. The 24-year-old was driving from Kaptagat to Eldoret around 11 pm (2000 GMT) on Sunday when the vehicle overturned, resulting in the untimely deaths of both Kiptum and his Rwandan coach,

Gervais Hakizimana. "The car had three occupants, two died on the spot, while one was taken to hospital. The two are Kiptum and his coach," said Peter Mulinge, police commander for Elgeyo Marakwet County in western Kenya where the accident occurred. "It is Kiptum who was driving heading to Eldoret and the vehicle lost control and rolled, killing the two on the spot. A female passenger sustained injuries and has been rushed to hospital," he told.

'Negative padosi': Irfan slams Pakistan fans for mocking India's defeat

Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan hit back at Pakistan fans over their taunting posts following India's Under-19 World Cup heart-break on Sunday in South Africa. Australia emerged triumphant with a fine all-round performance to clinch a 79-run victory. After the final, a number of Pakistan fans took to social media and trolled India for their third successive defeat in the final of an ICC event to Australia. Pakistan lost in the semis of the U19 World Cup. India's former all-rounder Irfan Pathan slammed the taunting social media posts from Pakistan fans following India's defeat on Sunday in the Under-19 World Cup final against Australia, who secured a dominating 79-run victory with an impressive performance. After the match, several Pakistan fans took to



social media to troll India for their third consecutive defeat against Australia in an ICC event final. Posting his response on microblogging platform 'X', Irfan criticized such remarks and stated that mocking and trolling their neighbouring country reflects poorly on Pakistan as a nation. "Despite their U19 team not making it to the final, keyboard warriors from across the border find pleasure in our youngsters' defeat. This negative attitude reflects poorly on their nation's mind-

set. #padosi," Irfan posted from his official 'X' handle. In a span of three months, India twice made the final of an ICC event unbeaten in the group stages, only to come up short in the title clash. Coincidentally, in both title clashes, they ran into their familiar nemesis, Australia, and finished on the losing side. First it was the senior team in the ODI World Cup final and now the U19 boys led by Uday Saharan. Before that, India had also lost to Australia in the World Test

Wristy wonder Gundappa Vishwanath turns 75

BENGALURU: In 1960, an aspiring cricketer, barely 11 years old from sporting-rich South Bengaluru, watched his hero - Australia's Neil Harvey in action against an Indian Universities team in a tour match at the erstwhile Central College ground.

The youngster was in awe of the left-handed great's fearlessness and dominance over the bowlers. It left a deep impact on the child, who then made a resolution to play for India. His dreams were almost extinguished when at 15, he was told he was too young and short to make it to the state schools' team. Disappointed, but unwilling to give up, he continued to pile on the runs and a few years later, scored a sparkling double-century (230) on debut for Mysore state (now Karnataka) against Andhra in Vijayawada. That was only the beginning of his storied journey in Indian cricket. Short in stature, towering in deeds, he was an artiste who showcased bold batting. The silken square cuts were as revered as his on-field grace and fair play. Humble and endearing off-field, the legend goes by the name Gundappa Ranganath Vishwanath. Born on Feb 12, 1949, in Bhadravati, an industrial town in picturesque Shivamogga district, GRV as the genial maestro is known - moved to Bengaluru as a four-year-old.

2nd ODI: Sri Lanka beat Afghanistan by 155 runs to secure 2-0 series win

NEW DELHI: Sri Lanka sealed a commanding 155-run victory over Afghanistan in the second one-day international on Sunday in Kandy, securing an unassailable 2-0 lead in the three-match series. Despite being set a target of 309 to level the series, Afghanistan crumbled and were bowled out for 153 within 34 overs, with leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga shining with four wickets. While Afghanistan appeared well-positioned at 128 for one during their pursuit of the target, the dismissal of Rahmat Shah (63) and Ibrahim Zadran (54) marked a turning point, leading to little resistance from the remaining batsmen. The duo had forged a crucial 97-run partnership for the second wicket, but Asitha Fernando, making his first ODI appearance in 15 months, made a breakthrough by dismissing Ibrahim, caught behind. Leg-spinner Hasaranga followed up with a pivotal over, claiming two wickets as he trapped Rahmat leg before wicket and bowled captain Hashmatullah Shahidi. Hasaranga was backed up by seamers as Dilshan Madushanka claimed two wickets in an over.

To curb selection politics, DDCA sets up own academy

NEW DELHI: In a first in the history of Delhi cricket, the Delhi and District Cricket Association (DDCA) has started its own High Performance Academy (HPA) from Saturday. DDCA has tied up with the Delhi government and obtained a ground in Bharat Nagar in north Delhi for the round-the-year academy. The development has come at a time when Delhi's teams across age groups have been struggling in BCCI tournaments for a couple of seasons. Former India batter Gursharan Singh, former India fast bowler Parvinder Awana and former Delhi wicket-keeper Devendra Sharma have been appointed as coaches. In a bid to formulate a programme on the lines of the National Cricket Academy (NCA), the HPA is also aimed at curbing selection politics in state teams by DDCA administrators. DDCA president Rohan Jaitley has acknowledged that there are deep-rooted problems while selecting teams and that has reflected in the embarrassing display by the senior team in particular. "This has been my pet project when I took over as the president of DDCA. We needed to have an academy of our own to monitor players round the year. There have been multiple complaints about selection politics. That needs to be checked. The HPA will help creating a pool of players and only those players will be picked during the domestic season. Now, nobody knows the whereabouts of players and thus it creates a lot of confusion while selecting teams with many interferences," Jaitley told. "There needed to be a structure in place for round the year.

Over 99 percent of last year's sugarcane price has been paid: CM Yogi

Muzaffarnagar Inaugrating the 'Gram Parikrama Yatra' from Shukirth Bangar on Monday, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath engaged with beneficiaries of various government schemes, highlighting that over 99 percent of last year's sugarcane price has been paid. "Out of the 119 sugar mills operational in the state, 105 are settling payments to sugarcane farmers within ten days. We are exerting pressure on the remaining mills. The double-engine government is steadfast in ensuring that hardworking 'Annadata' farmers receive their dues promptly," remarked the CM. Reflecting on the state's progress, CM Yogi contrasted the cur-



rent stability with past turmoil, noting, "During previous administrations, daily riots plagued our state. The scars of the Muzaffarnagar riots lingered for months. What the double-engine government pledges, it delivers. In 2017 we promised you security. Today, the entire state is safe and moving toward prosperity." He said that today Muzaffarnagar is

being recognized because of its organic jaggery. "The sweetness of our jaggery resonates not only across the state but also nationwide and globally," he added. CM Yogi said that the main reason for the formation of the BJP government in the state is the farmers who provide food. "Farmers are first on our agenda", he asserted. CM Yogi

emphasized that previous governments were involved in 'nepotism' and 'corruption,' appointing their relatives to government positions while disregarding merit. The youth of the state remained cheated, he pointed out. "Today, about 60,000 civil police constables are being recruited in the state without any discrimination", her stated. He highlighted the ongoing 'Gram Parikrama Yatra' led by the BJP Kisan Morcha, which is centered around nine resolutions. These resolutions encompass water conservation, digital payments, cleanliness drives, vocal for local, domestic tourism, organic farming, promoting millets, encour-

aging rural sports, and providing healthcare and assistance to economically disadvantaged farmers. Through this yatra, awareness will be raised among farmers and villagers regarding these resolutions. The event saw the participation of several notable figures, including BJP State President Bhopendra Singh Chaudhary, Union Minister of State for Animal Husbandry Sanjeev Kumar Baliyan, Uttar Pradesh Minister of State for Vocational Education Kapil Dev Aggarwal, District Panchayat President Dr. Veerpal Nirwal, Fatehpur MP Rajkumar Chahar, Legislative Council Member Vandana Verma, among others.

PM Modi to lay foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham, CM Yogi oversees preparations

Sambhal Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath made a one-day visit to Sambhal on Monday to oversee preparations for the upcoming foundation stone-laying ceremony of Shri Kalki Dham. Prime Minister Narendra Modi will lay the foundation stone of Shri Kalki Dham on February 19 at Ainchoda Kamboh. CM Yogi conducted a meticulous inspection of the venue, providing detailed directions to officials. Subsequently, he convened a review meeting with officials to ensure seamless coordination and execution of plans. The foundation stone laying ceremony of Shri Kalki Dham in Anchora Kamboh, Sambhal, is set to take place under



the auspices of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Prior to this event, the Chief Minister conducted an inspection to assess the preparations. CM Yogi meticulously inspected the venue, stage, and helipad, emphasizing the importance of timely completion of all arrangements and ensuring stringent security measures. Saints should not face any kind of inconvenience

During the review meeting, officials updated the Chief Minister on the swift progress of preparations for the foundation stone laying ceremony. They reported that the venue and its surroundings have been meticulously leveled, with pits filled in with soil. Furthermore, construction of six helipads is underway, with three designated specifically for the Prime Minister.

Security forces seize weapons in Churachandpur

IMPHAL: A joint security team of Assam Rifles (AR) and Manipur Police on Saturday confiscated a large cache of arms and ammunition and "war-like stores" during a search operation in Churachandpur district's Sangaikot area, the paramilitary force said on Monday. The seized arms include two 9mm pistols with magazines, tear gas, six single-barrel rifles and four improvised heavy mortars. The recovered weapons and war-like stores have been handed over to Sangaikot police station for initiating necessary legal action, said an AR state-



ment. On the same day, the rifles distributed support materials to people displaced by the ongoing conflict and are currently putting up in relief camps in Churachandpur and Imphal West districts. Meanwhile, miscreants opened fire at a private boarding centre for stu-

dents at Sagolmang Bazar in Imphal East district around 8.30pm on Sunday night. No one was injured in the attack even as the locals strongly condemned the incident. Police rushed to the spot and carried out an abrupt search, but no arrest was made. A case has been registered.

UP Police Constable Recruitment Exam admit card available for download from February 13

Lucknow In a significant update for aspiring candidates, the UP Police Constable Recruitment Exam admit card will be available for download commencing February 13 via the official website of the Uttar Pradesh Police Recruitment and Promotion Board (UPPRPB). This development follows the earlier release of the list of examination centers for various districts on February 10. The examination is scheduled to take place on February 17 and 18 across various districts of the state. It's worth noting that on December 23, under 'Mission Rozgar', the Yogi government issued a notification for the largest police recruitment in the state's history. The youth of the state have been waiting for the recruitment on more than 60,000 vacant posts for constables in Uttar Pradesh Police. List of examination centers released on February 10. Uttar Pradesh Police

Recruitment and Promotion Board (UPPRPB) Chairperson DG Renuka Mishra stated that candidates for the UP Police Constable Recruitment Examination can download their admit cards starting February 13 by visiting the board's website, upppbb.gov.in. Nearly 50 lakh candidates have applied for the constables' posts in Uttar Pradesh Police, as part of a significant recruitment drive by the government and have been awaiting their admit cards. The chairperson of the board said that the recruitment board had released the list of exam centers of various districts of the state on February 10. A total of 2,385 examination centers have been established across all districts, where 48,17,441 candidates will appear for their examination. To download their admit card, candidates should follow these steps: 1. Visit the official website of the board, upppbb.gov.in.

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

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



SARAS fair concludes in successful note, Registered overall Rs 72 lakhs sales



Chandigarh: The 12-day SARAS Mela being organized by the Rural Livelihood Mission under the aegis of Ministry of Rural Development and Panchayati Raj, Govt of HP at Exhibition Ground, Sector 34 ended in a successful note on Monday. The Ministry in endeavour to empower rural entrepreneurial women organised this fair every year. These enterprising women displayed their handmade products at their nearly 100 stalls. According to the organisers, these entrepreneurs made sales worth approximately Rs 72 lakh at the fair. The participating exhibitors also expressed their satisfaction over the business done in the fair. The Food Festival was another attraction of the fair wherein the local people relished the traditional dishes of Himachal. Women from almost all the districts of the state served Dham and other dishes. HPRLM's Director Kalyani Gupta honored the participating women entrepreneurs by giving them prizes and certificates.

Rahul to Modi: Release funds for MGNREGS workforce in Bengal

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi has written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi over the "devastating plight" of workers under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) scheme in West Bengal and urged him to facilitate the release of central funds to the state for clearing their pending wages. In his letter to Modi on February 10, Gandhi said that during his recent visit to West Bengal, as part of the party's ongoing Bharat Jodo Nyaya Yatra, a delegation of MGNREGS workers from the Paschim Banga Khet Mazdoor Samity apprised him of the issues faced by them. The letter came days after chief minister Mamata Banerjee, who has even held a two-day protest over the delay in release of central funds under various schemes.

Beggar booked for forcing kids to seek alms in Indore

INDORE: A plot of land, a two-storeyed house, a motorcycle, a smartphone worth Rs 20,000 and a neat Rs 2.5 lakh in six weeks. This is what a woman, Indra Bai, made by making her children beg in Indore, officials said after she was taken into custody. Indra, a repeat offender, was booked for begging and forcing her children into the crime

and sent to jail on remand on Monday. One of her daughters has been put in the care of an NGO. "Rather than starving, we chose to beg. It is better than stealing," Indra Bai argued with volunteers of NGO Sanstha Pravesh when she and her seven-year-old daughter were being taken off the streets. The NGO, which is working with Indore

Municipal Corporation to rehabilitate beggars, has been collecting data on around 7,000 beggars, 50% of them children, from 38 major squares of Indore. "A rough estimate says that collectively they make over Rs 20 crore annually," NGO volunteer Rupali Jain told. Apart from the seven-year-old, Indra has four other children aged 10, 8, 3 and 2.

India can aspire to be \$7 trillion economy by 2030: Review

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy is likely to achieve a growth rate of 7% in fiscal year 2025 after growing at or above 7% in 2023-

24, driven by resilient domestic demand despite risks and uncertainties in the global economic landscape, according to a review of the economy unveiled on Monday. It also said India can aspire to become a \$7 trillion economy in the next six-seven years (by 2030) asserting that this would be a significant milestone in the journey to delivering quality of life and standard of living that match and exceed the aspirations of the Indian people. "If the prognosis for FY25 turns out to be right, that will mark the fourth year post-pandemic that the Indian economy will have grown.

Former NC MLC joins BJP, lauds development of 'new' Kashmir

NEW DELHI: Former Jammu and Kashmir MLC Shahnaz Ganai on Monday joined BJP, with the ruling party's leaders lauding her work for Scheduled Tribes and women in the region. Ganai said govt led by PM Narendra Modi has done good work for people and she has been impressed with his philosophy of 'sabka saath sabka vikas'. This govt has empowered every section of society, including those in J&K which is undergoing a "transformation", she said, lauding the development work in "new" Kashmir. People want to strengthen Modi and



BJP, Ganai added. Ganai joined BJP in the presence of Union minister Jitendra Singh, Lok Sabha MP from Udhampur, and party general secretary Tarun

Chugh. Ganai praised govt for extending reservation benefits to SCs, STs and OBCs in the erstwhile state, now a UT. "We will work together

to ensure a hat-trick for Modi," Ganai said, referring to the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Her father Ghulam Ahmed Ganai was a minister in J&K.