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

PM Modi: Sandeshkhali culprits will pay, TMC failed women

"If the intent is right, the result is also right," he asserted, giving examples of the schemes to provide houses"



KOLKATA/COOCH

BEHAR: PM Narendra Modi assured Thursday that the "culprits of Sandeshkhali will spend their entire lives in jail", while accusing Trinamool govt in Bengal of failing Sandeshkhali's women, who have accused local TMC leaders of sexual harassment. During a Lok Sabha campaign rally in Cooch Behar, Modi also accused Trinamool govt of corruption and obstructing the implementation of development schemes initiated by the Centre. He alleged that BJP's political rivals were spreading misinformation about Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), while reassuring the audience that those

who have faith in "Ma Bharati" would receive citizenship. "This is Modi ki guarantee," the PM said. Modi highlighted both corruption and Sandeshkhali to show how Trinamool was actively working against the people of Bengal. "The country has seen how the entire state machinery was used to protect the tormentors of Sandeshkhali. We have vowed to punish them," the PM said. "Trinamool is also trying to save those involved in the ration and teacher recruitment scams. They are trying to save those who duped members of Modi's family.

That was your money and no one can loot that. They are trying to stop the investigations. I say 'remove corruption'. They say 'protect the corrupt'. But their threats will not work with Modi. You will see more stringent investigations in the next five years," he promised. Modi asserted that 140 crore Indians are "my family". The development that India had seen over the past 10 years was "just the trailer", he said, promising that 3 crore women from Bengal would become "Lakhpati Didis" in BJP govt's next term.

"We freed Jammu and Kashmir from Article 370. We brought Women's Reservation Bill. Ram Mandir was built in Ayodhya after 500 years," the PM said, giving examples of how Modi's guarantee worked. "If the intent is right, the result is also right," he asserted, giving examples of the schemes to provide houses, toilets, piped water, and cooking gas. Commenting against the backdrop of a campaign by opposition parties, including TMC, which has claimed that applying for CAA would turn legal citizens into foreigners.

Gaurav Vallabh quits 'directionless' Congress to join BJP

NEW DELHI: Gaurav Vallabh, for long the face of Congress's aggression on prime time television, joined BJP on Thursday in protest against the opposition party's attacks on wealth creators and boycott of the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir as well as attacks by INDIA bloc parties on Sanatan Dharma. "I am not able to feel comfortable with the directionless way in which the Congress party is moving forward today. I can neither raise anti-Sanatan slogans nor abuse wealth creators of the country in the morning and evening. That is why I am resigning from all posts and primary membership of the Congress party," Vallabh posted on X in what marked the first public attack on Rahul Gandhi's targeting of "Ambanis and Adanis". Calling Congress's "anti-corporate" narrative dangerous for the nation, the economics professor said he felt



stifled by the party's economic policies. "Hundreds of unicorns are generating wealth for the country. They are generating for themselves as well but ultimately that wealth belongs to the nation. Are they sinning? Are they sinners? They are creating wealth with their capital and hard work. I cannot abuse wealth creators. That is non-negotiable and unpardonable," he said. Vallabh, who had once stumped his BJP counterpart by challenging him to say how many

zeroes were there in a trillion, said he had conveyed his misgivings to party president Mallikarjun Kharge. "These days, the party is moving forward in the wrong direction," he said, explaining that while on one hand, it talked about caste-based census, on the other hand, there was a perception of being against the entire Hindu society. "This approach is giving the public a misleading message that the party is supportive only of a particular religious group. This goes

against the fundamental principles of the Congress party," he said, adding that he had always desired construction of Ram temple in Ayodhya and could not accept Congress's decision to not go to the consecration ceremony. The spokesperson's departure came within 24 hours of boxer Vijender Singh, bronze medal winner at the Beijing Olympics, leaving the party. The day also saw former Bihar Congress chief Anil Sharma crossing over to BJP. The resignation of Vallabh, who joined a growing number of Congressmen to disapprove of the party leadership's decision to boycott the consecration ceremony of Ram Mandir, also criticised the "silence" over attacks on Sanatan Dharma by DMK leaders. While Congress spokespersons distanced themselves from anti-Sanatan remarks by Udayanidhi Stalin.

Prioritise MP and MLA criminal cases: Delhi High Court

NEW DELHI: Delhi HC has asked its judges to prioritise hearing of all criminal cases, appeals and revisions concerning MPs and MLAs so that the cases can be decided expeditiously and effectively.

A division bench of acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet Pritam Singh Arora passed the order while dealing with a suo motu PIL to monitor cases pending against MPs and MLAs in trial courts as well as the high court. The matter will be heard on May 20.

'Refrain from adjourning cases related to MP, MLAs'

The court also asked its registry to reallocate or redistribute cases pending before a single judge of the court in which an order of stay of trial has been passed and the stay is continuing for more than six months. There are 34 such cases.

This is to ensure that the "stay applications are disposed of in the subject cases expeditiously and trial of such cases can conclude before the designated special courts," the court said in its order. Further, directing the registry to circulate the judgment among judges of the high court, the bench said, "In line with the directives passed by Hon'ble Chief Justice of India in WP(C) No 699 of 2016 titled as Ashwini Kumar Upadhyay vs. Union of India & Anr, we direct the registry of this court to circulate this order among brother and sister judges assigned with such cases so that priority is given to all criminal cases/appeals/revisions pending before them against members of Parliament and legislative assemblies as it is essential for expeditious and effective disposal of such cases." With respect to cases pending before district courts, the high court directed special MP/MLA courts to first give priority to those cases against legislators which are punishable by death or life imprisonment, subsequently to cases punishable with imprisonment for five years or more. and then hear other cases.

High Court: Shameful if even one Sandeshkhali plaintiff true

KOLKATA: Even if one affidavit was found to be accurate, it would be a matter of shame, Calcutta HC remarked Thursday, expressing deep concern over the contents of affidavits presented before it during a hearing on a PIL seeking an independent investigation into the Sandeshkhali sexual harassment allegations. A division bench comprising Chief Justice TS



Sivagnanam and Justice Hiranmay Bhattacharya said district authorities and Trinamool Congress must take responsibility for the situation. It warned that Bengal's claim of being the "safest state for women" would lose credibility if the allegations in the affi-

davits were proven true.

HC reserved its judgment after hearing extensive arguments on petitions urging a court-monitored investigation by an independent commission into allegations of torture, sexual abuse of women in Sandeshkhali, and land-grabbing by Trinamool strongman Sheikh Shahjahan and his associates.

Delhi LG office to Centre: AAP govt filing false cases

NEW DELHI:

The office of lieutenant governor V K Saxena has written to the Union home ministry alleging that concerted attempts were being made by AAP govt in the capital to "mislead" courts by filing "motivated and premeditated petitions" with the apparatus aim of "influencing" the justice delivery system. In a five-page communication, Saxena's principal secretary Ashish Kundra alleged that "patently false affidavits" were being filed by the elected dispensation to secure an endorsement for such motivated petitions. "GNCTD vs LG in various matters in different courts has become the prevalent norm, rather than an exception," he said,



referring to specific cases. "The attempts obviously are, apart from misleading the courts, (intended) to create a false media narrative which maligns the constitutional office of LG in public domain." In transferred subjects, LG has no role to play: Letter to Centre Kundra referred to several cases that are currently before Supreme Court and Delhi high court, arguing that it not only

"overburdened" the judiciary but also caused expenditure of crores of rupees on "scurrilous" litigation and wastage of time of public officials. "Such attempts, apart from misleading the courts, create a confusing and skewed narrative that maligns the image of LG," stated the letter. The LG's office pointed out that the Delhi water minister recently filed a civil petition in Supreme Court seeking directions to the LG to

Amid Congress Amethi suspense, Robert Vadra says 'people want me'

NEW DELHI: Amid Congress suspense over who will contest the Gandhi family seats of Amethi and Raebareilly, Robert Vadra jumped into the mix by saying that people of Amethi want him to step in and take charge of Amethi because he started his political work from the place in 1999. Vadra, Sonia Gandhi's son-in-law, added the caveat that workers want him to fight from Amethi should he choose to



take the political plunge-his deliberate soundbite betraying an ambition given the opening in the twin seats.

Lashing out at Amethi MP Smriti Irani for "ignoring the constituency and merely

misusing the position to level baseless allegations" against the Gandhi family, Vadra said people of Amethi are tired of Irani because she does not visit the seat and indulges in discrimination.

Amid summons from ED, Mahua reveals WA chat

Maitra shares mother's supportive chat amidst CBI searches, ED FIR. Warnings of Tihar, backed by Mamata, Abhishek Banerjee. Re-nominated for Krishna Nagar, resumes campaign in Bhipur, Asannagar, Alipore, Nadia, cash-for-query case.

Amid summons from ED, Mahua reveals WA chat with her 'Sherni' KOLKATA: Trinamool Congress's Lok Sabha election candidate Mahua Maitra has made public a WhatsApp conversation she had with her mother, where the latter expressed readiness to fight her daughter's battle if central agencies arrest Mahua.

RBI defers exchange-traded currency derivatives rules

MUMBAI: RBI has deferred the implementation of its rules on exchange-traded currency derivatives by a month, resulting in traders scrambling to square off their positions. RBI's circular, which was scheduled to come into effect on April 5, said that only traders with an underlying forex exposure can trade in currency derivatives. Exchange-traded currency derivatives, like futures contracts, help companies hedge against currency risk. For instance, an Indian exporter expecting payment in US dollars in three months, can use currency futures to mitigate potential losses from adverse exchange rate movements. By entering a futures contract to sell US dollars at a

predetermined rate, the exporter locks in a viable exchange rate. The market for exchange-traded currency derivatives has been thriving for a decade because of positions taken by investors with a view on the currency. However, RBI said that its recent circular only reiterates its existing position. "The regulatory framework for exchange-traded currency derivatives has remained consistent over the years, and there is no change in RBI's policy approach," it said. The circular, issued on Jan 5, retained most of the earlier regulations, including a requirement that trades over \$100 million would require proof of exposure.

Nudges from health coaches can lead to healthier lifestyles

Chennai: At least one in every two patients lost an average of 4kg (BMI of 1.6 kg/month) after nudges from health coaches. The coaches from Apollo Hospitals who pushed people to go in for periodic health checks also managed to help them significantly bring down their blood pressure and sugars, said doctors. Riding on its success, the group launched a digital health risk assessment called 'ProHealth Score', hospital chairman Dr Prathap C Reddy said. The free risk score evaluates factors such as family history, lifestyle, and current symptoms and generates a personalised numeric indicator of a person's health status. Additionally, it provides simple corrective measures to guide you toward better health. "The effort is to prod people to undergo health checks and lead a healthy lifestyle," said hospital CEO for Preventive Healthcare, Dr Sathya Sriram. In a group of nearly

17,000 people, the hospital's digital records show that about half of the group lost weight, with an average loss of 4 kg and a BMI decrease of 1.6 kg/month in 21 months, said Apollo Hospitals CEO and president, Dr Madhu Sasidhar. At least 70% of them with high blood pressure saw an improved average decline in systolic (24 mmHg) and diastolic (15 mmHg) blood pressure. In a smaller group of about 8,000 people, nearly three out of five people brought down their HbA1C levels by an average of 1.45 mmol/mol in 21 months. The difference will help people prevent or delay diseases and complications, doctors said. The surge in non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, respiratory ailments, and cancer accounts for 63% of all deaths in the country. "People must take action to protect themselves,

their families, and their communities from the escalating burden of non-communicable diseases," said hospital vice-chairman Preetha Reddy. We also published the following articles recently: 5 dead and over 100 hospitalized from recalled Japanese health supplements: Five deaths and 114 hospitalized due to intake of Japanese health supplements, including Benikoji Choleste Help with red mold. Ongoing investigations and criticism of delayed public disclosure by Kobayashi Pharmaceutical Co. 5 dead and over 100 hospitalized from recalled Japanese health supplements: Five deaths and 100 hospitalizations linked to a Japanese health supplement by K o b a y a s h i Pharmaceutical Co. Health ministry warns of more deaths, tourists bought supplements, and 18.5 tons of benikoji produced.

Donations surge to Rs 83.8 crore; Kashi Vishwanath temple clocked highest revenue in March



VARANASI: As the Kashi Vishwanath Temple continues to attract devotees from far and wide who are making generous donations, the temple earned Rs 83.34 crore in 2023-24 financial year, registering a jump of 42.43% as compared to collections in 2022-23. The income of Rs 11.14 crore in March was also the highest single-month collection made ever by the tem-

ple. Talking to, temple's chief executive officer Vishwa Bhushan said, "Shri Kashi Vishwanath Temple Trust (SKVTT) has recorded its highest ever collection as well as expenditure in the 2023-24 financial year. On the income part, its gross earning was Rs 83.34 crore, which was 42.43% more than the gross earnings of 2022-23. The expenditure was Rs 25.32 crore which was

40.38% more than the figures of the previous financial year." All previous records of income were broken by Feb-end when Rs 69.92 crore was received by the temple even when the value of precious metals received as donation was not included in it. In 2022-23, the temple had recorded income of Rs 58.51 crore while it was over Rs 26 crore in 2018-19 and 2019-20 financial

CAPSULES

Rush at OPDs as heat soars, doctors sound dehydration-exhaustion alert

KOLKATA: The hot and discomfort weather conditions in the past few days are taking a toll on the health of Kolkatans, especially those who have to remain outdoors for hours. Even though none of the city hospitals have recorded any heat stroke cases so far, doctors are getting a good number of people with heat exhaustion and dehydration. Health experts have cautioned people to take all precautions when outdoors to avoid severe consequences.

"Because of such hot and humid weather, the people who are engaged in outdoor activities are prone to develop heat exhaustion when the body starts sweating a lot due to the rise of the core body temperature resulting in dehydration. Heat exhaustion makes the person feel weak, dizzy and thirsty. I have seen two to four such cases in the past one week, mostly middle aged men, probably due to their higher exposure to the sun," said internal medicine specialist Joydeep Ghosh of Fortis Hospital, Anandapur. opd

B P Poddar Hospital had tended to 14 persons in its emergency in the past three days, most of them down with extreme dehydration making them unwell while they were out in the sun. "37 patients came to our OPD with heat related issues. While most of them were middle-aged patients, some were school children. We had to admit two senior citizens because in addition to dehydration they had other issues like BP fluctuation and sodium, potassium imbalance," said Supriyo Chakrabarty, group advisor, BP Poddar Hospital.

Probe Shortage Of Medicines: Bharadwaj To LG



New Delhi: Health minister Saurabh Bharadwaj has written to lieutenant governor VK Saxena demanding strict action against officials responsible for the non-availability of medicines and consumables at Delhi govt health facilities. He also demanded a "time-bound inquiry" against them for misrepresenting facts and misleading govt on the issue. The letter was sent on Thursday in response to a story, 'Boy with broken arm turned away by hosps'. On April 1, an 8-year-old boy with a broken arm was turned away by two state-run

hospitals, Dr Hedgewar Aarogya Sansthan and Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya, a dedicated paediatric facility. While one hospital claimed it did not have cotton, the other said it had no orthopaedic doctor at the time to treat the boy. The boy's father, a guard with a monthly salary of Rs 15,000, had to ulti-

mately take him to a private hospital and pay Rs 13,000, including the doctor's consultation fees, which would have been negligible at a govt hospital. Chacha Nehru Bal Chikitsalaya, where Class II student Aditya Kumar was taken by his parents, has now started "emergency ortho" till 8pm on all working days.

Until now, this facility was available from 9am to 4pm. Bharadwaj wrote about the health secretary misinforming and misleading the minister concerned about the availability of the items. Bharadwaj underlined that either the senior officers of health and family welfare were unaware of the actual situation or were not deliberately resolving this imminent crisis.

He said he had directed the chief secretary and the health secretary multiple times to ensure the supply of medicines and consumables at all

PAT Day 1 marked by shortage of question and answer booklets

Mumbai: As the Progressive Assessment Test (PAT) for class 3 to 8 students of government and aided schools in the state began on Thursday, a number of schools complained of shortage of question-answer booklets. On the very first day, schools had to take photocopies of the first language paper. The maths and third language English papers will be held on Friday and Saturday, respectively. The question papers were set by the

State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT). School heads said despite sending details of the number of students appearing for PAT, the SCERT on Wednesday directed schools to take photocopies of the question papers wherever there was a shortage. Schools also complained of not receiving the answer keys to the questions. Teachers assess papers based on answer keys. Mahendra Ganpule, spokesperson of the Maharashtra School

Principals' Association highlighted the need for improved planning by the education department. Ganpule said, "Despite the challenges, teachers managed to distribute papers on the first day, albeit with additional effort and expense. The issue was more pronounced in remote areas and was exacerbated by a lack of manpower at the taluka level for distribution." Over one crore students are participating in these exams, which are part of the

Strengthening Teaching-Learning and Results for States project funded by the World Bank. The PAT aims to enhance the quality and governance of school education and includes a basic test followed by two comprehensive assessments. The mandatory test is to determine the learning outcome of students. It is based on second semester syllabi. Schools that incurred expenses on photocopying question papers last year said they are yet to receive

HC seeks status of criminal cases filed in 2020 Delhi riots

New Delhi: Delhi High Court on Thursday sought status of criminal cases registered following riots that broke out in the national capital in Feb 2020. A bench of Justice Suresh Kumar Kait and Justice Manoj Jain asked police to furnish details after noting that over 750 FIRs were registered in the aftermath of violence and the investigation in 273 was still pending. Communal clashes had broken out in northeast Delhi on Feb 24, 2020, after violence between citizenship law supporters and protesters spiralled out of control leaving at least 53 people dead and around 700 injured. The bench was hearing a public interest litigation by Jamiat Ulama-I-Hind seeking setting up of special investigation team (SIT) to hold

an independent probe into the riots. The petitioner's lawyer said that SIT should be set up at least in those cases where the stage of filing of chargesheet has not even come till now. "How much time will you take? That was 2020 and we have entered 2024... Total cases registered is 757; transferred to Crime Branch 62; number of cases chargesheeted 367; number of cases pending trial 250 and pending investigation is 273. Therefore, pending cases are 273 as on April 2. So many cases," said the bench, relying on the figures furnished. During the hearing, the court observed that the cases were registered in 2020 but several of them were still pending and asked the police the reason behind it. The petitioner had approached the

high court in March 2020 seeking several reliefs, including preservation of the CCTV footage of the riots in northeast Delhi. The PIL claimed that FIRs have not been lodged against persons responsible for the riots and alleged that the police is not accepting the complaint in which the accused are named and they are insisting to give a complaint against unknown persons. The court posted the matter for next hearing on April 29. We also published the following articles recently: 2020 Delhi riots: Court rejects Tahir Hussain's bail. Former AAP councillor Tahir Hussain's bail plea rejected by New Delhi court in the 2020 Delhi riots case due to prima facie true allegations.

2 calves born in Kashi farm mark new start for Gangatiri breed

LUCKNOW: UP govt's Varanasi farm has become the country's first conservation centre to breed two high-merit Gangatiri cow calves using embryo transfer technology (ETT) and IVF. The two female calves were born on March 26 and 27. Gangatiri breed is native to eastern UP and Bihar. It got its name after Ganga as it is the belt along the river which is its natural habitat. The breed has low input costs and is resistant to many diseases. "Gangatiri is recognised nationally and has high significance as a source of livelihood to local farmers in the state," said Dr Neeraj Gupta, CEO of the UP Livestock Development Board. The ETT will help produce elite cows at a faster rate as a single mother can produce multiple high-merit progenies, he added. In the current case, four elite females at the farm were selected as egg donors. Semen from a high-merit bull was used to fertilise the eggs in-vivo (inside the body).



After about seven days, the embryos were flushed from the donor cows and transferred into four surrogate cows, which may not have been of high merit. However, only two pregnancies were successful, and two calves were born, said Gupta. The ETT is being extensively used for the improvement of indigenous cow breeds at var-

ious places as elite cows are used as egg and sperm donors. "This technique will increase the efficiency as well as productivity of Gangatiri bovine herds. It has huge potential to multiply the income of farmers," said Ravinder, principal secretary of animal husbandry, dairying and fisheries, and chairman of UPLDB.

Joyride? Man risks life travelling 400km on the train's roof

KANPUR: A man spotted lying on the roof of New Delhi-Gorakhpur bound Humsafar Express (12572) triggered panic at the Kanpur Central railway station on Tuesday. Investigation revealed that the man, identified as Dilip Kumar of Fatehpur, had travelled an astonishing 400km between Delhi and Kanpur by lying on the train's roof. The video of his bizarre act also went viral on social media. Fortunately, Kumar did not stand on the train's roof during the journey and got saved from getting electrocuted by the overhead wires, said GRP personnel. When the train entered platform 9 of Kanpur Central, passengers noticed Dilip on the roof of the B-11 AC coach of the Humsafar Express and raised an alarm. Deputy chief traffic manager Ashutosh Singh, assistant commercial manager railway Santosh Kumar Tripathi, station superintendent.

Dr. Sushil Gupta will win in Kurukshetra with record breaking votes: Sultan Jadaula

Kaithal: Senior Congress leader and former Chief

Parliamentary Secretary Sultan Singh Jadaula said that India Alliance candidate from Kurukshetra Lok Sabha constituency Dr. Sushil Gupta will win with the blessings of the public with record breaking votes in the Lok Sabha elections. Dr. Sushil Gupta has settled in the hearts of the public due to his friendly, clean and neat image.

People from every section of the society are flocking to the public meetings of Dr. Sushil Gupta in every village of Pundri Assembly Constituency and the public is ready to show victory to Dr. Gupta by showing BJP the way out of power. Congress leader Sultan Jadaula is campaigning in various villages of the constituency by appealing to the villagers to vote in favor of the alliance candidate Dr. Sushil Gupta. Jadaula alleged that BJP had promised in



the elections that it would put Rs 15 lakh each in the accounts of the poor, provide employment to 2 crore people, M.S.P. Implement it, make gas cylinders cheaper, implement Swaminathan Commission report, reduce inflation, but after winning the elections, BJP went back on all the promises. Today, rising inflation, unemployment and corruption have made life difficult for people. He said that this time BJP has given the slogan of crossing 400, but looking at the situation in the country today, it is clear that this time BJP will fall face down. The campaign of Congress in every house among the peo-

ple shows that the people are in the mood for change. In Haryana too, BJP will win on all the seats. Former Chief Parliamentary Secretary Sultan Jadaula said that there is a difference between the words and actions of BJP. In any case, BJP has become famous all over the world for shunning election promises and announcements by calling them election slogans, hence now the public is not going to be misled by them. Now whether BJP calls the election manifesto a resolution letter or Modi's guarantee. The public is fully prepared to answer them in the elections.

Opt for Hybrid funds to help cut tax outgo - 10 mutual fund

Wealth managers recommend conservative investors to opt for hybrid schemes before the financial year closes to save on taxes in mutual fund investments. The government's removal of indexation benefits for pure debt schemes in Budget 2023-24 shifts focus to hybrid funds with 35%-65% equity allocation for tax efficiency.

Tax planning guide: Opt for Hybrid funds to help cut tax outgo - 10 mutual fund schemes to consider
Tax benefits of hybrid funds: As the financial year comes to an end, it's important to keep

a tab on your tax outgo for FY 2023-24. Wealth managers advise conservative investors to consider hybrid schemes before the financial year ends to save on taxes in mutual fund investments, states an report. The government's removal of indexation benefits for pure debt schemes in Budget 2023-24 makes hybrid funds with 35% to 65% equity allocation a viable option. Indexation, which adjusts inflation with the asset's cost, lowers tax liability. Certain schemes like

multi-asset, and dynamic asset allocation still offer indexation benefits. Investors purchasing these schemes before March 31 and holding them till April 1, 2027, will pay a 20% long-term capital gains tax with indexation benefits, gaining an extra year's advantage. Viral Bhatt, founder of Money Mantra, suggests that moving funds from bank deposits to such schemes can enhance post-tax returns for low-risk investors. Here's a look at mutual fund schemes where you can get indexation benefit

Bank of Japan ends negative rates, closing era of radical policy

TOKYO: The Bank of Japan ended eight years of negative interest rates and other remnants of its unorthodox policy on Tuesday, making a historic shift away from a focus of reflating growth with decades of massive monetary stimulus. While the move will be Japan's first

interest rate hike in 17 years, it still keeps rates stuck around zero as a fragile economic recovery forces the central bank to go slow in any further rise in borrowing costs, analysts say. The shift makes Japan the last central bank to exit negative rates and ends an era in which

policymakers around the world sought to prop up growth through cheap money and unconventional monetary tools. In a widely expected decision, the BOJ ditched a policy put in place since 2016 that applied a 0.1% charge on some excess reserves financial institutions.



HDFC Bank's home loan business head to lead Poonawalla Fincorp

MUMBAI: HDFC Bank's mortgage business head Arvind Kapil has filed papers to take charge as MD & CEO of Poonawalla Fincorp. Kapil is a 25-year veteran of HDFC Bank and was placed in charge of the legacy housing finance business of HDFC after its merger with the bank last year. "Given the sheer size of the mortgage portfolio (Rs 7.5 lakh crore) and the material importance of distribution, we believe there is key managerial personnel risk (for HDFC Bank)," said Suresh Ganapathy of Macquarie. He noted that this is the second major exit in mortgages with the head of HDFC sales Santosh Nair quitting to join Bandhan Bank last month. Poonawalla Fincorp, in a statement to stock exchanges, said that Kapil will join the company on June 24, subject to approvals. Shares of Poonawalla Fincorp rose 1.5% after the announcement. Before taking charge of the Rs 7.5-lakh-crore mortgage business at HDFC Bank, Kapil led the retail lending business at the bank, which included unsecured loan20s, auto loans, two-wheeler loans, retail working capital loans, gold loans, loans against shares, home loans, microfinance, and business loans.

"Given his leadership, execution skills and business acumen, (Current MD & CEO) Abhay Bhutada has been elevated to group level and will be taking up a strategic and larger role at the Cyrus Poonawalla Group for managing its strategy, investment and finance," said Adar

Sivan Public School is the best school in the area in the field of education: Amarendra

Kaithal: The new session was started by performing Havan and Ardaas in Sivan Public School of the city. Principal Dr. Ramnivas Sharma told that today the school's management committee member Principal S. Amarendra Singh Khara, Pawan Sharma, Vivek Goyal, Ankush Gupta and outgoing Sarpanch Pawandeep Kaur Khara along with the staff members first performed Ardaas and then performed Havan to inaugurate the 8th session of the school. He said that in



the field of education, Sivan Public School is the best school in the Sivan area, which has established high dimensions in the field of education in a short time. Along with edu-

cation, all-round development of children is done in the school. Amarendra Singh Khara, Pawan Sharma and Vivek Goyal told that the school was estab-

lished in 2017.

The only objective behind the establishment of the school was to provide a good educational institution to the Sevan area, in which the children could have all-round development. On this occasion, school vice principal Pratibha, coordinator Kuldeep Kaur, Mamta Gandhi, Vinod, Varsha, innocent, Manish, Sukhbir, Gaurav, Geeta, Ritu, Mamta, Rajni, Shivani, Chanchal, Neetu, Pooja etc. teachers were present.

Dettol Celebrates The Big Dreams Of India With Its New Campaign; Launches New Bigger Dettol Soap

GURUGRAM : Dettol, India's most trusted germ protection brand, launched a new campaign celebrating the India success story. The three films capture the growing Indian ambition, with the promise of continuing to provide protection to consumers and support their growing dreams. The campaign marks the launch of the larger 100g Dettol Bar Soap (multi-pack), which underscores the brand's commitment to promote hygiene amongst everyone, allowing Indian dreams



to keep growing. For decades, Dettol has focused on protecting the consumers from germs, allowing them to work towards their dreams and overcome all obstacles fearlessly.

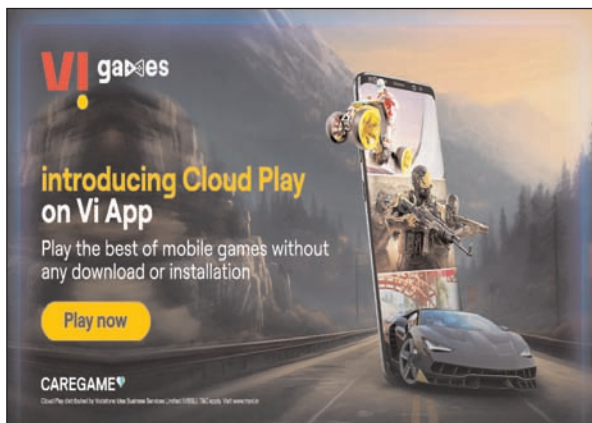
Consumers in India have shown consistent trust and support in Dettol, making it a household name synonymous with protection and cleanliness. The campaign films talk about the dreams of

young talented kids through the eyes of their mothers and teacher, who envision them successful in their pursuit.

In the new campaign, Dettol reinforces its pledge to support Indian consumers in their pursuit of achieving their dreams. With the new 100g Dettol Bar Soap (multi-pack) offering, Dettol aims to strengthen its partnership with the nation and contribute to the overall growth of India by offering its consumers protection from illness causing germs.

Vi Launches 'Cloud Play' Mobile Cloud Gaming

GURUGRAM / HISAR : The Gaming industry has witnessed a massive growth in India on the back of mobile-first phenomenon. Industry reports suggest gaming is likely to become a billion-dollar market in the country and Cloud Gaming will be the next frontier in the world of gaming. To cater to the continuously evolving interests of consumers, leading telecom operator Vi has partnered with Paris headquartered CareGame, to launch mobile cloud gaming service - Cloud Play. Strengthening its mobile gaming proposition, 'Cloud Play' provides a varied selection of premium AAA games across various genres including action, adventure, arcade, racing, sports, & strategy. The launch catalogue includes mobile games like Asphalt 9, Modern Combat 5, Shadow Fight, Storm Blades, Riptide, Beach Buggy



Racing, Gravity Rider and classics like Cut The Rope, Subway Surfers and Jetpack Joyride. There is a strong line up of games that will keep releasing in the coming weeks. Commenting on the launch of Cloud Play, Avneesh Khosla, CMO, Vodafone Idea said "At Vi, we have always believed in a collaborative approach to strengthen our bouquet of customer offerings. We recognize the potential of the fast-evolving Gaming landscape with the smartphone playing a key role in making Gaming more

accessible anytime, anywhere. With Vi Games 'Cloud Play' in partnership with CareGame, we welcome our users to the future of gaming, where the cloud is your playground and the possibilities are limitless. It's not just a game, it's a seamless journey into a world where imagination meets technology. Get ready to elevate your playtime and explore the extraordinary." Cloud Play is a subscription-based service priced @ 100 per month (104 recharge

Sommet Education Foundation to develop the Indian Talent Development Initiative

Chandigarh: Indian School of Hospitality (ISH) and Sommet Education has announced a collaboration with Accor, a global leader in hospitality, to unveil the Indian Talent Development Initiative. The three-year alliance was officialised at the HICSA 2024, 19th Hotel Investment Conference in Bengaluru. This endeavour will be led by the Sommet Education Foundation, with Accor serving as its founding patron. The Indian Talent Development Initiative aims to invest in the skills of the Indian youth and deliver them opportunities for growth in the thriving hospitality industry. Under the initiative, Sommet Education Foundation and Accor will sponsor 16 deserving individuals from disadvantaged backgrounds to enrol in ISH's Intensive Culinary Arts Programme and Intensive Pastry and Bakery Programme. Each intake will consist of 5 to 6 students, with the program scheduled to commence in August 2024, followed by sub-



sequent intakes in January 2025 and January 2026. "As a prominent hospitality education institution, we recognise the transformative potential of the ITDI to uplift and inspire individuals aiming to make a difference in the hospitality sector." said Kunal Vasudeva, Co-Founder and Managing Director, Indian School of Hospitality. To address this significant challenge, Sommet Education and Accor are dedicated to promoting sustainable growth, addressing employment gaps, and empowering individuals

from underserved communities to pursue rewarding careers in hospitality. The launch of the Indian Talent Development Initiative is a testament to the shared vision and dedication of Sommet Education, ISH, and Accor towards promoting talent development, fostering social equality, and bolstering economic growth in India. The unique and noble initiative will also create new avenues for development and elevate the standards and prospects of the hospitality sector in India.

Star Health eyes NRI business through GIFT

CHENNAI: Star Health and Allied Insurance Company will offer dollar-denominated insurance from GIFT City for NRIs. The company is launching international insurance product suite from the facility in FY25.

Star Health is the first health insurance company to be granted registration to establish an International Financial Services Centre international office in GIFT City. It plans to commence operations with a branch by the end of this month, facilitating access to health insurance solutions in US dollars for the global Indian community, the company said in a statement on Monday. Noting that the facility will enable the company to significantly expand its global reach and business, it said, the company will offer NRI-focused insurance.

Editorial

HAL's revenue skyrockets, but original design, IP vital for global leadership

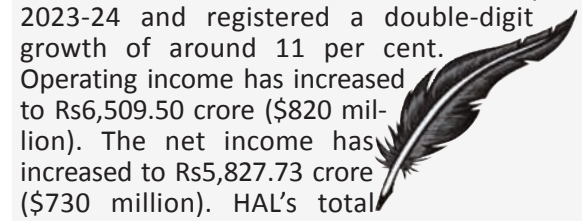
Defence Public Sector Undertaking (DPSU) Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd (HAL) just declared a record revenue of Rs29,810 crore for FY 2023-24. This amounts to 11 per cent growth in revenues compared to 9 per cent during the previous financial year. HAL also received fresh manufacturing contracts of over Rs19,000 crore and repair and overhaul contracts worth Rs16,000. This is an outstanding performance considering the major supply chain challenges throughout the year due to the global political situation. Meanwhile, India's defence exports cross the Rs21,000-crore mark for the first time. Also, the series production variant of LCA 'Tejas' Mk 1A, tail number LA5033, piloted by Chief Test Pilot Group Captain (retd) KK Venugopal, made its first flight on 28 March and is getting all set for handover to Indian Air Force (IAF) later in April. Meanwhile, India just delivered two HAL-built Dorniers to Guyana and began a new partnership. HAL has clearly come a long way since it was first established as an aircraft factory by the visionary patriot and pioneering industrialist Seth Walchand Hirachand Doshi in 1940.

Initial years of Hindustan Aircraft

Hindustan Aircraft was started in Bangalore in the Mysore state with the active support of its Diwan, Mirza Ismail in December 1940. The Kingdom of Mysore was a venture partner. There were also others who invested their money. As early as 1942 Hindustan Aircraft was licensed producing Harlow PC-5, Curtiss P-36 Hawk and Vultee A-31 Vengeance for the IAF. By April 1941, the Indian government acquired one-third of ownership and by April 1942, it nationalised the company by compensating shareholders adequately. Nationalising was prompted by the World War II. In 1957, the company started manufacturing Bristol Siddeley Orpheus jet engines under licence at the new factory located in Bangalore. The IAF Aircraft Manufacturing Depot in Kanpur, which was manufacturing HS748 under license at that time, along with the newly established group tasked with MiG-21 production under license and its planned factories in Koraput, Nasik, and Hyderabad, were amalgamated to establish HAL as a DPSU. Hindustan Aircraft was renamed as Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd later on 1 October, 1964. The HAL HF-24 Marut fighter bomber was the first indigenous fighter aircraft made in India. It had a world-class airframe design, but could not fully succeed because it lacked a matching powerful engine. Yet 141 were built and saw significant service in the IAF including during the 1971 war.

Hindustan Aeronautics Ltd today

HAL is today a major aerospace and defence PSU with headquarters in Bengaluru. HAL currently has 11 dedicated Research and development (R&D) centres and 21 manufacturing divisions under 4 production units spread across India. HAL is managed by a board of directors and works under the direction of India's Ministry of Defence. They are involved in designing and manufacturing fighter jets, helicopters, jet engines and marine gas turbine engines, avionics, software development, spares supply, overhauling and upgrading of Indian military aircraft. The company has nearly 24,500 employees. Its provisional and unaudited revenue from operations exceeding Rs 29,810 crore (\$3.75 billion) for the financial year 2023-24 and registered a double-digit growth of around 11 per cent. Operating income has increased to Rs6,509.50 crore (\$820 million). The net income has increased to Rs5,827.73 crore (\$730 million). HAL's total assets are now worth Rs67,203.80 crore. (\$8.4 billion).



How farmers' protest 2.0 is taking a dangerous turn

Rumour has it that the 'hard-liner' factions, also credited with breaking barriers during the farmers protest 1.0 and Red Fort incident, have taken shelter under the wings of Kisan Andolan 2.0. Image: PTI As the Kisan Andolan 2.0 organises its big rally in Ambala to commemorate the death of Shubkaran Singh, one ought to go back to the Akhil Bharatiya Pratinidhi Sabha (ABPS), the highest decision-making body of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), for a statement suggesting that the farmers' Andolan 2.0 is "an attempt to spread anarchy". Farmers, leaders, and citizenry

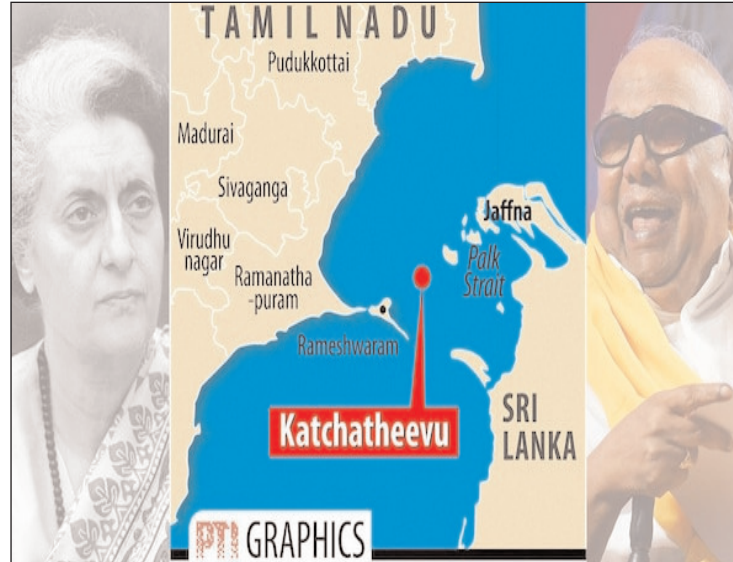
depending on their political allegiance, believe in different sides of the story. But the real question is: can there be smoke without fire? If there isn't, one must at least relook at the situation. Now, when it comes to Farmers' Andolan 2.0, many things are uncertain, including the fact that who is leading the movement? There are many "rumours" bruited. Some are hinting at the potential infiltration of farmers' camps by fringe fundamentalist groups at the Shambhu and Kannuri borders. But even before we begin to analyse this premise and see its potential consequences for SKM and the large

question of agrarian distress, let us see the situation as it stands now. When we speak of the movement, sadly, it is true that the farmers movement has now spilt up into two major factions. First being the original Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), which is a coalition of various farmers unions, Left organisations, workers unions, etc., which led the 13-month agitation against the three farm laws and retreated once the Modi government rescinded the three laws. The second is a new splinter group comprising of two subfactions: Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) (SKM-NP) along with Kisan

Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), which can be credited for galvanising the movement by giving the 13th February 'Delhi chalo' slogan and is currently organising the Ambala rally. While KMM holds the Shambhu border, SKM-NP has camped at the Kannuri border. Although the cadres are intermixed, both subfactions have cadres camping at both protest sites. Although both SKM and SKM-NP-KMM, agree on common demands, their approaches are very different. SKM-NP drew first blood by taking the high road, calling themselves non-political, and overtly calling SKM a political entity.

With Katchatheevu gambit, BJP has killed three birds with one stone

A mile long, uninhabited, barren speck in the Palk Bay between India and Sri Lanka, hard to trace on a map, has become the latest flashpoint in domestic politics ahead of general elections. Amid high-octane political rhetoric and public posturing, the Katchatheevu island controversy has already served three notable purposes. One, it has shown Congress in unflattering light as a party in power that has historically been less than serious on matters of territorial integrity. Two, it has put paid to INDI Alliance member DMK's ability to cash in on local sentiment and play the politics of 'north-south divide' while hiding its historic role over Katchatheevu, and three, it has given BJP an issue to pursue in a state where it has been trying hard to expand with limited success. Katchatheevu may yet have a fourth dimension, that of a bilateral one between India and Sri Lanka, but it may become eventually manifest. The controversy around Katchatheevu exploded with the prime minister on 31 March sharing a news article that reported on some documents released in public domain through an RTI application by Tamil Nadu BJP chief K Annamalai. The hitherto unpublished documents from the Ministry of External Affairs reveal that Congress



government in 1974 had handed over the strategically important islet to Sri Lanka bypassing Constitutional norms and that then DMK chief minister M Karunanidhi, who was kept in the loop by the Indira Gandhi government, was fully aware of it and acquiesced to the move. These are momentous revelations. It may not seem so in terms of national politics, but Katchatheevu was and remains a sensitive issue in Tamil Nadu with the livelihood and sentiment of the state's influential fisherfolk community intrinsically involved with the little islet. It naturally holds enormous political significance with all major players in Tamil politics trying their best to set the narrative. The point to note here is that Katchatheevu

wasn't suddenly brought out of the cold storage of history by the BJP ahead of elections for political gains. As External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said at a press conference on Monday, the island and fishermen's issues have been consistently raised in Parliament and in the consultative committee by various parties in the past five years, and the external affairs minister has responded to Tamil Nadu chief minister MK Stalin's letters "on 21 occasions". The dot on the Indian Ocean has been a consistent thorn and a diplomatic flashpoint in bilateral ties. Sri Lanka has constantly accused fishermen from the southern Indian state of extracting marine resources from its exclusive economic zone

despite the 1974 maritime boundary agreement, and Tamil Nadu has often accused Sri Lankan navy of "continued violent attacks, torture and arrest of Tamil Nadu fishermen". In the past two decades, Sri Lanka has detained 6184 Indian fishermen and seized 1175 Indian fishing vessels.

The tragedy is that both sides have a strong case to make. It is a legacy of the ambiguity baked into the 1974 agreement (subsequently formalized in 1976) and inability of the then Indian government to secure fishing rights over the waters around the island that were traditionally enjoyed by Indian fishermen. Resultantly, the narrative around Katchatheevu in Tamil politics has settled on a forceful demand for "retrieval" of the islet as the "only solution" with dominant regional powers and interest groups such as fishermen's associations using the island as a rentier issue for political expediency. For instance, in 2013, a 'unanimous resolution' was passed in the Tamil Nadu assembly demanding "retrieval of Katchatheevu" by the AIADMK leader and then chief minister, the late J Jayalalitha. Evidently, the entire issue is a manifestation of the complexities of Tamil politics in which though the Centre and the state govern-

ments in 1974 had relinquished sovereign rights over the disputed islet, it never received popular sanction, as has been proven by the recently released documents. On 23 July, 1974, DMK MP Era Sezhiyan had walked out of the Parliament protesting Indira Gandhi government's decision to sign the India-Sri Lanka Maritime Agreement, saying that "this agreement goes against the interests of the country since it amounts to pure surrender of our territory without going through any of the norms. This is an unholy and disgraceful act of statesmanship unworthy of any government. Therefore, we do not want to associate ourselves with the statement...", as reported by the Times of India. We now know that the DMK lawmaker was then unaware of the fact that his leader Karunanidhi was a party to the decision. Therefore, when AIADMK leader Jayalalitha heightened Katchatheevu activism and vowed to bring it back, regardless of what had transpired between the Indira government and Karunanidhi in 1974, the DMK couldn't be seen as complicit in the decision to relinquish India's claims over the island and hand on a platter to its Dravidian rival an issue that is so closely linked to local sentiments.

BBC's bias defeats its purpose, makes it Britain's liability

"Let me stop you right there!" thundered Irfan Ali, the President of Guyana, at BBC interviewer Stephen Sackur. The Hard Talk host had tried to lecture President Ali on carbon emissions from Guyana's newfound oil reserves worth \$150 billion in the next decade or two. Stating that his country does more than enough of forest conservation for which it is not paid or given credit while the developed world enjoyed the fruits of energy since the industrial revolution, he asked the BBC interviewer point blank: "Are you in the pockets of those who damaged the environment?" This interview instantly went viral. From every corner of the world praise poured in for Ali, who embodied the voice of the Global South. But

more strident than the support was the sheer anger and disgust towards the BBC's hypocrisy, its chastising coloniser tone, and what seemed to be its advocacy for the globalist elite and invested interests in a multipolar world, the BBC — as also a handful of western media outlets like The New York Times, The Washington Post, Financial Times, or Deutsche Welle — has squarely sided with powerful Left-leaning, globalist networks which want to weaken every government unwilling to do their bidding. By its over bias, the BBC violates the first premise of Britain's Royal Charter which defines its 'Public Purposes': "To provide impartial news and information to help people understand and

engage with the world around them: the BBC should provide duly accurate and impartial news, current affairs and factual programming to build people's understanding of all parts of the United Kingdom and of the wider world." The BBC has long failed to convince the world that it is spending British taxpayers' money to provide "impartial news and information". The Conservative Party of the UK has long called out its strong pro-Labour, pro-Left leaning. Tory MP Peter Bruinvels famously called it the Bolshevik Broadcasting Corporation.

Then prime minister Margaret Thatcher said: "I have fought three elections against the BBC and don't want to fight another against it."

US nod to LAC sanctity irks China to repeat renaming gimmick in Arunachal Pradesh

China's recent renaming of places in Arunachal Pradesh along the McMahon Line with 30 new names suggests how rattled it has become with the inauguration of the all-weather Sela Tunnel. The scale and speed of development in the North East, particularly in Arunachal Pradesh has been a significant worry for Beijing. On top of this, the work-in-progress Frontier Highway covering approximately 1,748 km from bordering Bhutan, China and Myanmar will be a solid strategic asset that will protect the border space and seriously check China's salami-slicing methodology and other interventionist modalities. In the Chinese strategic basket, several such modalities exist for territorial expansion. Its expansionist proclivity does not require any special study because it is so open. This tendency harboured by China makes relationships with its neighbours messy. Those countries that do not follow its diktat are bullied into giving forced consent. But the case of India is entirely different. It stands on its ground and speaks its mind. This irks China significantly. It devises ways to unsettle India by referring to border indeterminacy and making fictive claims along the Line of Actual Control (LAC).

The new India, under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has given serious attention to the border space. The Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs released the fourth list with 30 names of places in Arunachal Pradesh, as The Global Times reported on 31 March 2024. This exercise of renaming and cartographic redesigning is familiar in China's diplomatic and strategic parlance. This is a very old tactic used by Beijing to create tension in the region. It intends to determine the geopolitical temperature of the region. India's determinacy to remain decoupled from the Chinese scope of influence has disturbed Chinese composure. The politics of nomenclature has seen its iteration in 2017 when China arbitrarily renamed six places in Arunachal Pradesh, in 2021 fifteen places and in 2024 thirty places. The number of places renamed seems to be increasing. This indicates the Chinese disapproval over India's resolve to funnel development to the North East. India's capacity-building measures in Arunachal Pradesh to challenge China face to face if such situations develop in future will decrease Beijing's relevance. However, given these invented claims made routinely by China, New

Delhi does not take the former's claims seriously. External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar has called these claims 'ludicrous' and asserted that the frontier state Arunachal Pradesh is a 'natural part of India'. The response is sharp and clear. To add to this, the strong statement that came from the US on 09 March is as follows: "The U.S. recognises Arunachal Pradesh as Indian territory, and we strongly oppose any unilateral attempts to advance territorial claims by incursions or encroachments, military or civilian, across the Line of Actual Control." This disappointment is reflected in Beijing's recent renaming of thirty places in Arunachal Pradesh. However hard it may try to make such unfounded and subjective claims, India will not succumb to China's synthetic pressures. These unilateral claims do not carry any weight. It is designed to trigger some tension in the region. Reacting to these renaming gimmicks of China, Chief Minister Pema Khandu asserted that Arunachal Pradesh is an 'inalienable integral part of India'. He added, 'Proud citizens and patriots of Arunachal Pradesh are rejecting such antics'. It is now clear that the Chinese indulgences in phantoms are their own making without any empirical relevance.

HC asks how kids wearing school uniform at PM's rally is an offence



CHENNAI: How can the mere presence of school children in uniform during the road show participated by prime minister Narendra Modi lead to registration of a criminal case against the school concerned, asked Madras high court on Thursday.

Justice Jayachandran also directed the Coimbatore police to file an explanation by April 8 justifying registration of an FIR against Sai Baba Vidhyalayam Middle School under the Juvenile Justice Act. The court issued the direction on a plea moved by the school management challenging the FIR registered against it on charges of sending students in uniform to a road show organised by BJP in which the prime minister participated on March 18.

Responding to the query, the prosecution submitted that the school had caused unnecessary mental and physical suffering to the 32 children by

taking them to the road show. To this, the judge wondered how such an FIR could be filed merely based on a complaint filed by the District Child Protection Officer, who came to know about the issue only through media reports. The court observed that police registered the FIR as a knee-jerk reaction to media reports. "When we were children, we used to go to see celebrities and politicians during their election campaigns. The issue would have large scale bearing and needs to be addressed," the judge said. The court also extended the interim protection granted to the school against coercive action till

further orders. "The complaint is false and has been filed with a vindictive attitude just to harass the school management. There was no communication from the school education department as regards the measures to be taken to ensure safety of children in view of security arrangements for the prime minister's visit," the Sai Baba Vidhyalayam Middle School authorities said. However, the school management had taken all possible efforts to ensure that children were taken back to home and instructions were given to parents, it said. While so, the allegation that the school children were taken in uniform.

Don't need UN to lecture us on fair polls: EAM

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM

External affairs minister S Jaishankar on Thursday dismissed a senior UN official's recent remark on elections in India, saying that he does not need the global body to tell that the elections in the country should be "free and fair". His comments came in response to a query regarding a spokesperson for UN secretary general statement that they "hope" that in India, people's "political and civil rights" were protected and everyone is able to vote in a "free & fair" atmosphere. Jaishankar, who was in the city to campaign for his ministerial colleague and BJP candidate Rajeev



Chandrasekhar in the Lok Sabha polls, also said that the UN official made the comment on the Indian elections last week in response to a "very loaded question" during a press briefing at the United Nations. "I don't need the United Nations to tell me our elections should be free & fair. I have the people of India. The people of

India will ensure that elections are free and fair. So, don't worry about it," the minister told reporters. Last week, spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Stéphane Dujarric was asked about the "political unrest" in India ahead of the upcoming elections in the wake of the arrest of Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal.

Air India pilots write to Tata Group in support of their Vistara counterparts

MUMBAI: The concerns expressed by the Vistara pilots are not isolated incidents but rather indicative of systemic issues that extend across various Tata Group, Air India pilots said in a letter sent to the Tata Group chairman on Thursday. They brought to the fore problems

they have been facing with the Air India HR department as well, such as the use of threats against pilots and coercive tactics. Pilots who feel threatened or intimidated may be reluctant to report safety concerns or speak up about issues that could impact flight oper-

ations, said the letter sent jointly by the Indian Commercial Pilots' Association (ICPA) and the Indian Pilots' Guild (IPG). In the past four days, Vistara pilots have been in a stand-off with the airline management to protect their salary structure, improved working conditions.

Bengal crisis escalates as governor asks government to axe education minister

KOLKATA: West Bengal governor CV Ananda Bose "directed" the Bengal govt on Thursday to sack state education minister Bratya Basu, prompting the latter to say this was "as laughable as myself recommending the removal of the governor to the President".



Basu said governor Bose had not only revealed his true colours but exceeded his constitutional brief in asking for his removal, which is the constitutional prerogative of the chief minister. The latest flare-up has its origins in a complicated legal tangle over the appoint-

ment of vice-chancellors to 31 state-run universities, which is now in the Supreme Court and which has precipitated a barrage of vexed statements and counter-statements by both Basu and Bose. As chancellor of state-run universities, governor Bose has not kept the state in

the loop while appointing officiating VCs and asked them repeatedly not to heed the govt. Governor Bose singled out a "political meeting held in Gour Banga University" in Basu's presence on March 30 and directed the state govt "to take action against the erring

minister who has deliberately violated the election code of conduct, including his removal from the cabinet," a Raj Bhavan release said. It quoted the governor as saying, "Be you (Basu) ever so high, the law is above you." Reacting, Basu said, "...If I have violated the poll code, it is the prerogative of a political party to bring it to the notice of the Election Commission of India, which will take appropriate action. By raising such an accusation, he has misused his constitutional post and proved his political identity.

4 Indian restaurants on list of NY's 100 best of 2024

Four restaurants serving Indian cuisine figure in the list of New York City's 100 best restaurants of 2024. They were ranked in the New York Times by its food critic, Pete Wells. Located in Greenwich Village, Semma takes the 7th spot, climbing five places from the previous year. The others are: Dhamaka (54), Temple Canteen (80) and Hyderabad Zaika (95). Both Dhamaka and Temple Canteen too have substantially improved their positions. Dhamaka, situated on the Lower East Side, was ranked 74 in 2023 while Temple Canteen, located in



Flushing, Queens, stood at 96. Hyderabad Zaika, stationed in Midtown, Manhattan, is a new entrant. Seema's chef Vijay Kumar, writes NYT, was raised on a rice farm outside Madurai in Tamil Nadu. "At Semma he serves two dishes from his childhood that you'd have a hard time finding at another New

York restaurant. One is nathai pirattal, snails stir-fried with onions and tomatoes, soured with tamarind and served in a small box made of banana leaves. The other is Chettinad-style venison, a shank braised into sticky tenderness with star anise and a lichen called black stone flower that is one

of the prized seasonings of the Chettinad pantry," wrote Wells on Semma in 2022. Mumbai-born Chintan Pandya is the chef at Dhamaka. In a 2021 review, Wells described its biryani as "a polyphonic riot of flavour." He further wrote, "Black peppercorns and green chillies rip through the rice, through the darkly browned chunks of goat neck on the bone and, finally, through your central nervous system. But even as your eyes start to water, the heat is broken by a blast of fresh mint that arrives like a mojito on a humid summer afternoon."

Supreme Court restores Scheduled Caste status to BJP leader Navneet

NEW DELHI: In a relief to BJP leader and MP from Amravati reserved constituency Navneet Kaur Ravi Rana just ahead of general elections, Supreme Court on Thursday quashed Bombay high court order by which her Scheduled Caste certificate of 'Mochi' was cancelled. A bench of Justices J K Maheshwari and Sanjay Karol held that 2017 order of District Caste Scrutiny Committee which validated Kaur's caste claim as 'Mochi' was right and the HC inadvertently undertook an erroneous exercise of appreciating evidence and swayed itself into a roving inquiry which was not expected as per settled legal position. "When the scrutiny committee which is principally tasked with the fact finding exercise for validation of caste claim, had

applied its mind and reached a conclusion, then in such a situation, whether a roving enquiry by HC was required? It is well settled that high courts as well as Supreme Court should refrain themselves from deeper probe into factual issues like an appellate body unless the inferences made by the concerned authority suffers from perversity on the face of it or are impermissible in the eyes of law. In the instant case, the order passed by the committee reflects due appreciation of evidence and application of mind and in absence of any allegation of bias/malice or lack of jurisdiction, disturbing the findings of the committee cannot be sustained," the bench said. Kaur was elected from reserved seat on the basis of the certificate which attested to her being a 'Mochi'

which is Scheduled Caste in the state making her eligible to contest from a reserved seat. The court had in 2021 stayed the HC order, paving the way for her to continue to represent the constituency in Parliament. The HC quashed the order of the scrutiny committee primarily on the ground that the same was obtained fraudulently. Finding fault with the HC order, SC said, "the Scrutiny Committee duly considered the documents placed before it and after due application of mind on being satisfied, accorded reasons for accepting/validating the caste claim of the appellant herein while accepting/rejecting other certain documents. The Scrutiny Committee heard all the parties in detail complying with the principles of natural justice.

Bengal CM calls CAA a trap, says people could lose rights

KOLKATA/MATHABHANGA/MALBAZAR:

Bengal CM Mamata Banerjee stirred the CAA pot in twin pockets of north Bengal bordering Bangladesh on Thursday, warning those thinking of registering under the new law that this could result in them losing the rights they already enjoy such as access to the Trinamool govt's flagship welfare schemes. "The moment you register under CAA, you will be considered as having come from Bangladesh... You will no longer be able to cast your vote. You will lose your rights as a citizen here," she told a gathering in Cooch Behar's Mathabhanga, about 45km from the India-Bangladesh border. Mamata's tirade against CAA coincided with PM Narendra Modi's visit to the dis-



trict, which shares a 550km border with Bangladesh. "If CAA is the head, the National Register of Citizens is the tail. They are now saying priests can certify who should be a citizen. But under what law can they do that? You have seen in Assam, you will be sent to detention camps. If priests have so much power, why are they not being included in the empowerment committee that will issue the (citizenship) certificate?" the CM said. She assured the

crowd that her govt wouldn't allow anyone to implement CAA in Bengal. Not for the first time, Mamata accused BJP of not respecting election rules and using central agencies as an electoral tool. "I will not bow to them," she declared. "Our state officers are being transferred. How many central officers are being transferred? There is no punishment for their (BJP) crimes. They are going to every home and saying, 'Vote for BJP and

agencies will steer clear of you'. Do not bow to this oppression. They must be taught a lesson," she said. In a repeat of 2021, when Trinamool portrayed Mamata as the candidate in all seats, the CM said, "Remember my face when you go to vote." She also harked back to the firing by CISF on civilians at Sitalkuchi during the 2021 polls. "You remember the Sitalkuchi incident? They killed five innocent voters. Four of them were my minority brothers, and one was my Rajbanshi brother. I came here and stood by those families. Which police officer ordered this (the firing)? BJP gave him a clean chit and made him a candidate in Birbhum," she said, alluding to ex-Cooch Behar SP Debasish Dhar.

New tax regime hits private sector addition to NPS

NEW DELHI: The pension scheme for the corporate and individuals, regulated by Pension Fund Regulatory and Development Authority (PFRDA), may have been hit by the new tax regime, which offers lower tax rates but no exemptions, such as, those for investment. Latest data released by PFRDA on Thursday estimated that the growth in overall subscriber base, comprising govt, private sector and Atal Pension Yojana, slowed to 16.3% during the last financial year, with the total number pegged at over 7.3 crore. Within National Pension System (NPS), with under 36 lakh subscribers, the share of private sector contributors, comprising the corporate scheme (where the employer and employee contribute) and individual pension accounts, was estimated at 7.5% pvt sector in terms of growth, in the last financial year.

CAPSULES

Not asking India to cut down oil imports from Russia: US

NEW DELHI: Two senior treasury department officials, who are in India to discuss what is Phase 2 of the Russian oil price cap, said Thursday the US and others imposing the cap, are seeking to minimise Kremlin's profits and stifle its Ukraine aggression, but without destabilising the global energy market or forcing India to slash its imports from Russia. The officials, however, said allowing unrestricted Russian oil trade will remain unacceptable. Eric Van Nostrand, assistant secretary for economic policy, and Anna Morris, assistant secretary for terrorist financing and financial crimes, said the US isn't asking India to cut down its oil imports from Russia, adding the price cap isn't meant to block the flow of Russian oil. Russia accounted for a third of India's oil imports last month. Nostrand said it's important to keep the oil supply going in the market and that what the US is seeking to do is to limit Putin's profit. Russia has the option of selling under the price cap or to sell at deep discounts if it doesn't follow the Western regulations. The officials were speaking at an event organised by Ananta Centre. The US and an international coalition opposed to Russia's war on Ukraine had implemented a price cap, \$60 per barrel, on Russian oil, allowing them to support trade in Russian oil only if it was sold at or below the price cap. The second phase was launched in Oct last year to tighten the enforcement of the cap and to restrain the Kremlin's ability to export oil through alternative shipping ecosystems. "There is no curbs, we have not asked India to reduce Russian oil buying," said Morris, adding US hasn't sanctioned any Indian entity for importing or refining Russian crude. With India exporting oil products.

PM Modi, Mamata go all out to woo voters, target each other

NEW DELHI: Cooch Behar district in West Bengal on Thursday saw a fiery Lok Sabha campaign with back-to-back rallies by Prime Minister Narendra Modi and chief minister Mamata Banerjee as they went all out to woo voters.

Addressing his first election rally in the state after announcement of poll dates, PM Modi raised issues like Sandeshkhali violence, the Citizenship Amendment Act as he unleashed an all-out offensive against the Trinamool Congress and the opposition parties.

"They (INDIA bloc) never cared for marginalised communities. Now that we have brought CAA, they are spreading rumours and lies. It is Modi ki guarantee to provide citizenship to those who have faith in Maa Bharati," the Prime Minister said.

Hitting out at the opposition alliance INDIA, Modi said, "The opposition alliance is busy indulging in politics of lies and deceit." "I am saying remove



"Mamata, who also held a rally in the district, lashed out at the BJP and asserted that one can trust a poisonous snake but not the BJP"

corruption; the opposition is saying 'save the corrupt.' I will ensure the corrupt are punished, and the poor get justice. In the next five years, more stringent action will be taken against the corrupt," he said.

Mamata, who also held a rally in the district, lashed out at the BJP and asserted that one can trust a poisonous snake but not the BJP. "India is the world's largest democracy. I will take care of

Bengal, as long as I am here, they will not dare to touch the people of Bengal. Before elections, they are crying CAA. Remember CAA is the head of the fish, the tail is the NRC," Mamata said.

"You can trust a poisonous snake; you can even pet it, but you can never trust the BJP. The BJP is destroying the country," she added. Mamata reiterated that she will not allow implementation of CAA in the state and accused the saffron party of "peddling lies" about it. "The CAA is a trap to turn legal citizens into foreigners. Once you (BJP) implement CAA, NRC will follow. We would allow neither CAA nor NRC in West Bengal. If you apply, you will be designated as foreign-

Karnataka sop story: Smart TV box to scented gutka

BENGALURU: Devices from a famous Taiwanese brand that can turn regular TVs into smart ones, sleek wrist watches, digital wall clocks and, sliding right down the consumer product ladder, grocery hampers, chewing tobacco and scented gutka - meet the newest freebies election candidates in Karnataka are, illegally, offering voters. Police seizures, which began as the model code of conduct came into force, show Karnataka is a step or two ahead of most states when it comes to giving below-the-table incentives to voters.

sop Venkatesh Kumar, additional chief election officer, Karnataka, told TOI seizures show alongside the new freebies the old faithfuls are also being handed out - cookers, mixers, saris, churidars, dupattas and trousers. Bidar, Shivamogga, Chikkamagaluru, and Kalaburagi districts top this inglorious list. Grocery items among big pre-poll seizures this time: Officials Police haul of freebies in Shivamogga included grocery hampers of rice and ragi bags, salt and oil packets. "Grocery items are big among the seizures this time around. Groceries

are packed in boxes and kept for distribution across various godowns," said Venkatesh. Obviously, there are no bills attached. Even Bengaluru district has seen a spike in use of groceries as voter inducements. Data accessed by show Shivamogga's freebies include tomato sauce, Google TV boxes, tea bags, and scented tobacco. "We are uncertain if this is going to be used to induce voters or party workers, but hoarding such huge quantities without proper bills is an offence," Venkatesh told.

CBSE alerts schools about a bogus NOC case

Delhi: The Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) has issued a warning that any school found to be acting in violation of the affiliation bye laws will face serious repercussions after it was discovered that a school had recently submitted a false no-objection certificate (NOC) for affilia-

tion reasons. "We urge all schools to strictly comply with the CBSE affiliation bye laws to avoid facing adverse actions", said the board. The seriousness of the problem is highlighted by the current occurrence. Any school found to be in violation of the affiliation

regulations would face immediate legal action from CBSE, the statement stated. Following the current incident, Delhi Police has received a request from CBSE asking them to register a formal complaint and take appropriate action against the offend-



Dozens of Indian workers depart for Israel to take up construction jobs

NEW DELHI: India on Thursday requested Israel to ensure the safety of Indian construction workers who recently traveled to the country under a bilateral agreement.

The Israeli Ambassador to India, Naor Gilon, announced that the first batch of over 60 Indian construction workers have departed for Israel. External affairs ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal confirmed that these workers were part of a government-to-government agreement signed earlier. "As you are aware, these (first batch) workers have gone to Israel as part of a government-to-government agreement that we have signed with the country," External Affairs Ministry spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal said at his weekly media briefing. "This agreement predates the conflict. We are conscious of their safety. We have urged the Israeli authorities to ensure their safety and well-being," he said. Jaiswal affirmed that the safety of the Indian workers is a top priority, with ongoing communication between the Indian embassy in Israel and the workers, including approximately 18,000 Indian caregivers currently employed in the country. "Our embassy is in touch with the Indians in Israel," he said.

Reports emerged post the Israel-Hamas conflict suggesting that the Israeli construction sector may be seeking to hire around 100,000 Indian workers to replace Palestinian workers.

India has underscored its commitment to safeguarding its citizens in Israel following the death of an Indian national in a missile strike reportedly attributed to Hezbollah.

Polls about future, but young not interested?

India's youngest eligible voters - those who turned 18 or 19 - seem to have little interest in voting in this election. Fewer than 40% of them across the country have registered to vote, with some states - such as Bihar, Delhi and UP - seeing less than a quarter enrolling.

Just about a little more than 1.8 crore new voters (18-and 19-year-olds) are on the electoral rolls, according to data put out by EC after poll dates were announced about a



fortnight ago. The projected population in this demographic is just under 4.9 crore, which means barely 38% of these first-time voters are on the rolls. Telangana tops the list with over 8 lakh (66.7%) in the 18-19

age group enrolling. Bihar is at the bottom of the heap with just 9.3 lakh (17%) enrolled from a potential 54 lakh. Only 38% of those who turned 18 or 19 have enrolled to vote. The irony can't be more

stark: those who have the highest stake in the future have shown the least inclination in engaging with a process that holds the key to how the future will shape up.

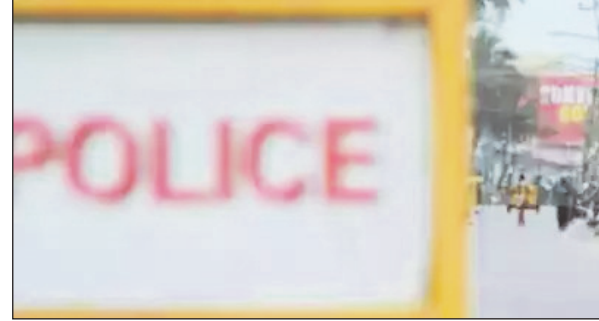
The world's largest electoral process has begun, but the youngest voters - 18-and 19-year-olds - seem reluctant to make their vote count. Fewer than 40% of them across the country have registered to vote in the 2024 elections, with some states - such as Bihar.

Family behind bars in molestation case, burglars decamp with Rs 17 lakh

NAGPUR: A family behind bars in a molestation case was stunned to find their house burgled after they were released on bail.

Wadi police said unidentified men made their way with valuables worth Rs 17 lakh from the house of one Arun Kumar Tripathi at Khadgaon Road in Dattawadi this week when the family was in jail on court orders for allegedly molesting a woman.

After getting bail on Thursday, the family



returned home, only to find their home ransacked with valuables missing. The Tripathi family approached the Wadi police to lodge a complaint of burglary.

We also published the following articles

recently Three of a family commit suicide after revenue records of their family property found altered. Subba Rao, wife Padmavathi, and daughter Vinaya tragically committed suicides near Vontimitta village. Suicide note

revealed they faced hardships due to property ownership alterations by the revenue department. Holi behind bars for court gives ED custody till March 28

Arvind Kejriwal remanded to ED custody till March 28 over money laundering allegations linked to Delhi Excise Policy 2021-22. Legal arguments question ED's arrest procedures and approach, highlighting the need for causal link and necessity for arrest.

Surjewala's remark against actor-politician Hema Malini gives BJP ammo to target Cong

NEW DELHI: The BJP on Thursday reacted scathingly over Congress leaders' remarks against Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Lok Sabha MP Hema Malini, saying they have lost their "mental balance" and

and the people of the country will give their party a befitting reply in the ongoing general elections. Senior Congress leader Charan Das Mahant, while addressing a rally in Chhattisgarh on Tuesday, called for support for former chief minister Bhupesh Baghel contesting from the Rajnandgaon Lok Sabha seat and said, "We want someone who can hold a stick and bash Narendra Modi's head." The BJP also responded to the Congress leader Randeep Surjewala's



"sexist" remarks against noted Bollywood actress and Mathura MP Hema Malini saying such attack on dignity of women by the opposition party is not a case in isolation but they are habitual of it that reflects their dastardly mindset. BJP IT department head Amit Malviya on Wednesday shared an undated video, accusing Haryana Congress leader Randeep of making "vile, sexist" remarks against BJP MP and candidate from the Mathura seat Hema Malini. In the video

posted by Malviya on X, Surjewala was seen purportedly making some objectionable remarks about the actor-politician while attacking the ruling BJP. "Ham MLA/MP kyo banate hai, taaki woh hamari awaj utha sake, hamari baat manwa sake, isliye banate hai, Koi Hema Malini to nahi, jo Chaatne ke liye banate hai," Congress leader Surjewala is heard saying in the video. Surjewala's purported video has come in public a few days after his party's colleague Srinatesh's.

5 crushed to death by dumper truck in Rajasthan's Jhalawar

KOTA: Two brothers and three others were crushed to death under the wheels of a dumper over a yet-to-be-known dispute in a village under Pagaria police station in Jhalawar district on late Saturday night.

Two accused individuals in the matter fled the scene after the crime and are yet to be traced. The five deceased were identified as Bharat Singh (22), his brother Dhiraj Singh (20), and the other three, Tufan Singh (33), Goverdhan Singh (28), and Balu Singh (20), all residents of Binnayga Fanta village under Pagaria police station in Jhalawar district. A dispute allegedly erupted between Ranjeet Singh, Dunger Singh (both around 20-22 years old) of the same village, and the



deceased Bharat Singh and others late Saturday night at around 11 pm, SHO at Pagaria police station, Vijendra Singh, told on Sunday morning. The reason behind the dispute was yet to be ascertained, but when the dispute did not resolve, Bharat Singh, his brother Dhiraj Singh, and three others on two separate bikes left for Pagaria police station to lodge a case against the two - Ranjeet and Dunger Singh. The five individuals on two bikes could hardly move half a kilometer in the village

when the two accused, Ranjeet and Dunger Singh, got into a dumper parked nearby and started it. They drove it speedily after the two bikes and ran over the wheels over them, killing four of the five on the spot, while the fifth one died on the way to the hospital, the SHO said. The two accused fled from the spot, leaving the dumper stationary, he added. The two accused,

Ranjeet and Dunger Singh, were reportedly drivers, while the owner of the dumper was reported

Cap helps cops identify Bengaluru cafe blast duo

CHENNAI: Two suspects in the Rameshwaram Cafe bomb blast in Bengaluru on March 1 were spotted in Chennai in Jan, a special branch CID police team in Tamil Nadu has reported to Bengaluru police.

A cap that one of the suspects, Musavir Hussain Shazib, was wearing helped police identify the duo after CCTV images showed their faces before they bought the cap. Soon after the blast that injured 10 people at the cafe near Whitefield in Bengaluru, National Investigation Agency (NIA).

Distressed at escalating tensions in West Asia: India

India expressed concern over recent air strike in Syria by Israel, leading to destruction of Iran consulate and loss of 12 lives, including senior military officials. Indian foreign ministry stresses adherence to international law to avoid escalating tensions. NSA Ajit Doval and Iranian counterpart express condolences in Kazakhstan meeting. After an air strike attributed to Israel by Tehran destroyed an Iran consulate building in Damascus and killed 12 people including senior military commanders, India said on Thursday that it's stressed at the escalating tensions in the region and urged all parties to avoid any action that violated international law. The remarks by the Indian foreign ministry followed a meeting a day earlier between NSA Ajit Doval and his Iranian counterpart Ali Akbar Ahmadian.

Missing party flags at Rahul roadshow: Kerala CM says Congress afraid of BJP

NEW DELHI: Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan and state Congress leaders on Thursday traded barbs accusing each other of being afraid of the BJP. Vijayan said Congress and IUML flags were not used at Rahul Gandhi's road show in Wayanad yesterday as the grand old party was scared of the BJP. This evoked a sharp retort from the Congress leaders who alleged that Vijayan was afraid of Prime Minister Modi and was trying to please him. Chief minister Vijayan questioned the absence of party flags at Rahul's roadshow and said: "The Congress party wants



vote of IUML, but not their flag and for that, it decided to forego even its own flag. This act doesn't augur well."

Targeting the grand old party he said, "They got scared of the BJP because in 2019 when Rahul

came to file his nomination papers, the green flags of IUML and the Congress flags were tied together at the roadshow. The BJP used these pictures to campaign in north India stating that these were Pakistani flags. Do the Congress

leaders here know what their party flag used to depict during the pre-independence struggle?" Vijayan also accused the Congress of helping BJP gain majority in Rajya Sabha and questioned the decision to field K C Venugopal, who is a

Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan, from Alappuzha.

"Even though he has two more years before his term ends, he decided to contest from Alappuzha and this was done to ensure that in case he wins, then a by-election to the Upper House from Rajasthan will be held and the BJP will win it. At the moment the BJP doesn't have a majority in the Upper House and is short by four seats. This is being done to help the BJP, but the people at Alappuzha (where Venugopal is contesting) will ensure that his seat is intact in the Upper House as he will be defeated here," CM Vijayan said.

'People of Amethi expect me to represent their constituency,'

NEW DELHI: Robert Vadra, husband of Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi, on Thursday said people of Amethi expect him to contest from the constituency if he decides to take a plunge in electoral politics. Amethi was a traditional Gandhi bastion for a long time. However, in 2019 Lok Sabha elections, BJP's Smriti Irani defeated Rahul Gandhi ending the winning streak of Gandhis from the prestigious seat. "For years, Gandhi family worked hard in Rae Bareilly, Amethi and Sultanpur. Amethi wants a Gandhi family member to return. They expect me to represent Amethi if I decide to contest elections," Vadra told news agency ANI amid suspense over Congress's pick for the prestigious seat.

Vadra claimed that the people of Amethi were unhappy with their present representative Smriti Irani and felt that



they had made a mistake by electing her. The Congress, which will contest 17 Lok Sabha seats in Uttar Pradesh, has not announced candidates for Amethi and Rae Bareilly yet. UP Congress leaders have demanded that members of Gandhi family should contest from the two seats. Congress has already announced Rahul Gandhi's name from Wayanad, but there are demands that he also contest from Amethi.

Meanwhile, Rae Bareilly, which was represented by Sonia Gandhi for a long time, will also have a new Congress candidate as she has opted out of electoral politics

and entered Rajya Sabha. The state Congress leaders want Priyanka Gandhi to contest from Rae Bareilly. Sonia, who had represented Rae Bareilly since 2004, had informed voters that she would not contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls due to health and age issues. In a letter addressed to people, the 77-year-old had also thrown subtle hints of a possible entry of a member of her family from the constituency. "After this decision, I will not have the opportunity to serve you directly but my heart and soul will always remain with you. I know that you will stand by me and my family in the future.

West Bengal: ED conducts searches at TMC minister Chandranath Sinha's residence in Birbhum

KOLKATA: A team from the Enforcement Directorate (ED) conducted searches at the residence of West Bengal minister Chandranath Sinha in Bolpur, Birbhum district.

The search is part of the investigation into an alleged school recruitment scam. The ED team, accompanied by central forces, arrived at Sinha's residence at 9.15 am to begin the search.

Sinha, who serves as the minister for MSME and Textiles in the



Mamata Banerjee government, was not present during the search as he was at his ancestral home in Murarai, 90 km away. "The search is in connection with the investigation of the alleged irregularities in the school recruitment scam. The minister is not present

at his residence, we are talking to his family," an officer said. Sinha had been previously summoned by the CBI in cases of cattle and coal smuggling. Meanwhile, the ED was also conducting raids at the homes of some businessmen in Kolkata.

State poll rout, netas' exodus make KCR go on a Vaastu overdrive

HYDERABAD: A strong believer in Vaastu, former Telangana CM and BRS chief K Chandrasekhara Reddy has decided to set his own house, party headquarters Telangana Bhavan, in order after last year's assembly election rout and a series of recent defections.

Work has started to shift the main entrance of the 60-room building in Hyderabad's upscale Banjara Hills to make it Vaastu-compliant in the hope this will alter the party's flagging fortunes. BRS bagged only 39 seats in the 119-member assembly last year. What worries it more is the spate of desertions of senior leaders like K Keshava Rao and Kadiyam Srihari to Congress ahead of the Lok Sabha elections.

The main entrance of the 40,000sqft Telangana Bhavan, built in 2005, is now on the north-west side. Another gate is now being made on the north-eastern side. A

ramp is also coming up on the north-eastern side for free movement of vehicles.

"Since the Bhavan has veedhi potu or T-junction (three roads meeting at a point right opposite the building which drains massive amounts of energy in Vaastu parlance), modifications are being made now to overcome the negative effect," a BRS leader said.

A senior leader, however, sought to play down the connection, contending that the north-eastern gate was being made to avoid inconvenience to commuters facing traffic jams on the busy Road No. 12, Banjara Hills. Interestingly, BRS (formerly TRS)

top brass had carried out some changes in 2014 and 2017 in the building, which also boasts a meeting hall that can hold 500 people. In 2014, internal walls and doors were removed or according to Vaastu principles.

Plans in place to maximise collection of property tax

New Delhi: With a few days left for this financial year to end, civic bodies, including Municipal Corporation of Delhi (MCD) and Delhi Development Authority, have made arrangements to maximise property tax collection.

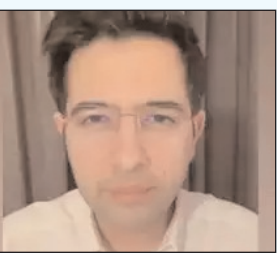
Except for Holi, the property tax offices will remain open on all days. Circulars, messages and notices have also been sent out in large numbers to motivate people to pay their pending dues. Till Friday, MCD's property tax collection was Rs 1,950 crore in comparison to Rs 1,862 crore till this point of time last year. The overall collection last year was Rs 2,417 crore.

"Unlike last year, there is no amnesty scheme in place this time. But, we are still making best efforts.

AP leader Raghav Chadha on extended stay in London; attends PMQs in parliament

CHANDIGARH: Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) national spokesperson and Punjab Rajya Sabha member Raghav Chadha has been in London since around March 8, it has emerged, even as opposition parties in Punjab are raising questions about his whereabouts.

This comes at such a crucial time with the Lok Sabha elections



approaching — and now the arrest of Delhi chief minister and AAP supremo Arvind Kejriwal. Chadha spoke on March 9 at the London Indian Forum of the London School

of Economics, where he himself studied and met his wife, Parineeti Chopra. On March 8, he tweeted: "Namaste England," presumably when he landed. On Wednesday this week, he watched UK PM Rishi Sunak and Labour leader Sir Keir Starmer battle it out at the weekly Prime Minister Questions from the Speaker's private gallery.

Focus on electoral fight, not court battle: SC

NEW DELHI: Supreme Court on Thursday refused to modify its order by which Ajit Pawar was allowed to use the Nationalist Congress Party name and the symbol 'clock' with the condition that wide publicity be given that the matter was sub-judice, while the rival faction headed by his estranged uncle and party founder Sharad Pawar was asked to use 'NCP- Sharadchandra Pawar' and the symbol of man blowing 'turha' (trumpet). A bench of Justices Surya Kant and K V Viswanathan directed the warring factions of NCP to abide by its directions on use of party names, symbols and publication of disclaimers in all print and audio/visual advertisements, turning down the Sharad Pawar faction's plea for a fresh judicial intervention in view of Ajit Pawar's alleged non-compliance with the directive to use "disclaimers" about its control over the name and symbol of the undivided party being transient. With the rival factions persisting with their legal feud even when the election process was on, the bench said they should better concentrate on "something else"; that is, wrestle at the hustings. In an interim order on March 19, the court had allowed Ajit's faction to contest the Lok Sabha polls using the NCP name and the 'clock' symbol but directed the Election Commission to recognise the rival faction.

Govt to buy 50L tonnes of wheat from UP, Rajasthan, Bihar this yr

NEW DELHI: Robust wheat procurement during this year riding on a good harvest may put more 'rotis' on the plates of beneficiaries covered under free foodgrain scheme—PM Garib Kalyan Ann Yojna (PMGKAY). Govt would review the mix of rice and wheat allocated to states for distribution to the 80 crore poor under the scheme depending on the procurement this year, which is estimated to be at least 310 lakh tonne.

In response to questions on whether the ongoing election would impact wheat procurement, Union food secretary Sanjeev Chopra said they are confident

of achieving the target. On the possibility of more wheat allocation to states for PMGKAY, he said the increase in procurement of the winter crop this year—including from non-traditional states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Bihar—would help govt to restore allocation of the foodgrain under the food security scheme. Govt has estimated procurement of at least 50 lakh tonne wheat from these states, an over seven-fold increase from last year. Govt had reduced wheat allocation and had increased the share of rice in May 2022 to avoid any scarcity-like situation amid sharp decline in

wheat procurement. The overall annual wheat allocation for the food security scheme and other welfare programmes was reduced to 184 lakh tonne from 230 lakh tonne, which has been continuing till date. Officials said the crop this year looks good and the pace of wheat procurement will gather momentum in the next two weeks. So far, 6 lakh tonne have been procured compared to 3.5 lakh tonne for the corresponding period last year. While wheat procurement at minimum support price (MSP) is normally undertaken by FCI and state agencies, this time govt cooperatives

Nafed and NCCF have also been roped in with a procurement target of 5 lakh tonne each.

"UP, Bihar, and Rajasthan have been contributing much less to the central pool than they could have. We have taken several steps to increase procurement from these states," Chopra said. These include starting procurement early, registration of farmers, increasing the number of procurement centres, aggressive targeting of production hotspots and drying facilities have been provided for early harvested crops. This is also being seen as a move to diversify.



Andhra Pradesh elections: TDP announces third list of 13 MP and 11 MLA candidates

VIJAYAWADA: The opposition has revealed its third list, disclosing the names of 13 MP and 11 MLA candidates. The TDP has named most of its candidates for both assembly and Lok Sabha. Out of the 145 assembly and 17 Lok Sabha seats being contested by the TDP in alliance with BJP and Jana Sena, candidates for 141 MLA and 13 MP seats have been announced so far.

Putting an end to the ambiguity over some of the key seats like Penamaluru, Sarvapalli, Narasaraopet, and Palasa, the TDP high command reposed faith in the existing in-charges. After much drama in the Penamaluru constituency in Krishna district, the TDP has finally given the ticket to the current in-charge, Bode Prasad, dashing the hopes of former minister Devineni Umamaheswara Rao, who lost the Mylavaram ticket to his rival and incumbent MLA Vasantha Krishna Prasad, who switched sides from YSRC to TDP.

TDP chief N. Chandrababu Naidu did not announce the candidate for the Sarvepalli constituency in Nellore district, which is represented by former minister Somireddy Chandramohan Reddy.

There has been much speculation over a change of candidate in Sarvepalli given the poor track record of Chandramohan Reddy. However, the former minister managed to convince the high command and finally got the ticket. Similarly, in Narasaraopet, Chirala, and Palasa assembly segments, the TDP high command considered various options but finally reposed faith in the existing in-charges. While the Narasaraopet ticket was given to Dr. Chadalavada Aravind Babu, Chirala has been given to M. M. Kondiah Yadav, and Gouthu Sirisha retained Palasa. Interestingly, all three of them are from BC communities. The TDP is yet to announce its candidates in Etcherla, Cheepurupalli, Bhimili, Darsi, Rajampet, Alur, Guntakal, and Anantapur urban constituencies.

However, there will be some tweaks to these constituencies as the TDP has announced a candidate for the Srikakulam assembly, which was not there in the initial proposal. Jana Sena is likely to get one seat from North Andhra districts as part of the last-minute adjustments, according to sources. Similarly, in Rayalaseema districts also, one or two changes are likely to be made as part of the seat-sharing arrangement with BJP, said sources.

Shashank overshadows Gill as Punjab Kings edge Gujarat Titans in thrilling IPL showdown



NEW DELHI: Punjab Kings registered a nail-biting three-wicket victory over Gujarat Titans in a riveting encounter in the Indian Premier League at the Narendra Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Despite Shubman Gill's stellar unbeaten 89, it was Shashank Singh's breathtaking knock that stole the show, guiding Punjab Kings to a thrilling win with just one ball to spare. As it happened: Gujarat Titans vs Punjab Kings Gill's masterful innings pro-

pelled Gujarat Titans to a formidable total of 199 for four, supported by contributions from Sai Sudharsan (33) and Rahul Tewatia (23 not out). However, Shashank's sensational unbeaten 89 off 29 balls, complemented by Ashutosh Sharma's vital 31 off 17, propelled Punjab Kings to a dramatic victory. Chasing the challenging target, Punjab Kings faced early setbacks with the dismissals of captain Shikhar Dhawan and Jonny Bairstow. Despite losing wickets

at regular intervals, Shashank's aggressive batting kept Punjab Kings in the hunt. Capitalizing on opportunities, Shashank displayed remarkable resilience and determination, steering Punjab Kings to victory with a stellar display of power-hitting. His remarkable innings, supported by Ashutosh, turned the tide in Punjab Kings' favor. Despite facing some setbacks, Punjab Kings' batsmen displayed resilience and composure, eventually clinching a thrilling victory.

NEW DELHI: Amid mounting criticism from all quarters, newly-appointed Mumbai Indians skipper Hardik Pandya found a firm supporter in the form of former Indian opener Virender Sehwag, who categorically stated that this is not the first time the Mumbai franchise is facing this kind of situation at the start of the Indian Premier League (IPL), as they earlier bounced back from the 0-5 stage to win the title under Rohit Sharma's leadership. The decision to replace Rohit Sharma as captain with Hardik Pandya has sparked controversy among fans, resulting in criticism of Pandya on various social media platforms. This backlash from fans has also extended to the venues, with spectators expressing their disapproval during matches. The transition of leadership within the team has undoubtedly sparked debate and divided opinions among cricket enthusiasts. As a result, Pandya has found himself under



increased scrutiny and pressure to perform both on and off the field. The Mumbai team's first home game against the Rajasthan Royals saw Hardik face disapproval from MI fans during the toss. This incident occurred amidst the team's disappointing performance, as they suffered their third consecutive defeat of the season. With the Mumbai Indians being the only team yet to secure a win in the league, the pressure is mounting on Hardik to deliver as the team's skipper. After the Mumbai Indians' loss against the Rajasthan

Royals, former India batter Manoj Tiwary suggested that the franchise might consider reinstating Rohit Sharma as the captain. However, Sehwag, who was also part of the expert panel, disagreed with the notion of changing the captaincy and offered a different perspective on the matter. Sehwag, who has thrown his support behind Hardik, emphasised that MI have a history of slow starts in the IPL. Sehwag pointed out that the team had faced a worse beginning to their campaign a few years ago when the Rohit-led side

encountered five opening defeats. "This team had lost five successive matches under Rohit Sharma's captaincy too; they were 0-5. Then they were champions (lost in the playoffs). So, they will be patient with Hardik, too. These are stats. They have been 0-3 down, too. But if this extends beyond that too, it might test the team management's patience," Sehwag told Cricbuzz. "2-3 franchises have done that. Punjab did that, Chennai did that when they gave the captaincy to Jadeja, and then Dhoni took over the captaincy again. But it happened midway through the season. I don't think MI will think about the captaincy switch right now. You can't change a captain after three games; that doesn't send the right message to the team, too. But after seven games, when the season is right in the middle, they can take a call based on how the performance has been," Sehwag added.

'This is IPL for you...': Gill after losing to PBKS in a high-scoring thriller

NEW DELHI: In a thrilling Indian Premier League (IPL) encounter, Punjab Kings (PBKS) emerged victorious over Gujarat Titans (GT) by three wickets. The match saw an outstanding unbeaten half-century from all-rounder Shashank Singh, whose aggressive innings of 61 runs off just 29 deliveries proved crucial in Punjab's successful chase of the 200-run target. Supporting him was Ashutosh Sharma, who contributed with a rapid 31 runs off 17 balls, forming a valuable 43-run partnership with Shashank.



Despite a shaky start for PBKS, losing skipper Shikhar Dhawan early in the innings, Shashank and Ashutosh's aggressive batting propelled the team towards victory, with Punjab ultimately reaching the target with just one ball to spare. For GT, skipper Shubman Gill's magnificent unbeaten knock of 89 runs off 48 deliveries was a standout

performance. Gill showcased sublime form, guiding his team to a formidable total with six boundaries and four maximums. Additionally, Sai Sudarshan's brisk 33 runs off 19 balls provided crucial support to Gill's innings, but their efforts were in vain as Punjab Kings secured the win in a thrilling contest at the Modi Stadium in Ahmedabad. Gill minced no words in stating that it won't be easy if you drop catches on a wicket like this, where defending the total was quite challenging.

'When I go to bat I think I am the best': Shashank Singh

NEW DELHI: A scintillating unbeaten half-century by all-rounder Shashank Singh, coupled with his fruitful 43-run partnership alongside the equally aggressive Ashutosh Sharma, propelled Punjab Kings to a thrilling three-wicket victory over Gujarat Titans in an Indian Premier League match in Ahmedabad on Thursday. Shashank blasted an unbeaten 61 off just 29 deliveries, while Ashutosh hammered a quickfire 31 off 17 balls as PBKS successfully chased down the 200-run target with one ball



to spare. Shashank, who smashed six boundaries and four sixes during his knock, single-handedly kept PBKS in the fray with his pyrotechnics while wickets were falling at regular intervals. After steering Punjab to victory from the brink of defeat, Shashank expressed that the sen-

sation was still sinking in, emphasizing how his coach advised him on reacting to such situations. "Still trying to sink in. Visualised all these things, but when it turned into reality, proud of the effort. Coach told me to react to the ball. The wicket was very good, the

bounce was good. 200 scored by both teams, so the wicket was fantastic. They are the legends of the game, but when I go to bat I think I am the best. You get experience, couldn't get a lot of matches before. Here the owners and coaching staff backed me. I was very confident," Shashank said after being adjudged Player of the Match. Punjab skipper Shikhar Dhawan also lavished praise on Shashank and Ashutosh saying the two young batters kept their nerves under pressure and finished the game.

ICC unveils Adair, Henry, Mendis as Player of the Month nominees

NEW DELHI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) announced the Player of the Month nominees for March, with Mark Adair, Matt Henry, and Kamindu Mendis vying for the esteemed award. Ireland's pace sensation Adair left an indelible mark across all three formats dur-



ing March. His stand-out performance came in the Test arena, where he led Ireland's pace attack to their historic maiden Test victory against Afghanistan in Abu Dhabi. Adair's stellar display included a remarkable five-wicket haul, conceding only 39 runs in the first innings, followed by another three crucial wickets in the second innings. Ending the month on a high note, Adair amassed a total of 16 wickets across all formats. Meanwhile, New Zealand's Matt Henry

emerged as a standout performer with the ball during their Test series against Australia. In the first Test held in Wellington, Henry delivered a fiery spell, claiming a five-wicket haul to showcase his bowling prowess. In the first innings of the second Test, he rattled Australia's middle order and claimed seven wickets while conceding 67 runs. Throughout the Test series, he demonstrated remarkable consistency and grit to force out some positives for the Kiwis.

'Phenta maar diya - Mayank Yadav might be a little quicker than Akhtar': Former Australian opener

NEW DELHI: Young pace sensation Mayank Yadav has become the talk of the town after delivering two stunning match-winning performances in the ongoing Indian Premier League (IPL). There is hardly anyone left from the cricketing circle who has not lauded the young bowler for his sheer pace and accuracy. Mayank, who firmly established himself as a rising star in the cricketing world, captured the attention of fans and pundits alike, clinching back-to-back Player of the Match awards for his stellar performances. On his debut against Punjab Kings, the 21-year-old delivered a



match-winning spell of 3/27, showcasing his prowess with the ball. He followed up this impressive performance with another scorching spell of 3/14, playing a pivotal role in Lucknow Super Giants' 28-run victory over Royal Challengers Bengaluru. Lauding Mayank's IPL performances, LSG head coach Justin Langer pulled

Shoaib Akhtar's leg, who holds the record for bowling the fastest delivery in international cricket, stating he might be a little quicker than former Pakistan speedster. Akhtar etched his name into cricketing history by bowling a blistering delivery clocked at 161.3 km/hr against former England star Nick Knight during the ICC Cricket World

Cup in 2003. In a video shared by LSG social media handle, former Australian opener Langer conveyed a special message for Akhtar. Langer used the colloquial phrase 'phenta maar diya', which roughly translates to 'you bowled a jaffa' or 'you delivered a beauty'. The 21-year-old's searing pace has been the subject of much admiration and discussion, with his deliveries consistently reaching impressive speeds. He even surpassed his own record (155.8kph) for the fastest ball of the season, unleashing a thunderous delivery clocked at 156.7kph during the match against RCB.



NEW DELHI: Gujarat Titans' seasoned campaigner Kane Williamson discussed David Miller's injury, expressing regret over losing the explosive batter. GT skipper Shubman Gill confirmed Miller's absence from their game against Punjab Kings due to a niggle during the toss on Thursday. Williamson, stepping in as his replacement, disclosed that Miller's injury might sideline the South African batter from action for a week or two. "Nice to be out there, shame to lose Davey (Miller) for a week or two," Williamson said