

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Friday 15 March, 2024

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

Key recommendations of Kovind panel on 'one nation, one election'

● "To address this, the committee recommended establishing a legally viable mechanism to restore simultaneous elections"



NEW DELHI: A high-level committee headed by former President Ram Nath Kovind on Thursday submitted the 'One Nation One Election' report to President Droupadi Murmu recommending simultaneous elections for Lok Sabha and state assemblies as the first step. The panel in its report, spanning over 18,000 pages, said that simultaneous polls will spur development and social cohesion, deepen "foundations of democratic rubric" and help realise the aspirations of "India, that is Bharat".

Here are the key recommendations made by the committee in its report:

The panel found that

the discontinuation of simultaneous elections in the decades following India's independence has negatively impacted the economy, politics, and society. The current scenario of multiple elections throughout the year places a significant burden on the government, businesses, citizens, and various other entities. To address this, the committee recommended establishing a legally viable mechanism to restore simultaneous elections. The committee has recommended holding simultaneous elections

This date would mark the commencement of the new electoral cycle

The committee recommended that the President of India, through a notification issued on the first sitting of the Lok Sabha post a general election, set an 'Appointed date'. This date would mark the commencement of the new electoral cycle. The tenure of state legislative assemblies formed after the 'Appointed date' and before the completion of the Lok Sabha's term would conclude before the subsequent general elections. Following this, all general elections for the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies would be held simultaneously. An Implementation Group is proposed to oversee the execution of the committee's recommendations.

for the Lok Sabha and state legislative assemblies as the first step. Subsequently, elections for municipalities and panchayats would be synchronized with the

Lok Sabha and state assembly polls, ensuring that they take place within 100 days of the main elections. To facilitate the synchronization of elections.

SBI submits all electoral bonds details to Election Commission of India

NEW DELHI: The State Bank of India (SBI) on Tuesday submitted all data related to electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India (ECI) in compliance with the strict Supreme Court regarding the matter.

"In compliance of Supreme Court's directions to the SBI, contained in its order dated Feb 15 & March 11, 2024 (in the matter of WPC NO.880 of 2017), data on electoral bonds has been supplied by State Bank of India to Election Commission of India, today, March 12, 2024," the spokesperson for the poll panel said on X.

The top court had ordered the central bank to furnish all details to the ECI by 5pm on Tuesday.

The Election Commission of India is expected to upload the data on its website by March 15 for public view in accordance with the SC's order.



The SBI has issued electoral bonds worth Rs 16,518 crore in 30 tranches since the inception of the scheme in 2018.

SC's tough directions The SBI's submission comes a day after the SC pulled up the bank over delay in disclosure of details about electoral bonds encashed by political parties and said it expects some candour from the bank, which is the authorised financial institution under the scheme.

"Our judgment is dated February 15. We are on March 11. In past 26 days, what steps you have taken? Nothing is stated. It

should have been disclosed. In the last 26 days, what steps have you taken? Your application is silent on that. We expect some candour from the State Bank of India," CJI Chandrachud had said. SBI had sought time till June 30

The national bank told the top court it needs time to submit details of electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India as it is still collating data. Dismissing the SBI's application seeking time till June 30 to reveal electoral bond details to EC, the five-judge SC bench - headed by CJI Chandrachud - had directed the

bank to disclose all details by Tuesday.

The apex court was hearing the application filed by SBI seeking extension till June 30 to disclose details of each electoral bond encashed by political parties before the scheme was scrapped last month.

During the hearing, the bench took note of the submissions of senior advocate Harish Salve, appearing for the SBI, that more time was needed for collating the details and matching them as the information was kept in two different silos with its branches. He said if the matching exercise was to be done away with, the SBI could complete the exercise within three weeks.

The bench said it had not directed the bank to match the details of donors and donee with other information.

(This is a developing story)

Mamata Banerjee suffers injuries after fall at home, gets 4 stitches, discharged



KOLKATA: Mamata Banerjee suffered a deep gash on her forehead, a cut on the nose and concussion after a fall at her Kalighat home on Thursday evening that state-run SSKM Hospital's director attributed to "some push from behind". The Bengal CM was taken around 7.30pm to the hospital's British-era Woodburn Ward, where doctors first stopped the bleeding and then closed the forehead wound with three stitches. The cut on the nose required one stitch. She underwent a CT scan and an MRI, among other procedures, on the advice of a multidisciplinary medical board before being taken home at 9.45pm.

"We wanted to find out whether the fall was an accident or she suffered any fluctuation in blood pressure," a health department official said. The theory about Mamata tripping on something while entering her bedroom and falling on her face changed around 11pm when SSKM director Manimoy Bandyopadhyay suggested a mysterious "push" was the culprit. He spoke of her injuries but didn't elaborate on the cause. "Investigations like ECG and CT scan were done. She was advised admission for observation, but she preferred to go home. She will continue to be under close watch. She will be assessed on Friday," Bandyopadhyay said. Mamata's sister-in-law Kajari Banerjee, a Trinamool councillor, added to the conspiracy theory, saying she heard that "Didi fell after a dhakka". The Bengali word can be interpreted variously, including "impact after colliding."

INDIA bloc's ideology is corruption, fuelling anti-national agenda: PM

NEW DELHI: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Thursday accused the opposition INDIA bloc of being guided by corruption, mis-governance and fuelling an anti-national agenda, adding that he stands for rooting out corruption and a p p e a s e m e n t . Addressing beneficiaries of the PM SVANidhi scheme at JLN Stadium in Delhi, the Prime Minister



asserted said that his ideology is ensuring the country's welfare through people's welfare. PM Modi accused the opposition alliance, which has gathered in the

national capital to challenge the BJP in the Lok Sabha polls, of uniting solely to criticize him incessantly, day and night.

PM Modi distributed on Thursday loans under the scheme to 1 lakh street vendors (SVs), including 5,000 SVs from Delhi. The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone of two additional corridors of Delhi Metro's

Phase 4 during the programme. PM Modi said he ensured cheap bank loans for the poor under SVANidhi "on his guarantee". He said SVANidhi is "one such guarantee of Modi, which has today become the support for lakhs of families doing street vendors, handcarts and such small jobs". "Modi's guarantee" is one of the key poll planks of the BJP.

NEW DELHI: Home minister Amit Shah on Thursday justified non-inclusion of Muslims from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan in Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019, saying that 'Akhand Bharat' was broken earlier to give them a separate Muslim state, as he announced a campaign to mobilise public opinion in favour of the law and "expose" those who are opposing



it as part of their "politics of appeasement". Speaking to ANI in a podcast, Shah took on Congress for hinting at repeal of CAA if INDIA was voted into office at the Centre. "Even INDI Alliance knows that it will not

come to power. CAA was brought by Narendra Modi-led BJP gov and it is impossible to repeal it," he said. Asked why Parsis and Christians — who represent religions that did not originate in India — from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan are eligible to seek citizenship under CAA but not Muslims, Shah said: "That part of Akhand Bharat now does not belong to Bharat."

Sukhbir , Gyanesh appointed new election commissioners

NEW DELHI: Bureaucrats Sukhbir Sandhu and Gyanesh Kumar have been appointed election commissioners by Prime Minister Narendra Modi-led panel, Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said on Thursday. C h o w d h u r y addressed reporters at his residence following the conclusion of the meeting, stating that six names were considered by the panel for the selection of the two election commissioners. The six shortlisted names were Utpal Kumar Singh, Pradeep Kumar Tripathi, Gyanesh Kumar, Indevnar Pandey, Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, and



Sudhir Kumar Gangadhar Rahate, all former bureaucrats. Sandhu and Kumar's names were ultimately chosen by a majority of the high-powered panel members. However, Chowdhury raised concerns about the absence of the Chief Justice of India from the selection panel and the lack of clarity regarding how six names were short-listed from a pool of over 200 candidates

presented to the search committee. After the meeting of selection committee to pick the election commissioner, Chowdhury told reporters, "In this committee, govt has the majority. One Mr Kumar from Kerala and one Mr B. Sandhu from Punjab have been selected as Election Commissioners." Sandhu is from Punjab and is a former IAS officer of the 1988 batch from

Uttarakhand cadre. Sandhu was appointed as the chief secretary of Uttarakhand when Pushkar Singh Dhama became the CM in 2021. He has also served as the chairperson of National Highways Authority of India (NHAI). Meanwhile, Kumar has served as secretary in the ministry of parliamentary affairs. He belongs to the 1988-batch from Kerala cadre. During his tenure in the home ministry, Kumar oversaw the abrogation of Article 370. After the resignation of Arun Goel, only chief election commissioner Rajiv Kumar was left in the 3-member poll panel, with the Lok Sabha polls.

Boy, 13, falls off MTC bus, injured

Chennai: A 13-year-old boy, who fell off the footboard of an MTC bus, sustained injuries after the rear wheels of the vehicle ran over his legs on Wednesday evening. This incident comes two days after four college students were fatally injured while travelling on the footboard of a private bus near Madurantakam..

Police said Vijay Vasanth, 13, of Maduravoyal, a Class VII student of a government school in Alapakkam, used to travel to school by an MTC bus every day. On Wednesday evening, he boarded a mini bus to reach Alapakkam after school. As the bus was crowded, he was forced to travel on the footboard. After travelling for some distance.

EC uploads electoral bonds data shared by SBI on its website

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission on Thursday uploaded electoral bonds data as shared by the State Bank of India (SBI), on its website. Donors to political parties through electoral bonds include Grasim Industries, Megha Engineering, Piramal Enterprises, Apollo Tyres, Lakshmi Mittal, Edelweiss, PVR, Keventer, Sula Wine, Welspun, Sun Pharma among buyers of electoral bonds. "In compliance of Supreme Court's directions, contained in its order dated February 15 and March 11, 2024 (in the matter of WPC NO.880 of 2017), the State Bank of India (SBI) had provided the data pertaining to the electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India. (ECI) on March 12, 2024," the election commission said in a s t a t e m e n t . " T h e Election Commission of

India has today uploaded the data on electoral bonds on its website as received from SBI on as is where is basis," it added. The data can be accessed at this url: <https://www.eci.gov.in/candidate-politicalparty> "It may be recalled that in the said matter, ECI has consistently and categorically weighed in favour of disclosure and transparency, a position reflected in the proceedings of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and noted in the order also," EC said. The State Bank of India had submitted a compliance affidavit to the Supreme Court on Wednesday, confirming that it has provided the Election Commission of India with comprehensive details regarding the electoral bonds scheme. SBI had furnished information including the date of purchase.

Several biz groups bought bonds via multiple entities

Several groups have purchased electoral bonds through multiple corporate entities, according to SBI data uploaded by Election Commission on Thursday. The biggest such donors include Megha Engineering and Western UP Power Transmission — both part of the same Hyderabad-based group — which together account for Rs 1,186 crore. Similarly, Haldia Energy and Dhariwal Infrastructure, both from the RP Sanjiv Goenka group, together contributed Rs 492 crore. The Aditya Birla group also has several companies on the list such as Utkal Alumina, Birla Carbon India, UltraTech Cement and Essel Mining, which gave a combined Rs 510 crore. Among the other big donors are Madanlal Ltd, MKJ Enterprises and Keventer Food Park Ltd, all from same Kolkata-based group, which donated a total of Rs 573 crore. MKJ Group is "engaged in the purchase and sale



of securities and real estate as well as in food processing". Qwiksupply, a little-known Maharashtra-based firm, is in the business of warehousing, storage and transportation, according to company details on the net. One of its directors is Tapas Mitra, who is a director in 24 companies, according to corporate filings available online. He is also the "head of accounts (consolidation) — group companies, Reliance Industries Ltd", according to his LinkedIn profile. Another not too well-known entity is Yashoda Super Speciality Hospital, a Ghazabad-based healthcare firm, that contributed Rs 162

crore. One of the better-known corporates near the top of the list is Bharti Airtel, with the firm buying EBs worth 198 crore and group company Bharti Telemedia putting in another Rs 37 crore, taking the total to Rs 235 crore. Another is DLF Commercial Developers with contributions of Rs 130 crore. Another group entity, DLF Luxury Homes, also figured with Rs 25 crore. Several pharma firms figure on the list with Dr Reddy's contributing Rs 84 crore, Torrent Pharmaceuticals Rs 78 crore, Natco Pharma Rs 57 crore, Aurobindo Pharma Rs 52 crore, Cipla Rs 39 crore and Sun Pharma Rs 32 crore.

No copy kept, EC tells SC to return info furnished in sealed cover

NEW DELHI: With the Friday deadline for publication of electoral bond details fast approaching, Election Commission has realised it would not be in position to fully comply with Supreme Court's March 11 direction, which included publishing on its website by March 15 the EB data it had supplied in two tranches to SC during pendency of petitions questioning validity of the bonds. In its application, EC on Thursday said it would comply with the directions to publish SBI-furnished details about EB purchasers and recipient political parties, but would not be able to publish the data it had furnished in sealed cover



to SC as it had not kept any copy thereof in EC office. It requested SC to return the original documents in sealed cover to enable publication of the information by March 15. In compliance of SC's interim orders of April 12, 2019 and Nov 2, 2023, EC had submitted "(a) in a sealed cover, (containing 106 sealed envelopes); and (b) in sealed boxes, (contain-

ing 309 and 214 sealed envelopes respectively) in two tranches". On Feb 15, SC had quashed EB scheme of 2018 and ordered full publication of data available with SBI and EC on the latter's website. On March 11, the SC had rejected SBI's plea for extension of the March 6 deadline for furnishing data to EC and directed it to comply with the Feb order by March 12.

Oppose BJP in run-up to polls: Key kisan meet

New Delhi: Undeterred by an unimpressive show of strength, the 'mahapanchayat' of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM), umbrella body that spearheaded 13-month long protests during 2020-21, on Thursday decided to unleash strong protests against

BJP in the run-up to parliamentary polls and lined up multiple activities across country to press for their unmet demands including legal guarantee to procurement of all crops at MSP. Even as the turnout was more than what was allowed by Delhi Police

for peaceful protests in Delhi, absence of SKM (non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha leaders who held 4 rounds of talks with govt during farm stir 2.0 cast its shadow over the 'mahapanchayat' and was reflected in the rather modest numbers gathered.

CAPSULES

AAP names 8 for Punjab LS polls

CHANDIGARH: AAP on Thursday named candidates for eight of Punjab's 13 Lok Sabha seats, reports Vibhor Mohan. They include five state ministers, the party's lone sitting MP, a former Congress MLA, and actor-singer Karamjeet Anmol, a childhood friend of CM Bhagwant Mann. The ministers are Gurmeet Singh Meet Hayer (Sangrur), Kuldeep Singh Dhaliwal (Amritsar), Balbir Singh (Patiala), Gurmeet Singh Khudian (Bathinda) and Laljit Singh Bhullar (Khadoor Sahib).



Uzbek woman found dead in Bengaluru hotel, hunt on for 3 suspects

BENGALURU: A 27-year-old Uzbekistan national was found dead in her hotel room in Bengaluru on Wednesday night, with police suspecting she was smothered after being beaten up, reports. There were injury marks on her face and she was found bleeding from the nose. Cops have launched a search for the suspects, including two hotel employees who have disappeared since the incident and a person who had booked the room for her. The victim, Zarina Utirovna, had arrived in Delhi on a tourist visa, before flying into the city on March 5. She had checked into Jagadish Hotel in Kumara Park West. CCTV footage revealed three men had entered her room since Wednesday evening.

Dog row: Cops visit New Town condo, collect CCTV footage

Kolkata: A team of officers from the Techno City police station visited the Elita Garden Vista complex on Thursday, where a security guard was severely beaten up by two residents after he had chased a stray dog with a rod, and collected CCTV footage of the incident. The team also spoke to witnesses who had seen the entire episode unfold early on Tuesday. An FIR was registered against a resident, Anirban Biswas, and another woman who



was accused of beating up the guard, under IPC sections 308 (culpable homicide not amounting to murder) and 325 (grievous hurt). Cops also visited

RG Kar Hospital on Wednesday night and had recorded the statement of the injured security guard who was initially released from the hos-

pital after first aid but was readmitted following complaints of chest pain. "We had also tried to speak to Biswas against whom the allegations of assault have been levelled, but the man's flat is locked and his phone is switched off. We are trying to trace him at the earliest," said a senior officer of Bidhannagar City Police. However, connected with him over a WhatsApp call on Thursday night when he said he was taking legal steps.

Kejriwal wants to put pressure on court, says ED on summons plea

New Delhi: The ED on Thursday told a sessions court that chief minister Arvind Kejriwal wanted to put "pressure" on the court by moving a plea at the "last moment", challenging a magistrate court's summons after the probe agency complained of his non-compliance on earlier summonses in the alleged liquor policy scam. "Today on a hyper-technical ground, stay on proceedings is being asked at the last moment. The entire modus operandi was to move this court at the



last moment, put pressure on court," additional solicitor-general ASV Raju said, while appearing for the ED before special judge (PC Act) Rakesh Syal in the Rouse Avenue Courts. The hearing will continue on Friday. Earlier, a magistrate's

court had issued summonses twice to Kejriwal in separate complaints filed by the ED for failing to appear before the agency in connection with the Delhi excise policy case. He has challenged both summonses. The court of additional chief met-

ropolitan magistrate Divya Malhotra had summoned Kejriwal in two separate complaints filed by the ED. Kejriwal, through senior advocate Ramesh Gupta, has submitted before the court that the ED wanted his personal appearance before a court just to make a mockery of him. "I am only saying I be exempted. What do they gain by making me come here? Is it only for the publicity," Gupta asked. To this, the ASG said that the agency was not doing anything for publicity.

Oil and gas cos operate on 6,639 sq km of land but unwilling to pay even .6% of profit as tax: Assam



NEW DELHI: Assam on Thursday informed SC that Union-controlled oil and gas firms in the past 12 years have earned a cumulative net profit of over Rs 3.3 lakh crore but are unwilling to part with even 0.6% of that amount towards their tax dues to the state, chargeable on 6,639 sq km of land used by them, which is more than the size of Goa. Responding to Oil

India's challenge to Assam Taxation (on Specified Lands) (Amendment) Act, 2004 for including coal, crude oil, natural gas and limestone bearing lands within the state tax regime, Assam govt through Rakesh Dwivedi told SC that Rs 1,894 crore, including interest on principal tax, is due from Oil India and ONGC of 12 years. While the companies are reluctant to pay 0.58% of their net profit to the state, they paid Rs 17.7 lakh crore dividend to the Union govt during 2011-2023, Assam said.

oil- and natural gas-bearing lands from mineral-bearing lands, Assam said the principal dues of Oil India and ONGC is only 0.6% of the net profit after tax, that is surpluses of Oil India and ONGC of 12 years. While the companies are reluctant to pay 0.58% of their net profit to the state, they paid Rs 17.7 lakh crore dividend to the Union govt during 2011-2023, Assam said.

Remarkable progress': UN hails India's progress in Human Development Index

NEW DELHI: The United Nations hailed India's progress in the Human Development Index, highlighting significant strides made in different parameters marking overall development. Highlighting the progress, Caitlin Wiesen, the United Nations Development Programme's country representative said, "India has shown remarkable progress in human development over the years. Since 1990, life expectancy at birth has risen by 9.1 years; expected years of schooling have increased by 4.6 years; and mean years of schooling have grown by 3.8 years. India's GNI per capita has grown by approximately 287 per cent," India's standing in the Human Development Index (HDI) for 2022 has seen a slight



improvement, with the country now ranked at 134 out of 193 countries compared to its previous ranking of 135 out of 191 nations in 2021. There has been an uptick in India's HDI value, rising to 0.644 in 2022 from 0.633 in 2021, as per the 2023-24 Human Development Report (HDR), released by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The Human Development Report, titled "Breaking the Gridlock: Reimagining Cooperation in a

Polarized World," highlighted a decline in the global HDI value for two consecutive years, indicating a concerning trend. While wealthier nations have seen significant human development progress, about half of the poorest countries have failed to regain their pre-crisis development levels. The latest HDR categorizes India under the medium human development bracket, showcasing a significant rise in its HDI value over the years. Between 1990 and 2022, India wit-

nessed a remarkable 48.4% increase in its HDI value, indicating considerable development progress. India's improvements across all HDI indicators, including life expectancy, education and gross national income (GNI) per capita, have contributed to its position. Life expectancy rose marginally to 67.7 years, expected years of schooling reached 12.6, mean years of schooling increased to 6.57, and GNI per capita saw a modest rise from USD 6,542 to USD 6,951. India's position on the Gender Inequality Index (GII) for 2022 also saw an improvement, with the country securing the 108th spot out of 193 countries, as opposed to its previous rank of 122 out of 191 countries in 2021, marking a jump of 14 ranks.

Joining BJP today, says MP denied TMC ticket

KOLKATA: Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh has declared he will join BJP in Delhi on Friday, inviting a "use and throw" barb from TMC that denied him ticket from Bengal LS seat in spite of him having switched to two years ago after winning in 2019 as a saffron party nominee. Singh said a "senior TMC leader" will join BJP with him. This coincided with his nephew Sourav Singh being named chief poll agent of Partha Bhowmick, TMC's Barrackpore candidate this time. As per sources, Singh was part of a late-night meet of state and central BJP leaders. During the session, the MP decided to shift allegiance. Despite defecting to TMC in 2022, Singh has officially remained a BJP MP all this time. Objections were raised by some leaders at the meeting, but those who sought Singh's return prevailed. State leader of opposition Suvendu Adhikari was among those who wanted him back in BJP.

Road ministry starts pilot project on cashless treatment of victims in Chandigarh



NEW DELHI: The road transport ministry on Thursday announced launching a pilot programme to provide "cashless" treatment to all road crashes in Chandigarh, which will entitle such victims to get treatment of up to Rs 1.5 lakh and for a maximum of seven days. Based on the outcome of the pilot programme, expansion of the cashless treatment facility to the entire country will be considered, it said. The ministry said the pilot programme is aimed at establishing an ecosystem for providing timely medical care to the road crash victims, including during the golden hour (first hour from accident). TOI had on Jan 31 first reported about the govt proposal to cap the amount for cashless treatment. The National Health Authority (NHA) will implement the pilot programme, in coordination with police, hospitals and State Health Agency (SHA). Several

studies have found that around half of road deaths can be prevented by providing quick medical care in the first one hour of a crash. In 2022, India recorded the maximum ever 1.68 lakh road deaths. Sources said an assessment by the ministry has found that average medical expenses in around 97% of road crash cases is approximately Rs 60,000. Only a small number of victims need long hospitalisation and intensive care. The cashless medical treatment will cover crashes caused by motor vehicles on all types of roads. The Ayushman Bharat (PM-JAY) packages for trauma and poly-trauma cases are also being co-opted in this scheme. "Claims raised by hos-

pitals for providing treatment to be reimbursed from the Motor Vehicle Accident Fund. The programme will be implemented through an IT platform combining the functionalities of e-DAR application of transport ministry and Transaction Management System (TMS) of NHA," govt said. The road transport ministry has carried out inter-ministerial consultation for the scheme, which was introduced in the Central Motor Vehicle Act in 2019. The scheme will have no burden on the public exchequer as insurance companies will bear the expenses. "It will be a fraction of the third party insurance premium they collect from vehicle owners. Reducing fatalities by providing faster medical care will ultimately benefit the insurance firms as their compensation outgo will reduce significantly," said a government official.

Preneet, who was suspended by Congress, joins BJP

NEW DELHI: Preneet Kaur, wife of former Punjab chief minister Amarinder Singh, joined the BJP on Thursday. Preneet, who is MP from Patiala, was suspended by the Congress in February last year for anti-party activities and helping the BJP. Kaur joined the BJP in the presence of party's national general secretary Vinod Tawde, leader Tarun Chugh and Sunil Jhaxkar. "I will work for my constituency, my state and the country under the leadership of PM Modi. I had a good innings with the Congress

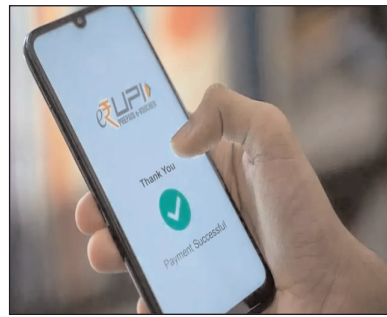


party and I hope I'll have a better innings with the BJP," Preneet said after joining the saffron party. On her chances of contesting Lok Sabha elections again from Patiala, Preneet said "That depends on the BJP." She praised PM Modi for his development works in the country. "I

am happy that today I am joining the BJP. In the last 25 years, I have worked in the Lok Sabha and the Legislative Assembly. Today, the time has come when everyone should come together and look at the works of PM Modi and his policies, like the 'Viksit Bharat' Programme.

Now in Nepal, Scan & Pay With UPI

Delhi: The introduction of UPI for cross-border transactions has been announced by Phonepe Payment Service of Nepal and NIPL, the international division of NPCI. With UPI-enabled apps, Indian customers may now make quick UPI payments at a variety of business outlets in Nepal. Indian consumers

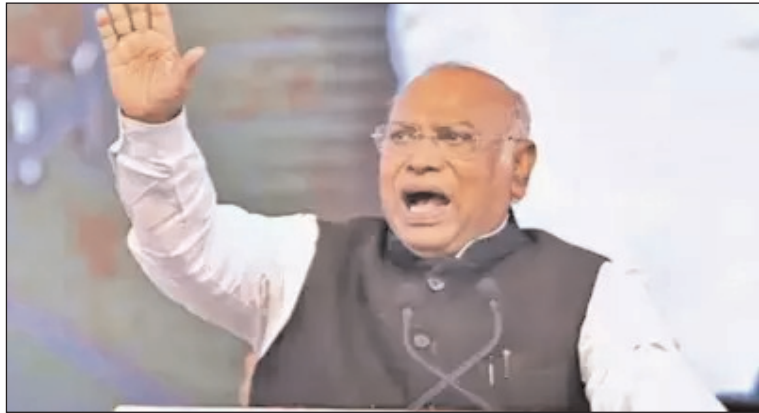


can easily accept UPI payments from merchants connected to the

Fonepay network. The Global Fintech Fest in September 2023 in India marked the launch of the Indo-Nepal UPI payments program. The collaboration is live and enables person-to-merchant UPI transactions between India and Nepal using QR codes.

BJP misused central agencies to garner Rs 400 crore through electoral bonds: Congress chief

NEW DELHI: Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on Thursday accused BJP of mis-using central agencies like Enforcement Directorate and CBI to garner Rs 400 crore through electoral bonds. Citing media reports, Kharge said that fresh investigations have revealed that 45 companies donated to BJP through electoral bonds after raids on them and demanded that it should come out with a white paper on its finances if the BJP cared about democracy. "Was it blackmail, extortion, loot and coercion to get more donations? A fresh investigation shows 15 more companies, donated to BJP after ED, CBI, IT raids, making it a total



of 45 companies paying BJP nearly Rs 400 crore," Kharge alleged in a post on X. "According to reports, 4 shell companies also funded BJP. Dictatorial Modi government has frozen Congress party's bank accounts, while it

extracts money by using Central agencies," he also alleged. The Congress chief claimed that the BJP used "unconstitutional and illegal electoral bonds to pad its 'loot chest', and has also 'manipulated' electoral trusts

to "increase its donation loot" by 10 times. "If BJP is bothered about 'Mother of Democracy', then it should bring a white paper on its own finances, through an independent investigation," Kharge demanded. Congress president Kharge cited some media reports that claimed that 15 more donors of the BJP include four shell firms, 11 companies that faced central action and that 30 firms who donated Rs 335 crore to the BJP were also stung by IT, ED. Kharge's attack is followed after Chief Election Commissioner on Wednesday announced sharing details of electoral bonds "in time".

Himanta Biswa Sarma says CAA 'completely insignificant' in Assam

NEW DELHI: Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Thursday claimed that the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is completely insignificant in the state as there will be "least number of applicants". "CAA is completely insignificant in Assam; the state will have the least number of applications on the portal," CM Himanta Sarma said in a press conference. Himanta has also said that he will be the first to step down if even one person, who has not applied for the National Register of Citizens (NRC) in the state, gets citizenship under the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, 2019 (CAA). The Assam chief minister said the Act is very clear that the cut-off date for application of citizenship is December 31, 2014, and in Assam,



with the updation of the National Register of Citizens, people who applied for it and did not find their names in that list, will only apply for CAA. The chief minister's statement comes days after the central government notified Rules for the CAA, which would grant citizenship to undocumented non-Muslim migrants who entered India on or before December 31 from Bangladesh, Pakistan and Afghanistan. The Act has been a major point of contention in Assam, which witnessed widespread protest in 2019 after the citizenship amendment turned into the law of the land. The protest also entailed incidents of violence in the state, including the state capital Guwahati.

TMC announces four Lok Sabha candidates for Assam

KOLKATA: The Trinamool Congress released a list of candidates for four Lok Sabha seats in Assam for the upcoming polls on Thursday, naming Gauri Shankar Sarania from Kokrajhar parliamentary seat. "Under the guidance and inspiration of Hon'ble Chairperson Smt. @MamataOfficial, we are pleased to announce the AITC candidates for four Parliamentary Constituencies in Assam," the Trinamool Congress wrote on X. Assam has 14 Lok Sabha seats. TMC's list of candidates includes Gauri Shankar Sarania from Kokrajhar, a seat reserved for Schedule Tribe (ST), Abdul Kalam Azad from Barpeta seat, Ghana Kanta Chutia from Lakhimpur seat, and Radhashyam Biswas from Silchar, a seat reserved for the Schedule Caste. The Lok Sabha elections are expected to be held in April and



May this year. The party announced former minister Zenith Sangma as its candidate from Meghalaya's Tura constituency for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. "AITC under the guidance and inspiration of Chairperson, we are pleased to announce the Meghalaya candidate from the Parliamentary Constituency of Tura (ST) seat.," the party said in a post on X on Tuesday. Zenith Sangma, brother to former Meghalaya Chief Minister Mukul Sangma, is the party's first candidate outside

Gadchiroli village on boil as health staff rapes tribal girl

Gadchiroli A peon of a primary health unit in Gadchiroli's Jarawandi village raped a four-and-half-year-old tribal girl last Saturday, it came to light this Thursday after the survivor was discharged from a Nagpur hospital. The incident triggered unrest in the Maoist hotbed with agitated villagers storming the health centre.

of West Bengal, to be named for the general elections.

Abhay Chautala moves HC for Z-plus security

CHANDIGARH: Senior INLD leader and Ellenabad MLA Abhay Singh Chautala has approached the Punjab and Haryana high court seeking Z-plus security cover through a central security agency in view of "continuous threats faced by him." In his plea, which is expected to come up for hearing on Monday, Chautala has also cited the recent murder of INLD state president Nafe Singh Rathi by some gangsters. According to Abhay, on Feb 25, INLD state president Nafe Singh Rathi was brutally murdered by a gang, and as per the petition, some London-based gangsters had claimed responsibility. The INLD leader further stated that on March 7, he had submitted a representation to the state government for round the clock Z-plus category security for him and his family members. As per the plea filed through advocate Sandeep Goyat, Abhay has been raising voice against drug smuggling, drug abuse, liquor scam and registry scam in the Haryana state assembly. "He has also been openly coming out in support of farmers and the destitute and has opposed anti-public policies of the government." the plea stated. The petition has also mentioned that during his padyatra on July 17, at around 9 pm, threat calls were made.

BJP clear leader, Trinamool No. 2 ahead of Congress

Data put out by EC shows while BJP got the largest amount — Rs 6,061 crore or almost half the total — of contributions via electoral bonds, the next biggest recipient was TMC (Rs 1,610cr). Congress, BRS, BJD and DMK followed. Parties that have been running govts in states figured higher on the list than those in opposition, one exception being JD(U), which while governing Bihar the entire time, received all of Rs 14 crore. Congress on Thursday said there was a discrepancy in the numbers of entries in donor and recipient files -- 18,871 against 20,421. It also asked why the data shared pertained to a period from April 2019 even though the scheme for anonymous political funding was introduced in 2017.

'6 names given, 10 mins before meet': Adhir Ranjan on appointment of election commissioners

NEW DELHI: Congress leader Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury on Thursday raised objections to the government's proposed candidates for the vacant Election Commissioner positions. The committee, including Prime Minister Narendra Modi, law minister Arjun Meghwal, and the leader of the opposition, convened to deliberate on the appointments following the resignation of EC Arun Goel. After the meeting of the selection committee, Adhir claimed that the government had given him 212 names on Wednesday, but 10 minutes before the appointment he was given six names. Chowdhury criticized the selection process, alleging procedural flaws and expressing concerns over the government's influence in the decision-making. He emphasized the need for a more transparent and unbiased procedure in selecting Election Commissioners. "They have the majority (in the committee that appoints election commissioner). Earlier, they had given me 212 names, but 10 minutes before the appointment they again gave me just six names. I know that the CJ is not there, government has made such a law that the CJ doesn't interfere and the Central govt can choose a favourable name. I am not saying that it's arbitrary but the procedure that is being followed has some lacunae." Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury said. After deliberations, the selection committee settled on retired IAS officers Gyanesh Kumar and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu as the new appointees to the Election Commission. Gyanesh Kumar, formerly the secretary of the cooperation ministry, and Sukhbir Singh Sandhu, the ex-Chief Secretary of Uttarakhand.

Editorial

Agni V with MIRV gets India into global deterrence league

The successfully test-fired Agni-V ballistic missile equipped with Multiple Independently Targetable Re-entry Vehicle (MIRV) technology vastly extends India's strategic envelop. The Agni-V boasts an intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) range, exceeding 5,000 kilometres. This extended reach significantly alters India's strategic landscape. Traditionally, India's missile arsenal primarily focused on deterring threats from its immediate neighbours. However, the Agni-V's extended range allows India to potentially engage targets across vast distances, encompassing a broader spectrum of potential adversaries. This expanded reach compels any potential aggressor to consider the wider ramifications of a conflict with India. The psychological impact of this extended deterrence capability is undeniable. The stakes have just gone up.

The integration of multiple independently targeted re-entry vehicle technology turbocharges India's capability to launch a survivable multiple nuclear attack from a single source. MIRV allows a single missile to carry multiple independently targeted warheads. During the final stages of flight, these warheads separate and manoeuvre towards pre-designated targets. This capability significantly complicates an enemy's missile defence system. Previously, an enemy could potentially expend a single interceptor missile to neutralise an incoming threat. However, with MIRV technology, the enemy's defence system would need to engage and destroy each independently targeted warhead, exponentially increasing the defensive burden. This complexity significantly enhances the effectiveness of the Agni-V as a deterrent. It's important to acknowledge the regional context. China, India's hostile neighbour, possesses a robust and growing missile arsenal. China's Dongfeng-41 (DF-41) ICBM, with an estimated range exceeding 12,000 kilometres, dwarfs the Agni-V in terms of sheer reach. However, the Agni-V's successful test firing demonstrates India's commitment to closing the strategic gap. Furthermore, India's indigenous development programme allows for greater flexibility and faster production. It makes a greater range and more powerful warhead-integrated missile system just a matter of time and investment.

Nuclear deterrence: Maintaining stability

The Agni-V, with its extended range and MIRV technology, serves as a potent deterrent against potential nuclear threats. The concept of deterrence relies on the credible threat of massive retaliation to dissuade an enemy from launching a nuclear attack. India has no first use of nuclear weapons posture, though there has been ambiguity on India's commitment to that posture lately. The Agni-V's capabilities complicate strategic choice for an adversary especially with regards to a nuclear first strike against India, knowing the potential for devastating retaliation across multiple targets. This strengthens regional stability and discourages the use of nuclear weapons.

Road ahead

While the successful test of the Agni-V marks a momentous milestone for India's strategic defence, the journey doesn't end here. Continued development and modernisation of India's missile programme are crucial to maintaining a credible deterrent in the face of an ever-evolving global security landscape. India must prioritise research and development in areas like hypersonic missiles and advanced defence penetration capabilities to stay ahead of potential threats. The next logical step in India's evolving deterrence strategy should be the enhancement of the submarine-launched ballistic missile.

CAA is not against Indian Muslims, but its opposition clearly smacks of anti-Dalit prejudice

The Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) is back in the news. The Modi government, after keeping the momentous legislation in a limbo for three years after it had sparked massive protests then, has decided to implement the law, which gives citizenship to religious minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan. The Act states that Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians from Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan will not be treated as illegal migrants, and therefore, be eligible for naturalisation. These communities are given this leeway because they have been facing religious persecution in their respective countries and are often forced to cross the border to save their lives and dignity. While the government says the new law gives sanctuary to people fleeing religious persecution, its critics find it to be anti-Muslim. While the government is categorical in saying that the legislation has nothing to do with Muslims staying within the country, those in opposition refuse to be convinced. One senior journalist called it a testament of sagging moral values in the country, while another bemoaned at not including Muslims in the list of 'beneficiaries'. What the opponents of CAA don't understand, deliberately or otherwise, is that Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan



and Bangladesh can still seek India's citizenship under the old Citizenship Act — just the same way former Pakistani singer Adnan Sami did. Other countries, including the United States, too have similar citizenship laws. Also, what most critics don't understand, as highlighted by senior journalist Abhijit Majumder in his Firstpost article, dated 12 March, 2024, that the US has a CAA-like "narrow-window legislation called the Lautenberg-Specter Amendments which give preferential shelter to persecuted minorities from Russia and Iran".

In fact, by delaying it in providing succour to minorities for so long, especially in Pakistan and Bangladesh, the Indian leadership has com-

mitted a moral transgression. The famous Liaquat-Nehru pact signed between India and Pakistan in 1950 promised to provide safety to minorities in the divided sub-continent. While India kept its side of promise by not just providing minorities equal rights and opportunities but also — as then prime minister Manmohan Singh insisted publicly in 2009 — giving them the first right to the nation's resources, the same cannot be said about the state of minorities in the neighbourhood. There were over two lakh Sikhs in Afghanistan in the 1980s. By the beginning of 2021, the number dwindled to 400 Sikhs, and after the Taliban's takeover of that country, the number barely touches a

three-figure mark now. Similarly, Hindu population in Pakistan today finds itself below the 2 per cent mark, while in Bangladesh, it has dwindled from being almost a third of the total population in 1950 to about 20 per cent in 1971 to less than 8 per cent today. Worse, if a leading Bangladeshi intellectual, Prof Abdul Barkat of Dhaka University, is to be believed, there won't be a Hindu in that country after 30 years. There is no doubt that minorities, especially Hindus, are facing existential crises in the neighbourhood. The same cannot be said about Muslims, though a few Islamic sects like Shias and Ahmediyyas do feel the occasional brunt of Islamic fundamentalism. Without denying

the scale of persecution faced by them, it would be ludicrous on India's part to grant a CAA-like relief to the descendants of those who had actively participated in its Partition. The fact of the matter is that Shias and Ahmediyyas, among others, were at the forefront of the Pakistan project. In fact, the main architect of the Pakistan movement, Mohammed Ali Jinnah, too was a Shia Muslim, today facing the brunt of Islamic fundamentalism. So, can the Indian state open its arms for the very people who once took an active part in its dismemberment? What's the guarantee that the descendants of the same sects won't participate in a similar Partition-like movement in future? Can the Indian State take this chance? But why special treatment for Hindus, critics could still ask. The answer lies beyond the Liaquat-Nehru pact of 1950. One can also for a moment ignore the civilisational aspect of the crisis where Hindus have no country but India to secure their safety and security. What makes the Indian state obligated to look after the Hindus of the neighbourhood is the fact that these people stayed back at the time of Partition after Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru proactively discouraged them from leaving the territories that would later become Pakistan.

Modi's India is ensuring it doesn't end up on the losing side this time

Many centuries ago when the world at large didn't have much clue about statecraft and strategy, Kautilya had advised Chandragupta Maurya, his disciple, that the country with which his kingdom would share an immediate border will always be its enemy. But the enemy's enemy will be a friend and hence all strategic calculation must be undertaken keeping this basic premise in mind. It seems India was following this exact logic when a set of very interesting images from Afghanistan splashed across the media this week. An Indian delegation led by JP Singh, joint secretary in the Ministry of External Affairs, met Taliban's foreign minister Amir Khan Muttaqi in Kabul. The Indian delegation also met former President Hamid Karzai,

officials of the UN Assistance Mission to Afghanistan as well as some people from the business community. This was the second such public engagement between India and Taliban after the latter returned to power in 2021. The first public engagement took place in 2022 when at that time also, Joint Secretary Singh met Taliban's foreign minister Muttaqi. In the last three years since Taliban has come back to rule the country by establishing the Islamic Emirate of Afghanistan, India's diplomatic engagement with the new rulers has been on a very firm footing. Time and again, India's foreign policy establishment has invoked civilisational ties and the role of history to justify maintaining strong ties with Kabul. Not without Prime

Minister Narendra Modi urging Taliban to form an inclusive government in the country. Although, India has not accorded diplomatic recognition to the state set up by Taliban yet but it has continued to engage the various stakeholders in Afghanistan including Taliban itself. A major part of this engagement is focused on humanitarian aid to people of Afghanistan which is being coordinated by a technical team posted by India since June 2022. As a part of this aid, India had provided Afghanistan with food-grains to tide over an unprecedented food shortage, medical aid that also included Covid-19 vaccines besides continued support for more than 500 projects in critical sectors such as power, water supply, road.

Crime and cupid: Intriguing romance of criminals

After one of the most headline-grabbing and glitzy pre-wedding functions in the recent past (Anant Ambani and his soon-to-be wife Radhika Merchant) just a few days ago, a drastically different romantic union has captured the public's imagination in the past week or so: the nuptials of two of India's high profile criminals, Gangster Sandeep alias Kala Jathedi and 'history sheeter', Anuradha Chaudhary who also goes by the moniker 'Madam Minz', in Delhi's Dwarka. It was an unusual wedding with most of the baraatis/wedding guests being heavily armed policemen, including SWAT commandoes carrying hi-tech weapons, deployed to prevent the gangster from escaping and also to protect him from rival gangs' assassination attempts. Sandeep who is currently incarcerated at Tihar jail was granted parole between 10 am to 4 pm to complete his wedding rituals. A known associate of gangster Lawrence Bishnoi, Kala Jathedi faces over a dozen cases of armed robbery, attempts to murder, murder and extortion in Delhi, Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. His lady love Anuradha Chaudhary is no shy bride, a 'history sheeter' herself currently out on bail, and facing several cases involving money laundering, abduction, and illegal arms in Rajasthan and Delhi. The lovey-dovey twosome's romance reportedly started in



2020, when they were introduced through a mutual associate Vicky Singh in Indore. Delhi Special Cell proved to be quite the Grinch as they arrested our local Bonnie and Clyde-inspired couple from a dhaba on the Yamuna-Saharanpur expressway in July of 2021. The couple remained devoted to each other and finally married on Tuesday, 12 February Though probably not an aspiration to most people, this unsociable and misanthropic love story is the stuff movie scripts and novels are made of. There is a word for it in the English dictionary: hybristophilia. It is defined as feeling romantic or sexual arousal for criminals or an act of crime by itself. Psychologists say, shared experiences or common tendencies and habits are often an emotional binding factor, so this could also be a reason for real-life criminal couples to fall in love with each other. As distasteful as this phenomenon might be, there are many such couples in history, their infatuation and intimacy ignited by a common passion for psy-

chopathic/criminal behaviour. Some of the more high-profile precedents for such romantic unions are: Bonnie and Clyde: One of the most iconic outlaw couples of the 20th century Bonnie Parker and Clyde Barrow were idolized for their dedication to each other through prison breaks, robberies and murder. They met each other at a mutual friend's place in West Dallas, USA, but their budding romance was quickly cut short when Clyde was imprisoned for auto theft, his crime just catapulting Bonnie's affection for him. Classic case of hybristophilia. Bonnie helped him escape by smuggling a gun into prison and the two soon descended into a life of crime, committing robberies, burglaries and murders for the next couple of years around Texas and the Midwest while they remained on the run. They were finally killed in a shootout when they were ambushed by law enforcement officials on the side of a highway in Louisiana in May, 1934. Their "love story" was further romanticised.

Double Income No Kids: A cause for alarm rather than a sign of liberal feminism

DINK - Double Income No Kids is the new cool. Married young women often throw around this label under the garb of feminist choice, asserting their desire to enjoy their freedom and pursue their careers without any hindrances. In this article, I do not intend to question women's ability to choose, but I do want to provoke them to delve deeper into the societal structures that have made this choice attractive. Especially in the current context of falling birth rates in many parts of the world. We are facing a dire reality, the world is losing the

ability to reproduce itself. It is about time that we pause and question, what is going on? Why are increasing numbers of women today, particularly those with economic resources, unwilling to have children?

The cost of liberal feminism

Growing up as a young Indian woman in Dubai and Canada in the late 1990s and early 2000s I was not expected to learn to cook, clean and demonstrate any maternal inclinations. From an early age, I defied gender norms in the clothes I wore, choosing to

play tennis at a young age when most girls around me were not playing any sport, and chomping down shawarmas not caring about putting on weight. I was by no means unique in my preferences. But at the time, I was one of the few girls in my social circle who had the luxury of navigating unconventional choices. The liberal feminist discourse of (individualistic) choice was still new and only more available to me due to parents who were intent on being progressive. As with any social shift, while allowing me immense

privilege and freedom, this came with unintended consequences: I grew up believing the world was "my" oyster, and there were no limitations or costs associated with pursuing what I wanted. I just had to do the hard yards and get there. Little did I know. I am telling you this because the aberration of my childhood is now the norm in well-to-do urban parts of the world. Young women are told it is okay and even desirable to operate based on their individualistic preferences, needs, and wants.

More checks on Big Tech for anti-competitive acts



NEW DELHI: A government-appointed panel has recommended enactment of a new law - Digital Competition Act - to allow the Competition Commission to monitor large digital enterprises and intervene before instances of anti-competitive conduct transpire. The move is meant to deal with entities such as Google, Facebook and Amazon that use data ("the defining feature of digital markets") and supplement the Competition Act. It will apply to a list of pre-defined "core digital services"

that are susceptible to concentration, the 10-member panel headed by corporate affairs secretary Manoj Govil said. When it comes to anti-competitive practices, mergers and acquisitions is to be kept out of the proposed law, while in case of nine others the draft legislation has worked out a principle-based framework, laying down the broad contours of each of them. A parliamentary standing committee report, which had dealt with the issue and has been used

extensively by the panel had listed anti-competitive practices such as anti-steering that is seen in app stores and prevents users from tapping into third party apps, or self-preferencing by marketplaces to promote their own products, along with other concerns such as bundling, deep discounting, exclusive tie-ups, search and raking preferences, advertising policies and data usage that allows personal data to be stored by large digital enterprises for profiling customers and sale to others.

ICICI Pru MF curbs flows into mid, small-cap funds

MUMBAI: ICICI Prudential Mutual Fund on Tuesday said it will not accept any fresh investment in mid-cap and small-cap funds, effective March 14 until further notice. I-Pru MF joined a long list of fund houses that have over the last few months stopped inflows into small-cap funds. Some fund houses have suspended inflows into mid-cap funds, too. These decisions have been taken to insulate investors in these funds from excessive market volatility and loss in value of investments in case of sudden slide in stocks



from these market segments of the market. On, Sebi chief Madhabi Puri Buch had also flagged about froth building up in mid and small-cap funds, referring to high valuations. The regulator had also, through MF industry trade body Amfi, alerted fund houses to strengthen their risk

management mechanisms relating to schemes belonging to these categories to safeguard investors. Sebi chairperson has also announced that the regulator is currently carrying out stress testing for mid-cap and small-cap funds, and the results would be out this Friday.

Now in Nepal, Scan & Pay With UPI

Delhi: The introduction of UPI for cross-border transactions has been announced by Phonepe Payment Service of Nepal and NIPL, the international division of NPCI. With UPI-enabled apps, Indian customers may now make quick UPI payments at a variety of business outlets in Nepal. Indian consumers



can easily accept UPI payments from merchants connected to the

Fonepay network. The Global Fintech Fest in September 2023 in India marked the launch of the Indo-Nepal UPI payments program. The collaboration is live and enables person-to-merchant UPI transactions between India and Nepal using QR codes.

CAPSULES

Nibiru Chain launches public mainnet

Nibiru Chain, the developer-centric Layer 1 blockchain platform, has launched its public mainnet and secured listings on four major exchanges: Kucoin, Gate.io, Bybit, and MEXC. It targets developers in gaming, real-world assets, NFTs, and DeFi.

The platform offers users the ability to stake with NIBI validators, participate in governance, and secure unique domains with NIBID.

Nibiru introduces web3 gaming through Chess3, allowing players to earn rewards while enjoying chess. The platform facilitates the minting and trading of NFTs on Dropspace and explores real estate opportunities through Coded Estates' testnet. Developers on Nibiru Chain are incentivized through rewards, receiving a portion of transaction fees for smart contract usage, with plans for additional rewards based on Total Value Locked (TVL) metrics. Looking ahead, Nibiru Chain aims to launch its genesis NFT collection, expand into the Asia-Pacific (APAC) market, and introduce parallel optimistic execution to address blockchain scalability.

Industrial growth slows to 3.8% in Jan

NEW DELHI: Retail inflation remained unchanged in Feb but food and beverages prices inched up, while non-food items eased during the month. Separate data showed industrial output growth moderated in Jan from Dec's upwardly revised number. Data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) on Tuesday showed retail inflation remained unchanged at 5.1% in Feb but below the 6.4% recorded in Feb last year.

Mutual fund SIP reached Rs 19,000 crore for the first time in February

"The greatest number of SIP accounts was 820.17 lakh in February, up from 791.71 lakh in January"

Delhi: February SIP contributions set a record. February's contribution was Rs 19,186.58 crore, up from Rs 18,838.33 crore in January. The SIP AUM rose 2.49% to Rs 10.52 lakh crore in February from Rs 10.26 lakh crore in December. The greatest number of SIP accounts was 820.17 lakh in February, up from 791.71 lakh in January.



New SIPs registered in January reached a milestone. New SIPs fell in February. February saw 49.79 lakh SIPs versus 51.84 lakh in January. Mutual fund AAUM was Rs 54.52 lakh crore in February, up from Rs 52.89 lakh crore in

January. Mutual Fund folios reached a record 17,41,95,535 in February, up from 16,95,59,182 in January. In February, retail MF Folios with equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes achieved an all-time high of

13,94,91,744. February retail AUM, including equity, hybrid, and solution-oriented schemes, was Rs 30.70 lakh crore with an average of 30.72 lakh crore. According to February 2024 data, SIP accounts increased to 8.20 crores with 49.79 lakhs new registrations. This shows investors' dedication to wealth accumulation. These developments suggest that investors are becoming financially educated and that collaboration is creating a smart investing landscape. Retail investor engagement nationwide shows that the mutual fund business is growing and important "said.

ITC's top shareholder BAT to sell 3.5% stake for \$2bn

KOLKATA: British American Tobacco, one of the world's largest tobacco products companies that is also the biggest shareholder in tobacco-to-FMCG major ITC, is selling about 3.5% stake in the Indian conglomerate, aiming to garner about Rs 16,800 crore (about \$2 billion). London-headquartered BAT will sell nearly 44 crore shares of ITC at a price band of Rs 384-400 through block deals on Wednesday, the deal's term sheet showed. At the lower end of the price band, the shares are priced at a 5% discount to the stock's Tuesday close on the BSE at Rs 404. ITC's block deal will be one of the largest in India. The biggest block deal in India was executed in May 2020 when global pharma major



GSK had sold 5.7% in FMCG major HUL for about Rs 25,600 crore. BAT holds a little over 29% stake in ITC but it is not the promoter of the company. BAT's top management has been talking about monetising part of its stake in ITC for three to four months, provided it could successfully navigate India's strict foreign holding rules in tobacco companies. BAT had indicated that its holding in ITC would not fall below the strategically important 25% mark. "They (BAT) will continue to remain a major shareholder in ITC," a source told. On Tuesday evening, BAT through a statement said that after the completion of this block trade, "BAT will remain a significant shareholder of ITC.

Apple, Google agreed to 'defend' search deal from regulators

Apple's agreement with Google to use it as the default search engine on iPhones includes a provision for the two companies to "support and defend" the deal against government scrutiny. Apple's Senior Vice President of Services, Eddy Cue, revealed this during an antitrust trial. The trial aims to determine whether Google pushed its way onto Apple devices at the expense of competitors. Apple, Google agreed to 'defend' search deal from regulators Representative image (IANS)



ment scrutiny, a top Apple executive said at an antitrust trial. Their longtime contract was renegotiated in 2016 to include the provision, Apple's Senior Vice President of Services Eddy Cue disclosed Tuesday in a Washington federal court, where the US government is pressing its claim that Google operates a monopoly in the search business. Cue, the architect of the most recent version of the agreement, said the provision for a joint defense was added at Google's request.

Panasonic's arm looks to boost production in India

TOKYO: Panasonic Electric Works Company, a subsidiary of one of the world's largest electronics companies, wants to enhance its production capacity in India. It is also planning to expand its footprint in the Indian market over next five years, with a focus on wiring device business segment, including switchgear and lighting. The company is planning to leverage its surplus facilities at its Sri City Industrial Park factory.

Pakistan inflation slows to 23.1% yr/yr in Feb

KARACHI: Pakistan's consumer price index for February was up 23.1% from the same month last year, marking the slowest rate of annual inflation since June 2022, data from the Pakistan Bureau of Statistics showed on Friday.

The country has been struggling with soaring inflation, which last May hit an all-time high of 38% on an annual basis, partly driven by new taxation measures the government imposed to comply with International Monetary Fund demands. Islamabad's funding agreement with the IMF expires on April 11. On a month-on-month basis the February CPI was unchanged, having risen every month since the fiscal year began last July. Pakistan's finance ministry projected in a monthly report on Thursday that inflation would hover around 24.5%-25.5% in February, with expectations of further easing to 23.5%-24.5% in March as the crop situation and the supply of commodities improves. The annual CPI for January had clocked in at 28.3%. February's improvement on that was partly due to base effects. In January, Pakistan's central bank held its benchmark interest rate at 22% for the fifth policy-setting meeting in a row and raised its full-year inflation projections.

Once a global ideal, Germany's economy struggles with an energy shock that's exposing longtime

ESSEN: For most of this century, Germany racked up one economic success after another, dominating global markets for high-end products like luxury cars and industrial machinery, selling so much to the rest of the world that half the economy ran on exports. Jobs were plentiful, the government's financial coffers grew as other European countries drowned in debt, and books were written about what other countries could learn from Germany. No longer. Now, Germany is the world's worst-performing major developed economy, with both the International Monetary Fund and European Union expecting it to shrink this year. It follows Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the loss of Moscow's cheap natural gas - an unprecedented shock to Germany's energy-intensive industries, long the manufacturing powerhouse of Europe. The sudden underperformance by Europe's largest economy has set off a wave of criticism.

World Bank maps out plans to further boost lending by \$100 bln-plus over a decade

WASHINGTON: The World Bank on Thursday proposed steps that would boost its lending to developing countries by an additional \$100 billion over a decade as part of an ongoing reform process aimed at helping the bank expand its mission to include climate change.

In a 24-page report to the joint ministerial committee that oversees the bank and the International Monetary Fund, the bank's management said it would ask shareholders to approve a hybrid capital measure and a new portfolio guarantee platform that together could boost lending by over \$100 billion. That amount would come on top of measures already being implemented that will boost the bank's lending to developing countries by up to \$50 billion.

Chocolates with betel instead of cocoa, but just as delicious

NEW DELHI: Unable to offer any explanations for the unsubstantiated comments on PM Modi made by its AI platform Gemini, American tech giant Google said a 'sorry' to the govt and called the platform 'unreliable', minister of state for IT & Electronics Rajeev Chandrasekhar has told. "We had sent them a notice, seeking an explanation on the unsubstantiated results thrown up by Gemini regarding a particular query on PM Modi. They replied and said, 'Sorry, the platform is unreliable,' the minister said as the govt announced that AI platforms will now need a 'permit' from the state to operate in the country.

MS Dhoni's final IPL season? AB de Villiers gives a major update on the legend

NEW DELHI: As MS Dhoni gears up for another IPL season with the Chennai Super Kings (CSK), speculation looms over whether this might be his final campaign in the league. Having led CSK to their fifth title triumph in the previous season, Dhoni's leadership and experience remain invaluable assets for the team. As the Yellow Brigade prepares to step onto the field once again, all eyes are on Dhoni as he aims to steer CSK towards yet another shot at IPL glory. While questions persist about his future beyond this season, Dhoni's focus is undoubtedly fixed on the task at hand: guiding his team to success, starting with the highly



anticipated clash against Royal Challengers Bangalore in the season opener on March 22 at Chennai's MA Chidambaram Stadium. South Africa legend AB de Villiers said Dhoni's team will once enter into the tournament as title favourites. "There were a lot of rumours

about MS Dhoni finishing up last year, that was not the case, ladies and gentlemen. He would be back again. Will this be his final season? No one knows. He just seems to be this diesel engine that never ends. He keeps running. What an incredible player, what an incredible captain,"

De Villiers said on his YouTube channel. De Villiers, who represented RCB and Delhi Daredevils (now Delhi Capitals) during his IPL career, lauded CSK and credited Dhoni for making the five-time champions an 'intimidating team'. "I believe it's through their presence, it's through the leadership of MSD, a calm coach in Stephen Fleming, senior players in Ravi Jadeja, and others who have really set this incredible culture alive. They are a very intimidating team to play against. They are never easy to beat," De Villiers said. "That is always a great characteristic of a very successful unit, of a very successful franchise.

'I am the lowest...': Rahane after guiding Mumbai to Ranji Trophy title win

NEW DELHI: Despite enduring a challenging period with the bat, Ajinkya Rahane found immense joy as he led Mumbai to their 42nd Ranji Trophy title at the Wankhede on Thursday. Mumbai secured victory over Vidarbha by 169 runs to clinch the prestigious trophy. Rahane had struggled throughout the Ranji season, accumulating only 214 runs and ranking ninth among Mumbai's run-scorers. However, his pivotal knock of 73 in the final's second innings, coupled with a crucial 130-run partnership alongside the emerging centurion Musheer Khan, proved decisive in setting an insurmountable target for Vidarbha. "Even though I am the lowest



scorer for my team, I am the happiest to lift the trophy. As a player, you will have ups and downs. It's about creating atmosphere in dressing room and enjoy each other's success. This is a special moment," Rahane said at the post-match presentation ceremony. "Last year, we failed to qualify for the knockouts by one run. We had to create the right culture and attitude in the team. We created a fitness culture and I would thank MCA for providing all the sup-

port," Rahane added. Rahane was all praise for Vidarbha's fighting effort on the fourth and fifth day of the final. "I want to appreciate Vidarbha's fight. Chasing 538, giving up is easy but they played really well." Player of the Match Musheer Khan and Player of the Tournament Tanush Kotian were thankful to their skipper for his guidance. "I enjoyed batting with him," said Musheer, adding, "During our partnership, he would very nicely explain

what he wanted from me." Kotian thanked Rahane for helping him unlock his true batting potential which saw him score over 500 runs. "Last year I got a bit more confidence in my batting and I worked hard with my father. Aju dada (that's how youngsters in Mumbai team address him) also helped me a lot," Kotian said, underlining Rahane's contribution in creating a healthy dressing room atmosphere. For the retiring Dhawal Kulkarni, Rahane said that any amount of praise would be less considering his contribution to Mumbai cricket. Dhawal has played six finals, for Mumbai and won five Ranji Trophy titles.

'Dhoni sahab is there...': Shardul opens up on CSK aspirations ahead of IPL 2024

NEW DELHI: Following Mumbai's triumph in clinching their 42nd Ranji Trophy title, all-rounder Shardul Thakur is gearing up for a new challenge as he prepares to don the Chennai Super Kings (CSK) jersey in the upcoming Indian Premier League (IPL) season. Thakur, who played a pivotal role in Mumbai's Ranji success, expressed eagerness to learn from the legendary MS Dhoni as he embarks on his IPL journey with CSK. The 17th edition of the IPL is set to kick off on March 22, with defending champions Chennai Super Kings slated to lock horns with Royal Challengers Bangalore in a highly anticipated encounter at the MA Chidambaram Stadium. Thakur, who returns to the franchise that played a significant role in shaping his cricketing career, spoke to ANI



about his aspirations for the IPL season ahead. "Dhoni sahab is there, he is one of the greatest cricketers ever in the world. I will play under him again and I have played under him before, so I will try to learn a lot of things and how he gets performance out of players," remarked the Mumbai and India all-rounder. Reflecting on Mumbai's Ranji triumph, Thakur applauded the performance of spin-bowling all-rounder Tanush Kotian, who played a crucial role with both bat and ball throughout the tournament. Kotian's stellar contri-

butions earned him the prestigious 'Player of the Tournament' award. In five Ranji matches this season, Thakur showcased his all-round prowess by scoring 255 runs and claiming 16 wickets, including a memorable centenary against Tamil Nadu in the semifinal. Thakur's stellar performances in big matches have earned him recognition both domestically and on the international stage. Mumbai's dominant display in the Ranji Trophy final against Vidarbha saw them clinch victory.

GURUGRAM : Dibber, Northern Europe's largest preschool chain with 600+ preschools across 10 countries, has announced the opening of its first preschool in Gurugram offering Nordic pedagogy, an emerging pedagogy of choice focusing on children's social, emotional, physical, cognitive and educational needs. Dibber's purpose statement is 'we develop lifelong learners with a heart for the world' and part of this is - having a heart for oneself and others. Dibber's Nordic inspired pedagogy is adapted locally and infuse with the rich cultural heritage and ethos of India, ensuring a child centered, holistic approach that is both culturally relevant and globally copetitive. The school was inaugurated by Mr Kamal Yadav, BJP District President for Gurugram and Mr



Marvin D'Souza, CEO, Dibber Schools India. Speaking at the launch, Mr D'Souza said: "Our decision to expand into this vibrant city stems from our commitment to providing children with the best possible start on their educational journey. With our innovative pedagogy, nurturing environment, passionate teachers, and commit-

ment to quality education, we strive to empower young minds to become lifelong learners and develop appreciation, understanding, and empathy for the world around them. We are excited to embark on this journey in Gurugram and look forward to making a positive impact on the lives of children and

families across the region. Dibber was founded by two passionate educators Randi and Hans Jacob Sundby in 2003. They developed the 'Dibber Childhood' a well-researched framework, that offers every child a supportive and caring environment where they develop positive relationships, experiences, and friendships.

At Dibber, every child is seen as unique and valuable, and is respected as individuals. Spanning 13000 sq foot, in Sector 50 Gurugram, the school has a capacity to accommodate more than 125 children. Drawing inspiration from Nordic learning principles, the school offers natural open spaces, extensive outdoor areas, a splash pool, and an extensive outdoor playground. Dibber's Gurugram facility also school in Gurugram features dedicated rooms for Dibber's unique 'Learning Friends' and offers a range of extra-curricular activities such as music, drama, movement and second language learning. Dibber Gurugram will offer both full-day and half-day programs designed to provide a holistic environment where learning and nurturing are a priority.

Mitchell Starc to be KKR's X-factor in IPL: Gautam Gambhir

KOLKATA: He is back. Gautam Gambhir, the man under whose leadership the Kolkata Knight Riders had won the IPL twice in 2012 and 2014, arrived in the city to guide the team in a new avatar. "I have always mentioned that KKR to me is not a franchise, but an emotion. I am thus happy to be back," the KKR mentor said on Thursday evening. The former India opener, who returned to reunite with KKR after seven long years, was aware of the fans' expectations. Gambhir joined the Knights in 2011 and was with the team till 2017. During the peri-



od, KKR qualified for the IPL playoffs five times and also made the final of the now-defunct Champions League T20 in 2014. "I know there will be

expectations and I hope to live up to it and make the fans happy," he stated amidst a roaring reception at the airport terminal gate.

Gambhir, who rejoins the purple brigade after a two-year stint with the Lucknow Super Giants, felt Australian pacer Mitchell Starc, whom

the KKR bought for a whopping sum of Rs 24.75 crore in the last auction, will be the team's X-factor this time. "I don't think the price tag will be an added pressure for him. I only hope he can do for KKR what he does for Australia in international cricket," he said. KKR will have their first practice session at the Eden Gardens on Friday with Indian players while their foreign cricketers will start arriving soon. KKR will open their campaign in 2024 IPL against Sunrisers Hyderabad at home on March 23.

'Outside interference...': Bravo on Chennai Super Kings ahead of IPL

NEW DELHI: Chennai Super Kings' dominance in the IPL isn't solely attributed to MS Dhoni's captaincy or the relaxed demeanor of its players. Bowling coach Dwayne Bravo points to the team's consistent success being fueled by minimal external interference. Undoubtedly, Chennai Super Kings stand as the epitome of consistency in the Indian Premier League, boasting the highest number of playoff appearances and clinching the tournament title five times. "There is no outside interference or pressure from owners, and they allow the players to be themselves. This is the beauty of this franchise," Bravo said. Speaking about the team composition ahead of the upcoming edition of the popular T20 league, he said, "It's good. We have a very good squad. We want to continue from where we left off last season." "We did some really great things with a very young bowling attack," he told PTI on the sidelines of the Avira Diamonds store launch here on Thursday. CSK



will enter the tournament as defending Gujarat champions having beaten Gujarat Titans in the final last year. "This year, we get back Shardul (Thakur), which is a bonus. Fizz (Mustafizur Rahman) is also experienced and has quality. "(Matheesha) Pathirana, we call him baby Malinga. Tushar Deshpande, who had a good last season. It feels good to work with these guys, and looking forward to the upcoming season," Bravo added. Bravo, one of the leading wicket-takers in IPL history, had called time on his playing career in the league in 2022 but remained with Chennai Super Kings in the role of the bowling coach. Bravo, who had played the tournament since its inception in 2008.

Indian cheetah family grows: Kuno welcomes five new cubs, totaling 13

BHOPAL: The population of Indian born cheetahs inside Kuno National Park in Sheopur district of Madhya Pradesh now stands at 13 with five new cubs spotted on Saturday.

Total number of cheetahs, including cubs, in Kuno is now 26, marking a significant milestone for India's ambitious conservation project. Officials say the project is heading towards the right direction as planned. Union environment minister Bhopender Yadav announced on Sunday that five cubs have been born to South African Cheetah Gamini. Also, this is the first litter by a South African Cheetah. Previous ones were by Namibians. "This takes the tally of the Indian born cubs to 13. This is the fourth cheetah litter on Indian soil and the first litter of cheetahs brought from South Africa," Yadav said on X. Vincent van



der Merwe from The Metapopulation Initiative expressed joy on the birth of the cubs and said, "Cheetahs are fragile large predators, and their reintroduction is extremely challenging. Nine of the first 10 reintroduction attempts in South Africa failed. We learned from our mistakes, never gave up, and today South Africa supports a growing wild cheetah population. A big congratulations to our Indian colleagues for persevering. The recent births represent the beginning of the recovery of wild cheetah populations across their historic range in Asia." In January Namibian

Cheetah Jwala had introduced three cubs in its second litter. She had delivered four cubs in its first litter of which one survived. Prior to that Cheetah Aasha had welcomed three members into the Kuno family. Ten Cheetahs have died since this project was launched by PM Narendra Modi. In May 2023, Project Cheetah faced a setback when three of four cubs born to Jwala succumbed to scorching temperatures, reaching up to 46-47 degrees Celsius, making it the hottest day of the summer season. The National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) responded.

'Bachi Khuchi Shiv Sena chief': Nirupam slams

NEW DELHI: Amid discussions over seat-sharing among the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) parties in Maharashtra, prominent Congress leader Sanjay Nirupam criticised Uddhav Thackeray for prematurely announcing the candidate for Mumbai's North-West Lok Sabha constituency.



MVA, a coalition of Shiv Sena (UBT), NCP (Sharad Pawar faction), and Congress, is currently in talks for a poll pact ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Nirupam expressed his disappointment over the decision to announce Amol Kirtikar as the Shiv Sena candidate for the

Mumbai North-West constituency before finalising seat-sharing arrangements within MVA. The Mumbai North-West seat, which Nirupam himself is eyeing, is still a point of contention within the alliance as no official decision has been made. "Yesterday evening, the chief of the remaining Shiv Sena declared MVA

Government likely to appoint two new election commissioners by March 15

NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India is likely to get two new election commissioners by March 15 to fill the vacancies left after the retirement of Anup Chandra Pandey and the surprise exit of Arun Goel, a PTI report said citing sources. A search committee

under Union law minister Arjun Ram Megwal and comprising the cabinet secretaries of the home department and department of personnel and training will prepare two separate panels of five names each for the two posts. Later, a selection committee

headed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and comprising a Union minister and Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha Adhir Ranjan Chowdhury will then name two persons for appointment as election commissioners before the official appointment by the President.

BJP brass summons top Odisha netas to Delhi

BHUBANESWAR: Amid buzz in political circles that the coalition talk between BJP and BJD could be in the final stages, the saffron party's Odisha leadership was summoned to Delhi by the party's central hierarchy on Sunday. Talks are doing the rounds that state BJP functionaries may be asked by the top leadership to refrain from making misleading comments on the alliance after party's Odisha chief Manmohan Samal strongly ruled out a coalition with BJD upon his return from



Delhi on Friday. Samal along with general secretary (organisation) Manas Mohanty, state election in-charge Vijaypal Singh Tomar, and co-in-charge Lata Usendi reached the national

capital in the evening, their second visit to Delhi in the last four days as part of the strategy to fine-tune the alliance. On the fresh summon to Delhi, Samal said the central leadership

wants to discuss the ground situation for the upcoming Lok Sabha and assembly elections in state. "I am not aware of the agenda of the fresh meeting though it will surely revolve around our preparedness," Samal said before leaving for Delhi. Asked about the alliance, Samal said, "I do not want to comment on the alliance matter." Samal's response comes a day after the emergence of a short video, featuring chief minister Naveen Patnaik and his aide V K Pandian.

'A sinking ship': Expelled Congress leader targets party

NEW DELHI: Expelled Congress leader Acharya Pramod Krishnam on Sunday launched a scathing attack on Rahul Gandhi's recent remarks on 'Modi Ki Guarantee', stating that someone who has lost their mental balance can say anything. In an interview with ANI, Acharya Krishnam expressed his disappointment over the mass exodus of members from the Congress party, attributing it to the party's 'anti-Ram' and 'anti-Sanatan' stance. Responding to Rahul's



claim that there was 'no guarantee' of PM Modi returning for a third term, the expelled leader dismissed it as the ramblings of a person who has lost their mind,

comparing it to the nonsensical statements of children. "See, a person, who has lost his mind, can say anything. As we have seen with children, they often

ramble on without making much sense. One need not take the words of a child or a senseless person seriously," Krishnam told ANI.

"The only person responsible for the prevailing ruinous state of the Congress is Rahul Gandhi. As long as Rahul Gandhi is in the Congress, there is no saving the Congress," he added. Acharya Krishnam questioned who would align themselves with a party that stands against Sanatan, despite residing in the country.

Sandeshkhali: Suspended TMC leader Shahjahan sent to 8-day CBI custody

NEW DELHI: Sandeshkhali-accused Shahjahan Sheikh was sent to four-day CBI custody by Basirhat Sub-Divisional Court on Sunday in connection with the January 5 attack on the Enforcement Directorate team in Sandeshkhali.



Earlier in the day, Sheikh was presented before the Basirat court as his 10-day police custody came to an end today. Previously, following orders from the Calcutta high court, the Crime Investigation Department (CID) of Kolkata Police transferred custody of Sheikh Shahjahan to the CBI. The high court, issuing a contempt notice to the CID, mandated on Wednesday that the case concerning the assault on ED officials be transferred to the CBI along with custody of the main

accused, Shahjahan. Additionally, the court criticized the state police for their inconsistent approach in the matter. "The accused is a political influencer. The investigation should be handed over to the CBI and the custody of the accused by 4:15 pm today," the high court observed. After evading authorities for nearly two months, the suspended TMC leader was apprehended by the West Bengal Police on February 29. Following his arrest, he was presented before the

Basirhat court, which granted a 10-day police remand. Besides being implicated in the assault on an ED team during a raid on his Sandeshkhali residence, linked to an alleged ration scam, Shahjahan faces charges of land encroachment, extortion, and mistreatment of women alongside his accomplices. Outraged by his actions, women from Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district staged violent protests, condemning Shahjahan and his associates for their egregious behavior.

Cover for 43 BJP netas in Bastar after 9 killed by Reds in a year

RAIPUR: Chhattisgarh government has provided Y+, Y, and X category security to 43 BJP leaders in insurgency-affected Bastar ahead of the Lok Sabha elections following a string of murders of BJP netas by Maoists. Nine BJP leaders have been murdered in Bastar division since Feb 2023, the last two in the space of a week this month. Bijapur BJP district president, Srinivas Mudaliar, had written to home minister Amit Shah on March 7, saying party workers need security. On Sunday, police headquarters issued an order listing names of 43 BJP leaders from Bastar who will be guarded by



the highest level of Y+ security. Four others have got Y-security. In his letter to Shah Mudaliar said: "Naxalites are targeting BJP leaders out of frustration because of the state govt's anti-Naxal campaigns. BJP officials and workers are always in fear of

death in Bijapur. Recently, a party leader was brutally murdered, creating an atmosphere of fear among officials. Several leaders are constantly targeted by Naxals, forcing them to frequently change their residence at night."

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Delhi Development Authority auction for Phase-III

Delhi: The DDA will auction Phase III of its Diwali Special Housing Scheme. The program offers 257 penthouse, high-income, and middle-income units in Dwarka's various areas. Sector 19B has two penthouses, 123 HIG units, and 132 MIG in Sector 14. DDA stated their tentative reserve prices. 5 crore, 2.1 crore, 1.44 crore. While e-auction registration and online earnest money deposits close on February 28, the auction will be held on March 5. The deposits for MIG flats are 10 lakh, HIG flats 15 lakh, and penthouses 25 lakh. Participants must register on the e-auction portal for Rs 2,500 per flat. It added that this sum is non-refundable and non-adjustable. DDA began e-booking 2,093 premium flats and penthouses in Dwarka Sector 19B, Sector 14 and Loknayakan Puram on November 23. It has 170 super HIG, 946 HIG, 14 penthouses in Dwarka 19B, 316 MIG.

Opposition parties when in power used your votes against your interests: CM

Gonda/Lucknow

Stressing that the double engine government is working for the development of people with utmost sensitivity, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Thursday, hit out at the previous governments for disrespecting people's vote and working against their interests. Addressing a public meeting at Shaheed-e-Azam Sardar Bhagat Singh Thomson Inter College Ground in Gonda, Yogi said: "Your one vote changed the destiny of the country. Previously, those you elected were hesitant to even mention the name of Lord Ram. Whenever your festival came, they used to impose curfew. They attacked faith and unleashed anarchy. They used to create barriers in the security and employment of youth.

They used your vote against your interests." "Besides, the prosperity of farmers



was trampled upon and robberies were committed at traders' houses. But today, the daughters and the traders are safe in Uttar Pradesh. The double engine government also respects faith", he added. The Chief Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of 422 development projects worth Rs 1689.46 crore on the occasion. He also inaugurated the Autonomous State Medical College and announced to name it after freedom fighter Devi Baksh Singh, who played an important role during the 1857 revolt. CM also distrib-

uted keys, cheques, certificates etc. to the beneficiaries of various schemes. Yogi informed that appointment letters were given to 100 youths in Lucknow on Thursday morning itself, adding that they were joining frontline services. The Chief Minister said that the entire Gonda has gone to visit Ayodhya. Gonda is benefiting the most from Lord Ram's presence in Ayodhya with all the development coming to the district. "Good governance brings welfare to the poor and respects the faith in this way", he asserted.

SP and Congress are 'liabilities,' they should be thrown out of the country: Yogi Adityanath

Ayodhya

In a scathing attack on the opposition, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath said on Thursday that the SP and Congress lack respect for faith and are incapable of ensuring livelihoods. Branding them as "liabilities," the CM emphasized that "they should be thrown out of the country." Addressing a huge public meeting organized at the Government Inter College here, the CM remarked, "They cannot provide food to the impoverished, nor can they arrange housing, medicine, or education. They fail to ensure the safety of our daughters and businessmen. In such circumstances, we should not endure these 'liabilities' any longer; they should be removed and thrown out of the country." The Chief Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 411 development projects worth Rs 1,090 crore on the occasion. Additionally, CM Yogi participated in the closing ceremony of the Virat Kisan Mela and



Agricultural Exhibition. He also distributed certificates and selection letters to beneficiaries of various government schemes. In his address, the Chief Minister highlighted that from January 22 to March 10, over one crore devotees had the opportunity to have 'darshan' of Lord Shri Ram Lalla. "It is by the grace of God that the darshan and worship are progressing smoothly, peacefully, and securely," he remarked. He also lauded the people of Ayodhya for setting an exceptional example of hospitality during this period. Highlighting Ayodhya's newfound global resonance, the Chief Minister remarked, "Today, the name of Ayodhya echoes across the world." He contrasted

the current vibrant atmosphere with past skepticism, noting, "Kuch log kaha karte the, Ayodhya mein parinda bhi par nahi maar sakte, ab toh ek crore se adhik shradhdhalu Shri Ram Lala ke navya-divya-bhava mandir mein darshan kar chuke hain (Some people said that not even a bird can fly into Ayodhya but now over one crore devotees have visited the magnificent and divine temple of Shri Ramlala). "The Chief Minister said that Ayodhya is swiftly evolving into the most beautiful city globally. He asked the public, "Would airports, four-lane, six-lane roads have been constructed? Would a safe environment have been fostered in the state under an SP or Congress government?"

CAPSULES

Rcap lenders to get funds back in FY25

Mumbai: Reliance Capital's lenders will receive the proceeds from the company's sale to the Hinduja group only in the next financial year. They had earlier asked for the purchase consideration to be paid in March to enable them to book revenues during the current financial year. IndusInd Holdings, a Hinduja company and the winning bidder, has written to the administrator of Reliance Capital stating that implementing the resolution plan for a company of Reliance Capital's size and scale in less than a month and 10 days (from the date of the NCLT order) is 'not only untenable and impractical, but unimaginable'. In a letter to the administrator, IndusInd Holdings director Moses Harding said that the company remains committed to implementing the resolution plan in accordance with the NCLT order dated Feb 27, 2024 and within the timelines.

On Wednesday, the NCLT allowed an application seeking a correction regarding the 90-day period for implementing the resolution plan. We also published the following articles recently

Reliance capital lenders to get funds back in FY25

Lenders await next year's sale proceeds with a March payment request. IndusInd Holdings finds the timeline impractical but commits to the NCLT order. Correction application filed and pending administrator response. Amid security concerns, Delhi police conducts flag march across national capital after CAA implementation.

Arvind Kejriwal trying to garner votes for LS polls: BJP

New Delhi: BJP on Thursday came down heavily on AAP and chief minister Arvind Kejriwal over his statements on CAA, alleging that he was spreading rumours to garner votes for the Lok Sabha elections.

Ramvir Singh Bidhuri, a BJP senior leader, said Kejriwal's statement shows he is anti-Hindu and anti-humanity. "There have been huge atrocities against Hindus, Sikhs and minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangladesh. In these countries their proper-



ty has either been taken away or destroyed," he said. "Hindu girls are not safe in these countries. Such news is continuously coming that they are kidnapped, converted or murdered. To save themselves from these atrocities and

torture, Hindu, Sikh, Jain, Christian and Parsi families have come to India," Bidhuri said. "By giving shelter to such families and giving them Indian citizenship, Modi govt has fulfilled its moral promise," he said. BJP MP Manoj Tiwari

said, "By opposing CAA, Arvind Kejriwal has proved he is a big enemy of Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Buddhists, Jains and Parsis. CAA is meant to give citizenship. But Kejriwal is spreading lies and hatred.... Kejriwal, you are a machine of lies, dividing the society and provoking it by telling lies."

Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva said Kejriwal was indulging in religious politics as he had lost all empathy. "Not a single statement came from him on Rohingya Muslims," he said.

Average hikes in India to be 9% this year: Deloitte

Bengaluru: The average increment in India is expected to be 9% this year compared to 9.2% in the corresponding period last year, showed the Deloitte India Talent Outlook 2024. Deloitte's latest salary survey shows that increments and promotions in 2024 will be subdued compared to 2023. While lower than last year, increments this year are higher than pre-covid levels across all sectors except IT and BPOs/KPOs. Over 350 organisations across seven sectors were a part of this survey.



The survey also predicted that companies are likely to offer double-digit increments to junior management employees, but with a focus on performance-based differentiation. Organisations may be stricter with their bell

curves, making it harder to secure top ratings. However, top performers can still expect 1.8 times the increments given to average-rated employees, it went on to add. Also, for employees rated below average, the increment is

expected to be lower than last year — 0.6 times in 2023 versus 0.4 times in 2024. The percentage of employees expected to be promoted decreased from 12.3% in 2023 to 11.5% in 2024. Deloitte's survey predicts that organisations are likely to maintain a 7.5% increment for promotions to retain key talent. Regarding performance bonuses, one of every two companies could pay at-target or above-target bonuses in 2024. Attrition rate fell from 20.2% in 2022 to 18.1% in 2023.

Telangana plantation workers send SOS from Malaysia, seek govt help

HYDERABAD: In constant danger of being bitten by snakes, or attacked by wild boars, Indian workers from Telangana are facing a tough time in the plantations of Malaysia. The workers who were lured with the promise of a free visa, are being made to work in rubber and palm oil plantations during the

night. "All we are given is a torch light and gum boots. During the night, we are expected to cut down at least 700 trees of the plantations. We are living in constant danger," a worker from Telangana told TOI over a phone from Malaysia. Two workers from Bangladesh reportedly died after being bitten by snakes in the night.

Scores of workers from Telangana work in Malaysia and it was only after they landed in the country that they got to know that they had to work during night-time and in dangerous conditions. "If your agent did not tell you, that is your problem," a supervisor at one of the plantations reportedly told the workers. Six workers from Telangana are said to have returned as they did not want to risk their lives. Those

who have stayed back are in a critical situation as they reportedly paid 3 lakh to a job agent who promised them work in Malaysia. A worker who felt it was too dangerous to continue working in the plantations asked to be removed from there and is managing to survive with some basic salary. The salary promised was 1,500 Ringgits (26,000) to work in the plantation fields. Now, out of the plantations, the worker is earning only 500 Ringgits. The workers want to make use of the Malaysian govt's amnesty scheme where those staying illegally can leave the country by paying a penalty. "The Indian govt should understand our plight and pay our penalties and also facilitate our return by booking our flight tickets.

Bhowanipore trader killed by biz partner, body dumped in Nimta house

KOLKATA: The body of a 44-year-old medicine wholesaler from Bhowanipore, who went missing from Ballygunge Circular Road on Monday, was found inside a water reservoir on the terrace of his business partner's house in Nimta, north Dum Dum, on Wednesday morning. Police suspect a dispute over Rs 50 lakh that the accused Anirban Gupta (40) had taken from victim Bhavya Lakhani led to the murder. Gupta had allegedly taken the money on the pretext of giving it to the pharma company he used to work for. Gupta has been arrested along with aide Suman Das (38) of Jorabagan, who allegedly helped murder Lakhani and then dump his body in the tank. Gupta reportedly paid him Rs 2,000 and



asked him to take Lakhani's phone to Kolkatta and dispose it of. Accordingly, the latter dumped the phone inside a public toilet in the Burtolla area. The accused have been remanded in police custody till March 27. Prima facie it appears that the trader was battered to death with a cricket bat and stump. There were injury marks on his head, forehead, right eyebrow and right arm. The assailants had also tightly wrapped an adhesive

tape around his neck eight times. After he died, the body was stuffed in a gunny bag and dumped in the tank. A concrete wall was also erected overnight to conceal the body. Police had to dismantle the wall to recover the body. Police said Gupta had opened a fake email ID in the name of a pharma company and from it, he sent a mail to Lakhani, stating that the company had returned the entire amount to Lakhani. Sources said he had

lured Lakhani to his house in Nimta's Probodh Mitra Lane with the assurance of settling the dues. Gupta, who claimed to be the chief medical representative of the firm, had allegedly borrowed the sum from Gupta for supplying medicines. But he didn't supply any medicine, nor did he return the money, said joint CP (crime) Syed Waqar Raza. The homicide wing of detective department has taken over the case.

Paytm employees brace for layoffs

Mumbai: Paytm Payments Bank, which has come under regulatory scrutiny, is likely to lay off employees, sources said. An employee working with the PPBL said that about 20% of the operations team will be laid off by March-end. "We have also been hearing of a major rejig across Paytm by June," the employee told TOI on a condition of anonymity. An email sent to PPBL did not elicit any response.

Paytm is also expected to slash jobs across departments as part of its annual performance exercise. "We continue to transform our operations with AI-powered automation to drive efficiency..." a Paytm spokesperson said.