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

Farmers-cops standoff on, fresh talks with ministers today

BATHINDA/CHANDIGARH/NEW DELHI: A third round of talks between protesting farmers and a team of Union ministers will be held in Chandigarh at 5pm on Thursday for a resolution of their demands even as standoff between protesters and Haryana police continued at Punjab-Haryana border areas of Shambhu and Khanauri on Wednesday - second day of farmers' march to Delhi. The Centre, to be represented by ministers Arjun Munda, Piyush Goyal and Nityanand Rai, may offer to set up a new committee to discuss all pending issues, including a legal guarantee for procurement of crops at MSP. But agitators threatened to use force to break barricades erected in Haryana and march towards Delhi after the meeting if govt didn't agree to their demands. On Wednesday,



Haryana cops continued to use tear gas to prevent protesters from crossing over. The latter, though, appeared better prepared, using water sprinklers and heavy-duty fans to blow smoke in direction of police, and flying kites using Chinese manja to tackle teargas-dropping drones. Only tear gas shells and rubber bullets have been used so far: Haryana cops The farmers, though, appeared better prepared to counter shells and smoke, using

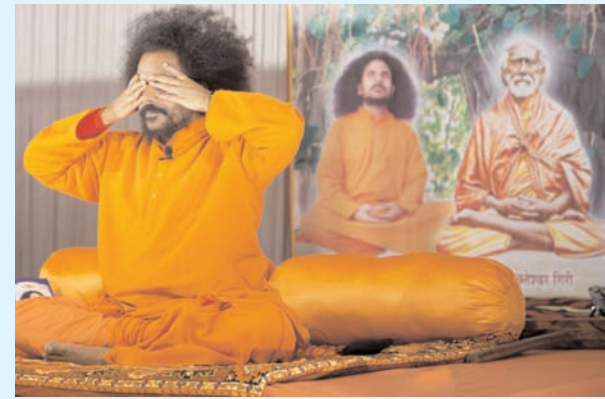
water sprinklers and heavy-duty fans to blow smoke in direction of cops, and flying kites using banned Chinese manja to tackle teargas-dropping drones. One media channel reported that farmers had downed an Ambala police drone using kites, a claim Ambala DC Shaleen refuted. "High-tech drones are used to keep a close eye... The farmers flew kites with banned Chinese strings which were cut by the drone... Police made a safe landing of the

drone." Some protesters also used swimming goggles against tear gas smoke. Cartons of swimming goggles were distributed. At the Shambhu border between Ambala and Patiala districts, Haryana police continued firing teargas shells and using water cannon. Wednesday began peacefully but afternoon the number of farmers had swelled and attempts were made to cross the heavily protected Ghaggar bridge, leading to police action. Ambala DC Shaleen said when protesters tried to move forward using a Patiala police barricade as a shield, a contingent of Haryana Police commandos and paramilitary forces chased them away. Later, farmers tried to enter Haryana on tractors loaded with wet sacks to negate the effect of tear gas. "In view of their aggressive nature, only tear gas and rubber bullet.

Kriyayoga practice is the scientific worship of Basant Panchami

Akhand bharat sandesh

Prayagraj: On Wednesday, at the Kriyayoga camp located at Akshayavat Marg in the Magh Mela area, internationally renowned Kriyayoga Guru Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji Maharaj explained the importance of Basant Panchami festival to the seekers from India and abroad who had come to the Kriyayoga Magh Mela camp on the occasion of Basant Panchami. Explained from. Swami Shri Yogi Satyam Ji explained to the seekers that in Kriya Yoga meditation, man experiences eternal unity with all the creations of the universe. In this state, he has the ability to render true service to all



the creations of the universe and he constantly experiences ultimate peace. Remains in. Swamiji also told that the meaning of spring is 'opening of

knowledge in life' which is the head and spine of knowledge in the human being in the form of flower, lotus, stem. It is said in the scriptures that 'Chakra',

which is known as 'Chakra', blooms in the time of spring. After blooming, the fragrance spreads, that fragrance is in the form of peace. Patience begins to expand into courage. Fruits appear only during the fragrance, that knowledge in the form of knowledge everyone, this process is called spring. And it was also told to the seekers that without Panchami, there is no spring, the five centers of knowledge inside the spine - Muladhar, Swadhishtan, Manipur, Anhat, Vishuddhi, spring comes only when they bloom, this is called Basant Panchami. And practicing Kriya Yoga is called scientific worship of Basant Panchami.

No stress-related problem with Suchana Seth court told

PANAJI: Calangute police informed a Goa children's court on Tuesday that Suchana Seth, a Bengaluru-based data scientist who allegedly killed her four-year-old son in Goa, does not suffer from any stress-related ailments. "She was examined by a panel of doctors, and questions posed to her were answered in a sane manner. In no context was any type of pressure of stress-related ailment noticed.

Rohit Sharma will captain India in 2024 T20 World Cup, confirms Jay Shah



RAJKOT: The suspense over who will captain India in the ICC T20 World Cup in the USA and Caribbean in June is over, it seems. India will be playing the tournament under the captaincy of Rohit Sharma, BCCI secretary Jay Shah said here on Wednesday. "In the 2023 (final) at Ahmedabad, even though we did not win the World Cup after 10 straight wins, we won hearts. I want to promise you that in 2024 (T20 World Cup) in Barbados (venue for the final), we will lift the trophy under Rohit Sharma's captaincy. Hum Bharat ka jhanda gadenge (we will hoist India's flag)," Jay Shah said here at a function to rename the Saurashtra Cricket Association Stadium in Khanderi after veteran cricket administrator Niranjan Shah. Significantly, Jay Shah made this statement in front of a gathering which included Rohit, head coach Rahul Dravid and chief selector Ajit Agarkar, a few other members of the Indian team, and IPL chairman Arun Dhimal. Legends like Sunil Gavaskar and Anil Kumble were also amongst the audience. All-rounder Hardik Pandya, who is currently out of action due to an ankle injury, led India full-time in T20s since January 2023. Rohit played for India's T20I side for the first time since the T20 World Cup semi-final in 2022 when he turned out for the home T20I series again.

PM Modi arrives in Doha, to meet with Emir of Qatar

NEW DELHI:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Doha on Wednesday for a meeting with Qatar's Emir, Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, to strengthen the two nations' historically close and cordial relations. This is Modi's second visit to Qatar as Prime Minister since 2014. PM Modi's arrival is followed by the two-day journey to UAE,



during which he addressed a well-attended Indian diaspora gathering, the prestigious World Governments Summit, and inaugurated the UAE's first Hindu stone temple. Before departing

dous growth and transformation." India announced PM Modi's visit to the Qatari capital on Monday, just hours after seven of eight former Indian Navy personnel returned home, nearly three and a half months after a Qatari court sentenced them to death, which was later commuted to jail terms ranging from three to 25 years.

5 years on, promises made to Pulwama martyr's family remain unfulfilled

JABALPUR: It was a lonely remembrance day for the family of Ashwin Kacchi in a Jabalpur village on the fifth anniversary of the Pakistan-backed terror attack in which he and 39 of his CRPF colleagues were killed. No one showed up on Wednesday to meet Kacchi's family in Khudawal village,



barely an hour's drive from Jabalpur, while the many promises made by the Madhya Pradesh govt remain just promises.

The family built a statue on their own as they were tired of waiting for the govt. After reported the matter last year, govt promised to build a garden around it, but not a brick has been laid. The govt-given house is crumbling. A school was supposed to be built and named after him,

but there is no sign of that either. 'No one remembers martyrs after polls are over' Army and CRPF officers and some ex-servicemen - Kacchi's brothers in uniform - garlanded the statue and a "kanya bhoj" was organised by the family, but no public repre-

Honour killing: Man held for murdering teen daughter for befriending upper caste boy

LUCKNOW:

Siddharthnagar police on Tuesday arrested a man for the murder of his 17-year-old daughter. In his confessional statement, the accused, Prahalad Kumar told the police that his daughter Sandhya was in a relationship with her classmate. Kumar had objected to the relationship because the boy was from another caste. When she refused, he strangled her to death with his muller. Superintendent of police, Siddharthnagar, Prachi Singh said that Sandhya's body was found on Feb 10 in Kharagwar village under Shohratgarh police station. Her mother identified the body, prompting the registration of an FIR against a boy of her daughter's age. "We found some bales of rice near her body and the victim's mother claimed that it must have been laced with sedatives offered by her boyfriend, thus accusing him of murder," said Singh.

Will need 3.4 lakh paramilitary personnel for Lok Sabha election: EC



NEW DELHI: As the country awaits the announcement of polls to Lok Sabha and four state assemblies, possibly towards the second week of March, the Election Commission on Wednesday sought a staggering 3,400 companies of central armed police forces (CAPFs), for the upcoming general elections. This even as the election watchdog embarks Thursday on its customary visits to the states and Union Territories to assess poll preparedness, starting with Odisha and covering Bihar, Tamil Nadu, UP, Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir until March 13. The poll preparedness

reviews come amid reports of EC seeking around 3.4 lakh personnel from the CAPF to ensure a free and fair election process. As per a communication sent by EC to the Union home ministry, the maximum chunk of 920 companies has been sought for West Bengal, where concerns regarding likely poll-related violence run high, followed by J&K where 635 companies are proposed to watch over its first Lok Sabha election since Article 370 was nullified. As per the EC proposal - which will be examined by MHA based on availability of the CAPFs - 360 companies.

43 years after Phoolan Devi & gang killed 20, one gets life term

KANPUR: Exactly 43 years after the Behmai massacre, where 20 people were shot in a Kanpur village by 'Bandit Queen' Phoolan Devi and her gang, a court in Kanpur pronounced its verdict Wednesday, handing the life sentence to one of the two last surviving accused. On Feb 14, 1981, Phoolan and her gang



stormed Behmai village, to

avenge her gang rape by upper caste men. Among those who perished in a hail of bullets, 17 were Thakurs. "What was the point of a judgment that took more than four decades? Most of the people associated with the case are dead, whether it was the plaintiff or accused," said main plaintiff Rajaram's son Raju Singh.

Massive farm mobilisation in Punjab



BATHINDA/PATIALA/AMBALA:

Before talks between Union ministers and leaders could end, farmers from across Punjab started leaving their villages in large numbers, many from the farthest border villages of Amritsar, for Delhi after offering prayers at local gurdwaras on Monday morning. Protesters are expected to gather on the Punjab side of the border and charge towards Haryana around 10am. Long lines of tractors could be seen along highways of Punjab through the day, with green-coloured farm flags atop them and trailers turning into makeshift homes with tarpaulin sheets for rooftops. Haryana has

sealed almost all borders with Punjab and put in place multi-layer barricading. The biggest fortification has been made on the Shambhu border between Patiala and Ambala districts, which falls on the busy GT Road. At the border, Haryana police continued its mock drill for the second consecutive day, firing tear gas shells to disperse youth on the Punjab side and even near OB vans of media channels. At the grain market in Mehmampur village of Patiala, at least 200 tractor-trailers belonging to activists of BKU (Ekta Azad), BKU (Bhatedi Kalan), BKU (K) and Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee (KMSC) had arrived by the evening, said

Jaswant Singh of Sadarpur village in Patiala, who is also general secretary of BKU (Ekta Azad). That 2020 feeling: Massive farm mobilisation in Punjab. Similarly, farmers in large numbers also gathered at Mehla Chowk in Sangrur. According to one report, 500 tractor-trailers are said to have reached Mehla Chowk and farmers had brought along their belongings, food and other necessities. Activists belonging to KMSC have also gathered at Sirhind Road in Fatehgarh Sahib.

"We have made preparations and brought our belongings with us with a target in our mind that our protest may go for a longer period

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

NEW DELHI: BJP on Monday highlighted allegations that Hindu women at Sandeshkhali were raped by "goons" having allegiance to TMC leader Sheikh Shahjahan, wanted in the case of recent attack on an ED team, to claim that Hindus were facing persecution under Mamata gov't. Union minister Smriti Irani alleged that West Bengal CM Mamata Bannerjee is responsible for "genocide" of Hindus and has now given patronage to those raping Hindu women. She referred to the allegation of Sandeshkhali women that they were raped in the presence of police to say that criminals enjoyed



state patronage. "In Sandeshkhali, some women narrated their ordeals to the media... They said TMC goons visited door to door to identify the most beautiful woman in every house and the young. The husband of identified women were told that they had no right on their wife. They didn't leave them till they were satisfied..." "TMC goons will take women to

the party office... Night after night they would be kept there... till they were satisfied," alleged a group of women in a video that has since gone viral. In a sharp attack on Mamata, Irani alleged that she is known for facilitating "genocide of Hindus" and is now allowing her party's workers to sexually attack women. The attack from the Irani came following allegations by a group of women in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district that Shahjahan and his supporters captured swathes of land by force and sexually assaulted them. They demanded his immediate arrest.

Spectre of 2020-21 disruption looms for many hit by border sealing

GHAZIABAD: For residents of the city, the sight of police putting up barricades and sealing the border with Delhi brought back memories of the traffic ordeal in 2020-21 — when the commute to office meant leaving home hours earlier, battling snarls on the way and mak-

ing long detours as farmers held the Delhi-Meerut Expressway hostage. People spoke to sought to know why they should bear the brunt every time there was an agitation and the protesters hit the streets. Deepak Kumar of Amrapali Village pointed out that the year-long protest had a

restricted impact on commuters as it happened during the lockdown and most people were working from home. He, however, feared that the sealing of borders could throw schedules out of gear and choke not just highways but arterial roads in the city as well.

Filed a criminal complaint against the managing director of another IT company

MUMBAI: The chairman of a Mumbai-based IT group of companies, undergoing insolvency proceedings, has filed a criminal complaint against the managing director of another IT company from Maharashtra for defrauding him of Rs 15 crore under the guise of bringing in huge investment.

The chairman filed an FIR against the MD and unknown persons at the Cuffe Parade police station.

The FIR was later transferred to the city police's Economic Offences Wing for further investigation. The complainant informed the police that the accused had assured to invest Rs 5,000 crore in his company, with an initial instalment of Rs 850 crore. Agreement papers were drawn up to formalise this arrangement. However, the accused later requested the complainant to invest in his



own company's equity amounting to \$1.5 million (approximately Rs 12.47 crore), in addition to taking Rs 3 crore as margin money. The alleged fraudulent activities occurred between Nov 2018 and June 2023. Before filing the FIR, the police conducted a preliminary enquiry (PE). According to sources, the complainant's company received numerous emails from a purported bank in Mauritius, indicating ongoing payment processes. A police source said that the email ID

of the Mauritius bank was fake. The complainant claimed the accused had fabricated email IDs and provided forged bank documents on multiple occasions. Additionally, the Swift MT 103 message furnished by the accused, referencing a payment transaction, was found to be forged. The MT103 is a standard Swift payment message utilised for international wire transfers and globally recognised as evidence of payment. Despite assurances, the complainant's company received no funds from the accused. The complainant asserted to the police that the accused had harboured dishonest intentions from the outset, with no intention of fulfilling the payment commitments to the complainant's company. Presently, an EOW team is conducting an inquiry into the matter.

Cognizant healthcare revenue beats BFSI's

Bengaluru: For the first time in Cognizant's history, revenue from the healthcare sector has raced past banking and financial services (BFSI) in the Dec quarter signalling continued weakness in financial services that's struggling with high interest rates. Cognizant's BFSI revenue in the Dec quarter was \$1,395 million, while healthcare revenue was \$1,396 million. Cognizant started reporting its sectoral revenue from 2002.

BFSI has for long been the mainstay for TCS, Infosys, HCLTech and Wipro. Cognizant's growth in financial services is under pressure due to challenges in some of the accounts, subdued macro-economic environment, and lower discretionary spending, providing a limited runway for growth. Cognizant has witnessed a deceleration in BFSI revenue growth for five quarters in a row, with the sharpest drop being 6.6% year-on-year in constant currency in the Dec quarter. "I would



say the discretionary spend, if you take an industry view, is the most in banking, financial services, and insurance. That's a sector which is burdened with high interest rates. And because of the high interest rates, there is a wait and watch and a kind of a pause on discretionary work. Remember, financial services is one of those sectors which also has a strong technology organisation. So, what they outsource is dependent on how much is discretionary," Cognizant CEO Ravi Kumar said in a recent earnings call. Cognizant, which counts JP Morgan, UBS, First Data, Keycorp, and MetLife as some of its key customers, has

lost some wallet share in a few accounts. With many banking customers expanding their tech centres in India and building capabilities in-house, it is chipping away at the business of some of IT firms. Swiss bank UBS, for instance, has over 7,000 employees in India. Before the acquisition, both Credit Suisse and UBS had a significant presence in India through their tech centres. In a recent report, Kawaljeet Saluja of Kotak Institutional Equities said, "The financial services segment is where CTSH (Cognizant) has lost the most to other IT services companies. There is no easy path to stem market share losses, in our view.

Beggar makes Rs 2.5 lakh in 45 days, booked for forcing kids to seek alms

INDORE: A plot of land, a two-storeyed house, a motorcycle, a smartphone worth Rs 20,000 and a neat Rs 2.5 lakh in six weeks. This is what a woman, Indra Bai, made by making her children beg in Indore, officials said after she was taken into custody. Indra, a repeat offender, was booked for begging and forcing her children into the crime and sent to jail on remand on Monday. One of her daughters has been put in the care of an NGO. "Rather than starving, we chose to beg. It is better than stealing," Indra Bai argued with volunteers of NGO Sanstha Pravesh when she and her seven-year-old daughter were being taken off the streets. The NGO, which is working with Indore Municipal Corporation to rehabilitate beggars, has been collecting



data on around 7,000 beggars, 50% of them children, from 38 major squares of Indore. "A rough estimate says that collectively they make over Rs 20 crore annually," NGO volunteer Rupali Jain told TOI. Apart from the seven-year-old, Indra has four other children aged 10, 8, 3 and 2. She would place the older kids strategically at the busy Luv Kush Square in Indore, from where roads branch off towards Ujjain, home

to Mahakal temple. Indra told cops she chose the crossing as it was a transit point for Ujjain. Pilgrims on their way to offer prayers were unlikely to shoo away children and women seeking alms. Those on the way back, even less so. She said her earnings shot up after the construction of Mahakal Lok. The footfall of devotees was around 2,500 per day before Mahakal Lok was built, and is now 1.75 lakh a day, said officials.

Indra's money run was cut short on Feb 9 when she was caught begging with her daughter. Her husband and the two older children fled. Officials found Rs 19,600 on her and Rs 600 with the girl. Indra revealed she had made Rs 2.5 lakh in the 45 days prior to her arrest. She also said she owns a two-storeyed house and agricultural land near Kota in Rajasthan, uses a good smartphone and her husband rides around on a motorcycle.

Bomb threat to Chennai-Mumbai flight

MUMBAI: An IndiGo aircraft operating a flight from Chennai to Mumbai received a bomb threat on Tuesday morning.

"IndiGo flight 6E-5188 was less than 40 kms away from landing in Mumbai when the pilots informed the air traffic control about a bomb threat message found in one of the aircraft lavatories," said a source. The A321 neo aircraft landed safely at 8.47 am.

"Since it was a specific alert the Bomb Detection and Disposal Squad handled the aircraft. No bomb was found on board," the source added. IndiGo in a statement said that flight 6E 5188 operating from Chennai to Mumbai received a bomb threat post landing in Mumbai. "All necessary protocols were followed and the aircraft was taken to a remote bay as per guidelines by airport security agencies. Post completion of all security checks, the aircraft will be positioned back to the terminal area," the airline said.

Basant Panchami festival celebrated with pomp in Durgavati International School

Akhand Bharat Sandesh Meja

The festival of Basant Panchami was celebrated with great pomp and joy in all the branches of Durgavati International School and College located at Gosaura Kala in the area. During this, various types of cultural programs were presented by the students of the school. The program was inaugurated with lighting of the lamp. Flowers were offered on the statue of Saraswati by the school chairman Sushil Kumar Mishra. After that, the



school children were informed about the latest style and modern facilities for better education. School Manager Mrs. Swatantra Mishra explained to the children the importance of

Basant Panchami and Saraswati Ji and praised the program presented by the children and on this occasion, 50 percent discount on admission was announced this week. Srijan

Mishra, Pawan Upadhyay, Juveria Ibar, Himanshu Sahu and Satyam Singh Rajput and all the teachers contributed mainly in making the program successful.

'The Karnataka unit must capitalise on Prime Minister Modi's popularity'

Mysuru

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



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

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

Twenty-five more people have arrested in connection with the February 8 riots

Haldwani

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

violence broke out over the demolition of an illegally built madrasa in the Banbhoolpura area, with locals hurling stones and petrol bombs at municipal workers and police, forcing many police personnel to seek refuge at a police station, which the mob then set on fire. In the violence, six rioters were killed and more than a hundred, including police personnel and mediapersons, were injured, according to the police. Curfew remained in force in Banbhoolpura but was lifted from the outer areas of the town. Shops were still shut and

roads deserted in Banbhoolpura. Internet services also remained suspended in the area to prevent rumour-mongering through social media platforms. Nearly 1,100 security personnel are already deployed in the town. And, the state government has sought four companies -- containing about 100 personnel each -- of central paramilitary forces from the Home Ministry to maintain law and order in Banbhoolpura. During the day, a delegation of the Uttarakhand Congress met Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhama.

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

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

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

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

Bihar-Delhi bus carrying 40 collides with car in Mathura; 5 dead

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

BJP seeks CBI probe into 40% commission charges

Bengaluru:

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

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



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

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

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

India may get cluster of servers mirroring internet root servers

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



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

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

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

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

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

Chennai

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

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

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



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

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

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

Ayodhya

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



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

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

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

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

Mumbai

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

Editorial

Negotiated ceasefire deal

In midst of the raging war, a number of attempts have been made for a ceasefire or a humanitarian pause, through the UN General Assembly, UN Security Council and regional countries. The latest attempt was a negotiated ceasefire deal which was drafted between officials from the US (through Director CIA), Egypt, Qatar, and Israel in Paris on 28 January. The deal proposed a call for a ceasefire of six weeks coupled with the first phase of civilian hostage releases with three Palestinian prisoners held by Israel released for each civilian hostage returned from Gaza. That ratio could go up for the exchange of Israel Defence Forces soldiers and a longer pause beyond the six weeks for the later phases could be negotiated later. Israel however, immediately voiced concerns over 'some conditions that were not acceptable'. The proposal was then presented to Hamas which in turn came up with an even more expanded ceasefire proposal on 7 February entailing a ceasefire of 135 days during which all hostages would go free, Israel would withdraw all its troops from Gaza and an agreement would eventually be reached on an end to the war. Israel was quick to dismiss the offer with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu calling it 'delusional'. The rejection of this proposal puts an end to any early hopes of early ceasefire although US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, after his tour to the region last week where he engaged with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MbS) in Riyadh as well as Prime Minister Netanyahu in Tel Aviv, was hopeful when he said that although, "there are some clear non-starters in Hamas's response, we do think it creates space for agreement to be reached". In November last year, displacing over a million people when it launched a large-scale ground offensive, cutting off Northern Gaza completely. As a result, almost the entire surviving population of Gaza is cramped up in areas surrounding Rafah.

Is Saudi Arabia having a rethought?

While Egypt has been the traditional peace broker between Israel and Palestine, it is Saudi Arabia which carries more weight in the region and has traditionally been the flag bearer of Palestine cause in the past. However, in the past few years, there has been noticeable disenchantment from these core issues as Saudi Arabia sensed a sense of fatigue and inevitability in the cause. Right from the start of war, it has maintained a surprisingly ambivalent position. Before the war started, Saudi Arabia was well on course towards reconciliation with Israel and therefore it was, in a way, caught off guard by the developments. Immediately after the 7 October attack, Saudi Arabia initially condemned the Hamas terror strike, but later on 12 October, Crown Prince MbS assured Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas that Saudi Arabia continues "to stand by the Palestinian people to achieve their legitimate rights". However, Saudi Arabia has stayed on the sidelines as the conflict escalated and casualties mounted, letting Qatar and Egypt take the lead. There were even reports that Saudi Arabia and possibly UAE were permitting Israeli cargo to take land route across the desert to avoid Houthis which were targeting their ships in the Red Sea. More recently, however, there seems to be a shift in Saudi position, perhaps due to pressure for a ceasefire and out of anguish with the uncontrolled destruction being caused by Israeli strikes. In a statement on 7 February, the Saudi Foreign Ministry stated that it has communicated its firm position to the US administration that there will be no diplomatic relations with Israel unless an independent Palestinian state is recognised on the 1967 borders with East Jerusalem as its capital and that the Israeli aggression on Gaza Strip stops and all Israeli occupation forces withdraw from Gaza Strip.



Surgical strikes, staring down the Dragon

Nearly half a century after 1971, Indian fighter jets flew deep into Pakistan to bomb terror camps. Before that, Bharat's commandos stormed across the borders in Pakistan and Myanmar to eliminate terrorists.

And most importantly, India stood nose-to-nose against China at Doklam, Galwan and Pangong Tso, greatly irking the Dragon.

Vaccinating Bharat and the world in Covid

When the Covid pandemic broke out, India's health sector was a carefully preserved relic with creaking infrastructure and pitiable capacity.

From there to developing its own vaccine and administering doses to more than 2.2 billion Indians (almost vaccinating the entire population twice over), Bharat transformed into a benign and fantastic beast. To top it, the Modi government sent vaccines and anti-Covid gear to more than 100 nations, leading the world in Covid diplomacy.

Indian economy closing in on third spot

When Narendra Modi took over from Manmohan Singh 10 years ago, India was the 10th largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$1.9 trillion at current market prices. Today, it is at \$4.1 trillion at the fifth place. It is galloping towards being



the third largest economy behind the US and China by 2027. These seven achievements stand out because each of them were inconceivable. They would sound like unrealistic bombast in the past. Turning them into reality is why Narendra Modi has already booked a shining place in history. What is staggering is that there may be many more on the way.

Articles 370 and 35A

August 5, 2019, has gone down in world history as an example of how the dark, violent destiny of an entire region can be changed with the single slice of the pen by striking down legislations that enabled the darkness. Indians at most expected tinkering. They got a new Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh.

Ayodhya and other mandirs

"Mandir whine banayenge, lekin date nahin batayenge," was the opponents' jibe against the BJP. In the party manifesto for decades, nobody thought a temple would actually be built at the disputed Ayodhya site. After winning in the Supreme Court, the Modi government facilitated the construction in less than five years. The Gyanvapi mosque, built after destroying a part of the Kashi Vishwanath temple, has been taken up. The Shahi Idgah at the Mathura's Krishna Janmabhoomi is being fought in court. Amit Shah

inaugurated Ma Sharda Devi temple near the Line of Control in Jammu and Kashmir's Kupwara district. And on 14 February, Prime Minister Modi will inaugurate Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple, the BAPS mandir. All this was beyond the reach of popular imagination till now.

Demonetisation and digital payments

DeMo in itself was politically unthinkable. But Modi took the risk which no politician in his or her right mind would.

Then came the narrative that it will wreck the poor. In reality, it became the inflection point for the poor and the underdog to start trusting the BJP, which till then was known as the party of Brahmins and Baniyas.

Then the Opposition dismissively said how would the rural or urban poor use digital payments. But they did. In volumes that India today leads in digital payments, beating US and China combined.

Within 18 months of their arrest for alleged espionage and barely two months since they got the death sentence in an Islamic country, Bharat brought its Navy men back to the homeland. Modi's opponents did not waste even this very short time to relentlessly mock

him, almost celebratory about the incarceration of fellow Indians. Only to eat an unpalatable member of the aves species in the end and have its eggs smeared all over their face. Let us look at seven such unthinkable feats that the Modi government has pulled off in the last 10 years. Not the most impactful or high-profile — that would run into several dozens — but the ones we would not perceive to be possible before 2014. These are the ones that have inspired the slogan: 'Modi hai toh mumkin hai' (if Modi is around, anything is possible).

Qatar and other rescues

The Qatar rescue turns on its head several accepted myths about Modi and international diplomacy. While his enemies have stubbornly called him anti-Muslim, his influence in the Islamic world keeps stupefying them into silence. No other PM has had this kind of influence. The way his government has rescued stranded Indians from ISIS-held Syria or Covid-wrecked Iran or war-torn Yemen, or Bharat's troops fighting from South Sudan to Djibouti, is lore now. Pakistan had to return captured Indian fighter pilot Abhinandan Varthaman within days in fear of a full-scale invasion.

Imperial Cadet Corps

The institute wanted to create some free space in their store for other materials. For this, an investigation about the source from where the skins were obtained started. The entire exercise was to know about the price at which they were purchased. Terming it rare and needing careful attention, the first search operation concluded on 5 September 1916 with an official note: "Paper regarding the purchase of the skins and their value are not readily traceable."

As the Imperial Cadet Corps wanted to discard the 28 snow leopard skins, another search operation started soon, and in his 20 September 1920 communication, the ICC commanding officer states, "There is nothing in the records of the office to show when all the skins were

purchased & what their value is. A bill from Cockburn's Agency, dated 29 February 1908, for two skins giving the price of Rs 50 and Rs 55 respectively. The other skins were probably brought in 1902-03." After a long official process and approval from the Foreign and Political Department (Shimla), a private firm was short-listed. Mull Chand & Sons — furrier, carpets and curio dealer based in Shimla and Peshawar — offered the storing facility for the entire lot for a monthly charge of Rs 10. The firm asked the Imperial Cadet

Corps that the leopard skins should be perfectly cured, and the firm will take no responsibility for any damage, if any, caused by the storage. Three files are in the collection of the National Archives of India (New

Delhi), which document the unusual incident related to 28 snow leopard skins and their disposal. The rare snow leopard skins finally reached Peshawar in 1916 and stayed there for over four years. Once the snow leopard furs reached Mull Chand & Sons store, nobody from the Imperial Cadet Corps ever bothered to approach them. In March 1920, the firm was forced to contact the ICC and ask them to collect their 28 snow leopard furs, as it was hard for them to keep storing them for long. They also asked the academy to pay Rs 520 as storage charges. As the letter from the firm from Peshawar reached Dehradun again, a confusing official process began. Right from inspecting the skins, accessing their condition, and finding buyers.

BAPS Hindu temple within the borders of the Emirates

Behold the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), stealing the scene—a multi-modal lifeline connecting India to the Gulf and Europe. Roadways, railways, ship-rail transit routes, electricity cables, hydrogen pipelines, high-speed data cables—it's not just a corridor; it's a saga unfolding beyond borders, a crescendo of ambition. In the financial arena, a game-changing 2023 pact emerges—a pact allowing India and the UAE to settle trade in rupees, bypassing the dollar drama. The crescendo swells with the 2024 Joint Vision Document, venturing into uncharted territories of cooperation—fintech, clean energy, climate action—a symphony of progress. The I2U2 Group, formed with Israel and the US in 2021, adds another layer to this tapestry of collaboration, a dramatic stroke on the canvas of geopolitics. Now, imagine this scene:

Sheikh Mohammed leading a parade with PM Modi in Gujarat at the 10th Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit, a stage alive with discussions and ambition echoing through the air. Union Minister Piyush Goyal steps into the spotlight, announcing the ambitious goal to

expand trade to an astonishing \$100 billion—a checkmate moment, a crescendo of ambition, camaraderie, and shared success. The stage is set, the players are aligned, and the India-UAE partnership, a dazzling spectacle, continues to captivate the world with its dramatic narrative. In the grand tapestry of the India-UAE relationship, the BAPS Hindu temple emerges as the pièce de résistance, the grand crescendo that transcends diplomatic triumphs and geopolitical maneuvers. It is not just another check; it is the magnum opus, an architectural marvel that encapsulates the essence of respect for civilisations and the shared ethos of two nations. As the sun sets over the sprawling 27-acre expanse near Al Rahba, it paints the temple in hues of gold, casting a spell that echoes the warmth of the India-UAE camaraderie. The journey from the vision of Mahant Swami Maharaj in 1997 to the grand inauguration ceremony, where Prime Minister Narendra Modi graces the event with the charm of his leadership, is a narrative of shared dreams and mutual admiration. This temple, a mosaic

of Italian marbles and Rajasthan pink stones, stands not merely as a physical structure but as a living testament to the profound bond that unites the civilisations of India and the UAE.

Each carving, each pillar, and each element of its design tells a story—not just the tales of Hindu deities etched on its shikars but the narrative of a diplomatic saga, where cultural sensitivity and mutual respect become the guiding stars. The 'Dome of Harmony', rising high above the desert landscape, encapsulates the very spirit of the India-UAE relationship—a harmonious blend of diverse elements, a convergence of histories, and a celebration of shared values. The BAPS Hindu temple is not just another check; it is the crescendo that echoes through the corridors of time, symbolising the respect for civilisations, the triumph of diplomacy, and the enduring legacy of a remarkable alliance. In the grand spectacle of India-UAE relations, the construction of the BAPS Hindu temple within the borders of the Emirates stands as the highlight, a vivid testament to the profound depth of this unique partnership.

What's next for PML-N, PPP and PTI?

The Pakistani army is essentially a Punjabi army. Its main recruitment centres still lie in the districts of northern Punjab, though in recent years the army has been trying to recruit more soldiers from other provinces. As the Pakistani generals are both professional soldiers and also play a 'political' role from behind the scenes, they keep a close watch on the politics of the province as well as its popular sentiments. That is why the May 9 attacks by Imran Khan supporters on Pakistani army installations in Punjab so embittered army chief Asim Munir against the

PTI leader. The fact that the protestors had a free run in the Corp Commander residence, Lahore—Jinnah House—was especially intolerable to Munir and the generals who are loyal to him. The Punjab Provincial Assembly consists of 371 members. Of these, 297 are to be directly elected. In addition, the Assembly has 66 women seats and 8 seats for non-Muslims. These are allotted to political parties under the proportional representation system. On February 8, elections for the Punjab Assembly were held for 296 general seats. The PML (N) won 137 seats, while the PTI

candidates contesting as independents secured 115 seats. As many as 22 seats were won by non-PTI-affiliated candidates. It is certain that a number of these 22 will prevail upon or willingly join the PML (N). The question is whether at least 10 of them will join the party so that it reaches a majority. That means it will be secure. In any event, the PML (N) should have no difficulty making a government in Punjab. This does not mean that the Sharifs and Munir would not be concerned with the fact that Imran Khan retains so much popularity among the urban population

and sections of rural youth and city women that his 'independent' candidates were able to secure 115 seats. Normally, voting in Punjab takes place on the basis of biradaris. Just as caste plays a crucial role in Indian elections in Pakistan's Punjab province, biradaris are an important part of the political process. Some important biradaris are the Arians, Jats, and Rajputs. The Sharifs have, over the decades, built a strong network among the biradaris. Clearly, Imran Khan has succeeded in making a huge dent in this network. His appeal has transcended.

NBFC rules not on par with banks: RBI deputy governor



MUMBAI: RBI deputy governor M Rajeshwar Rao said that large finance companies retain certain advantages over banks and face comparatively lighter regulation due to RBI's nuanced regulatory approach. Rao, who was refuting criticism that finance companies were being regulated on a par with banks, said that NBFC have a less stringent regulatory framework. The deputy governor said that NBFCs here have bucked the global trend of contraction and grown to control a significant chunk of the country's loans. In a speech titled 'No

more a shadow (of a bank) at a summit organised by the Confederation of Indian Industry here, Rao said, "Globally, the non-bank financial intermediation sector has shrunk by 3% in 2022, while in India have expanded by about 10%, the highest among all economic categories monitored by the Financial Stability Board." The deputy governor noted concern areas, particularly in NBFC peer-to-peer lending, where most of the lenders were individuals. He also raised the issue of NBFCs being

overdependent on banks for funds and lax underwriting standards in a bid to grow fast. "It's time that the NBFC sector comes out of its own shadow as well as that of the banking sector," said Rao. Rao noted India's position as one of the few countries experiencing an increase in share of total financial assets held by NBFCs. "As of March 2023, NBFCs accounted for 12.6% of the credit to GDP ratio and constituted 18.7% of banking sector assets, marking a substantial increase from 13% a decade ago," he said.

Reliance buys 82-year-old Ravalgaon candy brand

MUMBAI: Reliance Consumer Products, the FMCG arm and a subsidiary of Reliance Retail Ventures, has acquired the trademarks, recipes and intellectual property rights of Ravalgaon Sugar Farm's confectionery business in a Rs 27-crore deal. The details were disclosed by Ravalgaon in an exchange filing on Friday. RCPL has been expanding its footprint in the market through a mix of acquisitions and partnerships. The latest acquisition will add to its FMCG portfolio that includes brands like Campa, Toffeeman and Raskik, widening the product basket for con-



sumers. The 82-year-old Ravalgaon brand owns nine confectionery labels like Pan Pasand and Coffee Break. As FMCG companies compete for a larger share of the consumer's wallet, they have been attempting to ramp up product portfolios with acquisi-

tions to get more customers. RCPL did not issue any statement. A dwindling market share on the back of surging competition from both organised and unorganised industry players prompted Ravalgaon to make the move.

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

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

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

recently sought to go public, is developing therapies for genetic diseases like hemophilia A. All of its revenue has been generated from three collaboration agreements, including one with Moderna, and not any product sales. The company is yet to turn a profit.

McKinsey places 3,000 staffers on review as economies slow

McKinsey & Co has warned about 3,000 of the firm's consultants that their performance was unsatisfactory and will need to improve. The firm gave these employees a so-called "concerns" rating as part of their performance reviews in recent months, according to people familiar with the matter. With that rating, employees are typically given about three months to show improved performance. If they're unable to do so, the firm may begin counseling some of them to leave the company entirely. While the proportion of staffers receiving the "concerns" rating is largely in line with past years, the fact that the firm's headcount has swelled so dramatically in recent years has



meant that the ratings have been handed to far more employees than in prior periods, according to the people familiar with the matter. McKinsey's headcount has swelled to about 45,000 employees, up 60% from the 28,000 it had in 2018. "Our proportion of concerns ratings is consistent with our historical range," a McKinsey spokesperson said in an emailed statement. "It is not an unprecedented year.

The performance evaluation process we have today also remains consistent with years past." It's the latest sign that the consulting industry is pulling back after the boom times of the pandemic spurred hiring sprees across the industry. Now, some of the world's largest consultancies have said a growing number of clients are shelving longer-term investments as they navigate an uncertain macroeconomic environment, meaning there is less work for their consultants to come in and advise companies on. Accenture Plc last year said it would slash 19,000 jobs. Ernst & Young LLP in December said it was cutting jobs and delaying start dates for some new hires across the US.

EPFO fixes Employees' Provident Fund interest rate for 2023-24 at three-year high;

The Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has announced a three-year high interest rate of 8.25% on employees' provident fund (EPF) deposits for the fiscal year 2023-24. This decision was made by the EPFO's apex decision-making body, the Central Board of Trustees (CBT), during their meeting on Saturday. The interest rate for the previous fiscal year, 2022-23, was marginally increased to 8.15% from 8.10%



in the year before. This decision comes amidst robust financial performance by EPFO, bolstered by investments in equity and minimal Covid-related withdrawals, according. In 2021-22, the EPFO had lowered the interest rate on EPF to a four-decade

low of 8.1%, which was the lowest since 1977-78 when the interest rate stood at 8%, according to a PTI report. However, for the fiscal year 2020-21, an interest rate of 8.5% was provided. The interest rate for each fiscal year is decided by the CBT

and then sent to the Ministry of Finance for approval. Once the government ratifies the interest rate, it will be credited to the accounts of over six crore subscribers of EPFO. It is important to note that EPFO provides the rate of interest only after it is approved by the government through the finance ministry. Over the years, the interest rate on EPF deposits has varied. In 2019-20, the interest rate was lowered to 8.5%, the lowest in seven years.

Bezos sells \$2 billion of Amazon shares in first major stock sale



Jeff Bezos sold 12 million Amazon shares, his first sale since 2021, netting over \$2 billion. This follows Amazon's announcement that Bezos may sell up to 50 million shares within a year. His fortune increased by \$22.6 billion this year, reaching \$199.5 billion. The Amazon founder has sold over \$30 billion in shares since records going back to 2002. The gap between Bezos and Musk has been narrowing as Amazon and Tesla Inc shares move in

opposite directions. Jeff Bezos unloaded 12 million shares of Amazon.com Inc. this week, the first time the billionaire has sold the company's stock since 2021. The sales took place on Wednesday and Thursday and netted just over \$2 billion, according to a filing. Amazon disclosed on February 2 that Bezos plans to sell as many as 50 million shares of Amazon over the next 12 months, potentially cashing in on a stock surge that's put him within

reach of becoming the world's richest person. His fortune has climbed \$22.6 billion this year to \$199.5 billion as of Friday, according to the Bloomberg Billionaires Index. The Amazon founder has sold over \$30 billion in shares since records going back to 2002, including about \$20 billion combined in 2020 and 2021. He has primarily been gifting stock, including shares worth roughly \$230 million that were given to nonprofit organizations in November.

Moody's downgrades Israel's credit rating due to Hamas conflict

Moody's also lowered its outlook for Israel's debt to "negative" due to "the risk of an escalation" with the far more powerful Lebanese militant group Hezbollah. In a significant financial development, Moody's, a leading US ratings agency, has announced a downgrade of Israel's credit rating from A1 to A2 on Friday, attributing the decision to the detrimental impacts of the ongoing conflict with Hamas in Gaza. This marks the first time Israel has experienced a downgrade by Moody's, as reported by Bloomberg. The agency justified its decision by highlighting the increased political risk and the weakening of Israel's executive, legislative institutions, and fiscal strength due to the "ongoing military conflict with Hamas, its aftermath, and wider consequences." Furthermore, Moody's adjusted its outlook on Israel's debt to "negative," signaling concerns over potential escalations with Hezbollah, a powerful Lebanese mili-



tant group operating along Israel's northern border. The conflict, which escalated following Hamas's unprecedented attack on October 7, has led to significant casualties. According to an AFP tally based on official Israeli figures, approximately 1,160 people in Israel, predominantly civilians, have lost their lives. In retaliation, Israel's military actions in Gaza have resulted in at least 27,947 fatalities, mostly women and children, as reported by the health ministry in the Hamas-run territory. In the wake of these events, S&P Global Ratings revised Israel's credit outlook from stable

to negative, citing the potential for the Israel-Hamas conflict to widen. Similarly, Fitch, another major US ratings agency, placed Israel on negative watch, reflecting concerns over the conflict's implications. Moody's statement further elaborated on the rationale behind the downgrade, pointing to a deteriorated security environment, increased social risk, and a reversal in the previously projected downward trend in Israel's public debt ratio. The agency anticipates a significant rise in Israel's debt burden beyond initial projections due to the conflict. The ongoing war, which

has persisted since October 7, represents the latest chapter in the protracted conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, a situation that has continually destabilized the Middle East. Despite intermittent reductions in fighting intensity and temporary ceasefires, there remains no durable agreement to conclusively end hostilities or a long-term plan to restore and enhance security for Israel. Moody's also forecasts a substantial increase in defense spending, nearly doubling the 2022 level by the end of this year. The agency's baseline scenario reflects the financial strain imposed by the conflict, with Israel having launched an extensive air and land offensive in response to Hamas's deadly attacks and hostage-taking. As negotiations for the hostages' release and a temporary ceasefire continue, the outcome and potential for a lasting peace agreement remain uncertain.

TCS gives final warning to staff: Resume work from office or face consequences

Indian IT giant Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) has extended the deadline for employees to return to the office by another quarter, until the end of March. However, the company has made it clear that this will be the final deadline. Chief Operating Officer NG Subramaniam that there will be consequences for employees who fail to resume work from the office by then. Subramaniam emphasized the importance of work culture and security issues as the reasons behind this decision. While TCS has shown patience, the company firmly believes that employees need to get back to the office. The final communication regarding this matter has been sent to employees, and those who do not comply will face consequences.

Kane's hat trick leads Edmonton Oilers past Anaheim Ducks



NEW DELHI: In an exhilarating clash between the Edmonton Oilers and the Anaheim Ducks, the Oilers staged a remarkable comeback to secure a thrilling 5-3 victory, highlighted by Evander Kane's sensational hat trick and Leon Draisaitl's decisive third-period goal.

Kane stole the spotlight with his eighth career hat trick, showcasing his offensive prowess and igniting the Oilers' resurgence after falling behind early in the game. His timely goals, coupled with Connor McDavid's three assists, powered Edmonton's offensive surge as they bounced back from their previous defeat in Las Vegas to snap the Ducks' winning streak. McDavid's stellar performance extended his impressive five-game point streak, further solidifying his status as one of the league's premier playmakers. Meanwhile, Zach Hyman's contribution with a crucial goal added to the

Oilers' offensive firepower, highlighting the depth of their scoring talent. Goalie Calvin Pickard stood tall between the pipes, making 24 saves to secure his fifth consecutive victory and anchor Edmonton's defense in the face of Anaheim's relentless offensive pressure. For the Ducks, Ryan Strome's two goals and Cam Fowler's goal and assist showcased their offensive capabilities, but it wasn't enough to withstand the Oilers' relentless onslaught. Despite a valiant effort, Anaheim's two-game winning streak came to an end as they fell victim to

Edmonton's resilience and determination. The game was characterized by back-and-forth action, with momentum swinging in both directions. After falling behind early, the Oilers fought their way back into contention, with Kane's heroics propelling them to a hard-earned victory. Draisaitl's go-ahead goal in the third period proved to be the decisive moment, as he capitalized on a power-play opportunity to give Edmonton their first lead of the game. Kane's empty-netter provided the insurance marker, sealing the Oilers' comeback triumph in a thrilling contest.

Shohei Ohtani tries to blend in with Los Angeles Dodgers, even if that might prove impossible

NEW DELHI: In his new spring training environment, Shohei Ohtani made a notable entrance, clad in a plain white T-shirt boldly emblazoned with the word "BOSS" in large, dark letters. While Ohtani may not hold the reins of the Los Angeles Dodgers, his presence undeniably commands attention as the two-time Most Valuable Player. Addressing a crowd of over 50 reporters during his inaugural interview at Camelback Ranch, Ohtani found himself in the spotlight, fielding inquiries as baseball's sole \$700 million figure. The spectacle highlights the challenge of blending in when one is the focal point. Yet, Ohtani endeavors to assimilate seamlessly, adopting a rookie-like demeanor in his new team environment.

"I'm on a brand new team, so I'm going to act like a rookie," Ohtani remarked through an interpreter, emphasizing his intent to foster camaraderie among teammates. As the Dodgers kicked off their spring training with pitchers and catchers reporting, Ohtani's multifaceted talents take center stage. Although his pitching duties are paused due to recovery from elbow surgery, his prowess at the plate remains undiminished. Despite missing a substantial portion of the previous season, Ohtani's offensive performance was stellar, boasting a .304 batting average alongside 44 home runs. Now liberated from pitching concerns, Ohtani anticipates further offensive prowess. "I feel like there's not just one level, but several levels

ahead offensive-wise," he expressed. , poised to elevate his game amidst a stacked Dodgers lineup. Manager Dave Roberts acknowledges Ohtani's deliberate approach, noting his teammates' keen observation of the superstar's methods. "Everything he does is intentional, which is pretty amazing, but not surprising," Roberts remarked, emphasizing Ohtani's commitment to victory as a Dodger. Amidst the excitement surrounding Ohtani's debut season with the Dodgers, Roberts reflects on the team's role as a beacon of ambition in the league. "He wants nothing more than to win, and to win as a Dodger," Roberts affirmed, echoing the collective enthusiasm within the organization for their newest acquisition.

Pakistan's election left no clear winner. So who is likely to govern and what happens next?

Allies of imprisoned ex-Prime Minister Imran Khan won the most seats in the lower house of parliament in the elections last Thursday. It was a shock outcome given the obstacles: His Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf party could hold no campaign rallies, had no polling agents on election day and faced internet restrictions. They won 93 out of 265 National Assembly seats. It's not enough to form a government, however. The other two mainstream parties, led by Khan's rivals, also failed to secure enough seats to form a government on their own. They are the PML-N of former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif and the PPP, led by political dynasty scion Bilawal-Bhutto Zardari. They won 75 and 54 seats respectively. It's Pakistan's parliament that chooses the next prime minister, so having a majority is crucial. Not Imran Khan. He's in prison and barred from holding public office. The PTI said it doesn't want or need an alliance, claiming it has enough seats. It doesn't. The party has public support — as shown by the number of seats that candidates scooped up — but it doesn't have the backing of political peers. Analyst Azim Chaudhry said the other parties have "grievances and grudges" against Khan from his time in office and that they're not ready to shake hands with him because he's made it clear he doesn't want to talk to them. The PML-N and PPP started coalition talks once it became clear that Khan loyalists had taken a lead. They claim to have pacts with smaller parties and newly minted parliamentarians, including defectors from Khan's side, to bump up their seat quota to the magic majority number of 169. But knowing who could become prime minister from this ragtag crowd is trickier. Party insiders say Sharif isn't suited to a coalition because of his temperament. His younger brother, Shehbaz, led a coalition after Khan was ousted from power and is regarded as more accommodating.

Kirill Kaprizov's go-ahead goal pushes Minnesota Wild past Pittsburgh Penguins

NEW DELHI: In a thrilling matchup in St. Paul, Minnesota, the Minnesota Wild clinched a hard-fought 3-2 victory over the Pittsburgh Penguins, with Kirill Kaprizov emerging as the hero with the go-ahead goal midway through the third period. Kaprizov's decisive strike, accompanied by goals from Matt Boldy and Jonas Brodin, propelled the Wild to their second consecutive win following the NHL All-Star break.

The electric atmosphere was further enhanced by the Wild's celebration of "Marc-Andre Fleury Night," paying tribute to the veteran goaltender with pregame ceremonies and heartfelt video tributes. Fleury, living up to the occasion, showcased his brilliance by turning away 34 of the 36 shots fired by his former team, securing his 553rd career win in an impressive display between the pipes. Pittsburgh, despite

spirited efforts, fell short in their quest for victory, with Reilly Smith and Sidney Crosby notching goals for the Penguins. Goaltender Alex Nedeljkovic made 27 saves but couldn't prevent the Penguins from succumbing to defeat. The Wild drew first blood with a power-play goal late in the first period, as Kaprizov orchestrated a slick pass to Boldy, who rifled home a wrist shot from the slot. However, Pittsburgh quickly

responded in the second period, as Evgeni Malkin set up Smith for a thunderous one-timer, leveling the score at 1-1. Undeterred, the Wild surged ahead once more midway through the second period, with Brodin exhibiting his offensive prowess by maneuvering past defenders for a skillful finish, reclaiming the lead for Minnesota. The relentless Penguins fought back early in the third period, with Crosby capitalizing

Police in a Maine city ask residents to shelter in place after gunfire at a intersection

SACO: Police in Saco, Maine, asked residents to shelter in place Friday afternoon while they searched for suspects after an exchange of gunfire and vehicle crash at a busy intersection spurred a brief citywide school lockdown. The reports of gunshots came in at about the same time as the multi-vehicle crash downtown, police said. It involved a school bus that had children on board, but none were hurt, city spokesperson



Emily Roy said. A police spokesperson described the investigation as "an ongoing, fluid situation." Police said they were searching for four people who fled from one of the cars involved in the

crash, and that one of the people appeared to have been shot. They also said they recovered a firearm from one of the vehicles involved in the crash. Roy said the crash involved the school bus

from nearby Old Orchard Beach and another vehicle. "There were reports of gunfire downtown and then reports of a vehicle crash involving a bus from Old Orchard Beach," Roy said. "Right now there is police activity due to the ongoing incident." Ryan Guay, a supervisory Deputy U.S. Marshal in Portland, Maine, said the U.S. Marshals Service was on the scene helping the Saco Police Department.

Woman found dead in SoHo hotel with bloody iron next to her ID'd

A woman who was found dead inside a SoHo hotel room in Lower Manhattan with a bloody iron next to her has been identified as 38-year-old Denise Oleas-Arancibia, a Queens mother (Facebook) Oleas-Arancibia was a Jackson Heights resident and had been staying at the hotel for many days. A spokesperson for the NYC Office of Chief Medical Examiner told New York Post that her manner of death was officially determined to be homicide. Her cause of death was compression of the neck and blunt force trauma. Arrests in the case have yet to be made, the New York Police Department has said. Oleas-Arancibia's son Edwin Cevallos, 18, said that a week before the murder, his mother had appeared nervous. After moving from



Ecuador to the Big Apple, she lived there with her son and a young nephew. Her parents and younger son lived in South America, the Daily News reported. "In the week [before], she was like, sad. She was so nervous, and she was worried," Cevallos said. "I am in shock. I can't believe this happened. This is surprising," Cevallos added, "Everything here in New York reminds me of her. Everything." He added that his mother "worked very hard" and was "always working for us to give us the best

life in this country." Cevallos waited for his mother to come home on Thursday. When she did not, he called the police, who came to his house and delivered the tragic news. "She wanted a better life because in Ecuador is a lot of bad people. It was so dangerous," Cevallos said. "She gave us the life that we always wanted." The day before she was found dead, Oleas-Arancibia made breakfast for her son and gave him some money for a haircut. "Goodbye, I love you," he told him as he left for school.

Sikhs for Justice: Shots fired at Pannun associate's home in Canada

Toronto: Shots were fired in the early hours of Monday at a Greater Toronto Area home owned by an associate of Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) general-counsel Gurpatwant Pannun. The house, currently under construction in Brampton, was owned by Inderjeet Singh Gosal, who helped organise the so-called Khalistan Referendum in Surrey, British Columbia in September 23 after its coordinator Hardeep Singh Nijjar was killed on June 18. Police haven't made any public announcement about the incident nor have they attributed any motive for it. Gosal is leading a protest outside the Indian consulate in Toronto on February 17, to mark the eighth month since Nijjar was



murdered. "I have been heading Khalistan Freedom Rallies in front of the Indian consulate and I have been targeted for the same very reason that Nijjar was assassinated by Indian agents, i.e. our campaigning for the Khalistan Referendum," Gosal said, in a statement released by SFJ. Pannun accused India of being behind the incident as warned that if it was "using violence to stop the Khalistan Referendum", New Delhi will "be responsi-

ble if the current spree of violent attacks on pro-Khalistan Sikhs turns into a cycle". An Indian national Nik Gupta is currently in custody in the Czech Republic, awaiting possible extradition to the United States to face charges that he allegedly attempted to hire a hitman to target Pannun. The latest episode follows multiple shots being fired at the residence of Simranjeet Singh, an associate of Nijjar, in Surrey in the early hours of February 1.

While pro-Khalistan groups blamed India for that incident as well, the Surrey detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) arrested two teenagers in Surrey on February 6 for careless use of a firearm and discharge of a firearm with intent. They were later released without charges at the time. Investigators there continue to "collect evidence to advance the investigation and determine the motive of this shooting". Relations between India and Canada nosedived when Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau stated in the House of Commons on September 18 last year that there were "credible allegations" of a potential link between Indian agents and Nijjar's killing.

Whereabouts of Venezuelan human rights attorney

CARACAS, Venezuela (AP) — The whereabouts of a prominent human rights attorney, her daughter and ex-husband remained unknown Monday, three days after Venezuelan authorities detained her at the airport near the capital as she and her adult child awaited a flight to Miami, setting off condemnation inside and outside the South American country. Attorneys for lawyer and activist Rocío San Miguel, Miranda Díaz San Miguel and Víctor Díaz Paruta could not locate their clients Monday at detention facilities in Caracas despite confirmation Sunday from Attorney General Tarek William Saab of San Miguel's detention. Authorities have not acknowledged the detention of Miranda Díaz and Víctor Díaz, but a family spokeswoman told The Associated Press Monday both were last seen Saturday.

His absence does not mean...': Former India opener on Kohli's unavailability for series

NEW DELHI: Former Indian opener Aakash Chopra has weighed in on the absence of star batter Virat Kohli from the ongoing home series against England, expressing confidence that India can still perform well despite his unavailability. Kohli, who missed the first two Tests due to personal reasons, will continue to be absent for the remaining three matches, a decision supported by the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI). Reflecting on Kohli's absence, Chopra highlighted India's historic series win in Australia during the 2020-21 tour, where they emerged victorious even without Kohli, who played just one of the four Tests. "I would not go that far (losing the series without Virat). Let us be honest, life does not stop because of someone coming or going. Life must go on," Chopra stated in a YouTube video. Chopra acknowledged the sig-



nificance of Kohli's absence but emphasized that India had previously overcome challenges without him. He pointed out India's victory in Australia, where they defeated the hosts in his absence, showcasing the team's resilience. "You are definitely missing him but his absence does not mean that you will lose the series if he isn't there because you defeated Australia in his absence. India actually lost in the match he was there, that was the Adelaide Test match, but after that, we

broke Gabba's pride as well," he added. Assessing Kohli's potential impact on the ongoing series, Chopra remarked on the ordinary bowling attack of England and the favorable batting conditions, suggesting Kohli could have made significant contributions. "Considering the bowling standards and the sort of pitch that was there in Vizag and when we got to bat for the first time in Hyderabad, Kohli would have scored at least one 150 in the two matches because he would not have stopped against this ordinary bowling," Chopra asserted.

KL ruled out but what is Jadeja's fitness status ahead of 3rd Test

In another big blow to India's batting plans for the third Test against England, the hosts lost KL Rahul after he failed to recover from his injury that kept him out of the second Test in Visakhapatnam. Rahul, whose availability for the last three Test matches of the series was subject to fitness, was on Monday ruled out as BCCI's selection committee named Devdutt Padikkal, another Karnataka batter, as his replacement. But what is the fitness status of all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja, whose selection for the Rajkot match was also subject to fitness? Last week, selectors had named a 17-man squad

for the final three Tests against England. Shreyas Iyer was dropped from the team, following a string of poor returns with the bat, but Jadeja and Rahul were added to the list, although their participation was subject to fitness clearance from BCCI's medical team. Jadeja had incurred a hamstring injury during the first Test in Hyderabad, and Rahul complained of quadriceps pain after the match, subsequently leading to both the senior players getting ruled out of the second game in Visakhapatnam. Rahul, however, failed to recover in time for the Rajkot Test as the batter will continue his rehabilitation at the

National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru before returning for the final two Tests. "Rahul has reached 90 per cent of match fitness and is progressing well under the supervision of the BCCI Medical Team.

He will continue his recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to be completely match-fit for the fourth and fifth Test," read the BCCI statement. Is Ravindra Jadeja available for selection in 3rd Test against England? BCCI's press release, however, had no mention of Jadeja's fitness status or his availability for selection in the third Test against England in Rajkot.

'Selectors will stop overestimating Shreyas Iyer's batting ability': Ian

Though India are set to miss the services of Virat Kohli for the remainder of the England Test series, former Australian captain Ian feels the hosts will be 'greatly strengthened' by the returns of veteran all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja and KL Rahul. Former vice-captain Rahul and senior all-round-

er Jadeja were drafted back into the roster while premier batter Shreyas Iyer was shown the exit door when India announced its squad for the remaining three matches of the England series on Saturday. "India is a strong side and they also have a good leader in Rohit Sharma. They will be greatly

strengthened by Ravindra Jadeja's and KL Rahul's recovery from injury, but that Kohli will not return for the rest of the series is a blow. Hopefully the selectors will now stop overestimating Shreyas Iyer's batting ability and learn to value Kuldeep Yadav's wicket-taking capability more,"

Ranji Trophy: Odisha bowlers toil after early wickets

KOLKATA: Asked to field first by Uttarakhand skipper Jiwant Singh in their penultimate Ranji Trophy Elite Group D game, hosts Odisha got just the kind of start any team would have wanted. But at the end of Day 1, it was Uttarakhand who were in control of the game at DRIEMS Ground in Tangi near Cuttack on Friday. Losing both their openers inside the eight overs and with only 22 runs on board, the visitors fought back to reach 232/3 in 90 overs at stumps



opting to bat first. Odisha must feel disappointed to let their opponents off the hook after an encouraging start though. Bowling spearhead Rajesh Mohanty induced an edge off

opener Kunal Chandela in the third ball of the day and he was caught behind by Odisha wicketkeeper Aashirwad Swain.

Both seamers Mohanty and Debabrata Pradhan

continued to bowl a tight line to keep the scoring rate under 3 runs per over before fellow pacer Sunil Roul gave the hosts another breakthrough in his opening over, removing the other opener Sanjeet Sajwan by rattling his stumps. And at 22/2 in 8th over, the home side had good reasons to cheer before Vaibhab Bhatt

(101 batting) and Jiwant (90) collaborated to repair the early damage on the way to build a formidable score without any further hiccup.

'He was labelled as a white-ball cricketer...': Shastri praises Bumrah's Test cricket dedication

NEW DELHI: Former India head coach Ravi Shastri has lauded Jasprit Bumrah's unwavering commitment to Test cricket, emphasizing the pacer's desire to break away from the stereotype of being labelled as a "white-ball specialist." In an exclusive interview with 'The Times', recalling their initial conversation, Shastri reminisced, "I remember my first call to him, it was in Kolkata. I asked him would he be interested in Test cricket. He said that



would be the biggest day of his life." "He was labelled as a white-ball cricketer without asking him. But I knew. I wanted to see how hungry he was. I told

him to get ready, be prepared. I told him I was going to unleash him in South Africa," Shastri said. Despite Bumrah's remarkable success in white-ball

cricket, Shastri emphasized the significance of Test cricket, noting, "They will always remember your numbers in Test cricket." Reflecting on Bumrah's recent exploits, Shastri hailed his exceptional performance in the Vizag Test, stating, "He's so excited to be playing and doing well in Test cricket." Bumrah's achievement as the fastest Indian bowler to reach 150 Test wickets further underscored his commitment to excel in the traditional format.

Devdutt Padikkal's quiet knocks on India's Test door answered:

Devdutt Padikkal has received a maiden Test call-up ahead of the third match between India and England that is scheduled to start on February 15. Padikkal finds a place in the team as a replacement for fellow Karnataka batter KL Rahul, with the latter being ruled out of the third Test due to a sore knee. The Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) said in a release announcing the squad that Rahul "has reached 90 per cent of match fitness" and that "he will continue his recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to be completely match-fit for the fourth and fifth Test."

Rahul has pretty much been in the form of his life across formats since returning from a lengthy period on the sidelines a few weeks

before the 2023 World Cup. In the first Test against England, which India lost, Rahul was India's highest scorer in the first innings with 87 runs and he followed that up with 22 in the second. His unavailability is a blow but, as is the case so many times with the Indian team, it also means an opportunity for a player who has been quietly piling on the runs in first class cricket. Padikkal's impressive first class career Padikkal may have become a household name due to his performances in the Indian Premier League (IPL) but the 23-year-old has built an impressive resume in red-ball cricket. In the 31 first class matches that he has played thus far, Padikkal has scored 2227 runs at an average of 44.54 with six centuries and 12 half-centuries. He has been

in particularly good form this season, scoring 556 runs at an average of 92.66 in four matches. He has also scored three centuries in the six innings he has played, getting a three-figure score every time he crossed 50. In Karnataka's fifth round fixture against Tamil Nadu in Chennai that finished in a draw on Monday, Padikkal was played of the match, having scored 151 and 36. His highest score this season has been 193, which he scored in Karnataka's opening match against Punjab. Padikkal was also part of the India A team that faced England Lions in Ahmedabad and impressed with scores of 65, 21 and 105. His century in the second unofficial Test was part of a massive first-innings batting effort that helped set up an innings victory.

Gilchrist reacts to MS Dhoni's new bat sticker

The IPL 2024 is still more than a month away but the tournament has already picked up steam thanks to the one and only MS Dhoni. The Chennai Super Kings captain, for whom the 16th edition of the Indian Premier League promises to be his last, has started training in the nets in his vintage long locks, and as is the case with Dhoni, it's enough to send the internet community into a complete meltdown. Dhoni, in yellow, with bat and pads, in full flow. For people of the 'Yellow' army, this is what dreams are made of. However, for the first time, Dhoni's bat made more news than the man himself. Last week, a picture of Dhoni training with a new 'Prime Sports' sticker was all the rage. It was a tribute to Dhoni to his childhood friend Paramjit Singh, who owns a sports company of that name, a fact very well and beautifully documented in the legendary India cricketer's biopic 'MS Dhoni, the Untold story'. As Dhoni approaches the end of his cricket career, the former India captain used the sticker as a heartwarming gesture to Paramjit, who played a key role in his journey, including getting MSD his first bat sponsor. Even in 2019, before Dhoni made his final appearance for India, he played in the World Cup using bats with various logos; and hence, such a heartwarming act from the man with a big heart isn't really surprising.

BCCI set to issue critical 'Ranji Trophy' notice amid Ishan continued absence

Over the past few weeks, there have been significant speculations over the places of certain players in Team India's squad; one of them, Ishan Kishan, has drawn considerable attention. Ishan has been away from action since November last year and withdrew from the South Africa tour midway next month, reportedly citing mental fatigue. Last week, India head coach Rahul Dravid was visually displeased with repeated questions over Ishan Kishan's unavailability, stating that the player needs to play some cricket before returning to the national fold. A few days later, a report revealed Ishan has returned to training alongside the Pandya brothers - Hardik and Krunal - in Baroda. Also read Ravindra Jadeja's wife Rivaba loses cool after reporter's question on father-in-law's controversial accusations. Interestingly, the young wicketkeeper-batter didn't make himself available for selection for Jharkhand in the Ranji Trophy. Former India all-rounder Irfan Pathan had reacted to the development on his official Twitter profile earlier this week, stating he was "perplexed" with the player's unavailability.

Rivaba loses cool after reporter's question on father-in-law's controversial accusations

Ravindra Jadeja caught attention for reasons beyond the cricket field last week, when he issued a statement over his father's interview where the latter made controversial remarks over his relationship with his son. Jadeja alleged that the interview was "scripted" and his wife, Rivaba, recently addressed accusations made by her father-in-law, Anirudhsinh, regarding their family dynamics. Anirudhsinh had alleged that Rivaba was responsible for causing discord within the family, claiming that Ravindra had ceased communication with his father and sister after their marriage. He also disclosed that he resided alone in a modest 2BKH flat despite living in the same city as the Indian cricket all-rounder, managing his expenses solely from his late wife's ₹20,000 pension. Furthermore, Anirudhsinh implied that Rivaba gradually gained control over Ravindra's assets and properties following their marriage. When asked to comment on her father-in-law's statements at a public event, Rivaba, who is a BJP MLA, appeared visibly upset. She urged the reporter to approach her directly rather than discuss such matters in a public setting. "Why are we here today? You can contact me directly if you want to know about it," said Rivaba in a video that went viral.

Double engine govt guarantees security, prosperity & happiness of all: Chief Minister

Goarakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath reiterated on Wednesday that the double engine government of the Bharatiya Janata Party stands committed to ensuring the prosperity, happiness, and security of all sections of society. "This is Modi ji's guarantee, and the government is moving forward with full commitment to fulfill it. Under Prime Minister Narendra Modi's guidance, the double-engine government not only provides security and dignity to the people but also empowers them to be self-reliant," he stated. As part of the nationwide Gaon Chalo campaign aimed at assessing the effectiveness of government welfare schemes and



raising awareness among villagers, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath convened a Chaupal in a village to engage with the residents and inform them about the schemes. Upon reaching Rajhi Azadnagar (Vantangiya village) of Goarakhpur, Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath interacted with villagers, gathering

information about the benefits they have received from government initiatives. He also talked to children during the visit, inquiring about their studies, distributing chocolates, and encouraging them to excel academically. Following his interactions with beneficiaries, Chief Minister Adityanath addressed the gather-

ing in Rajahi, highlighting the comprehensive positive changes brought about by the double engine government. "Before 2014, the village went unnoticed, the plight of the poor was disregarded, women's issues were neglected, and the well-being of the youth was overlooked. Farmers were devastated, hunger claimed lives, and suicides among farmers were rampant." He emphasized that today, government schemes aimed at benefiting every segment of society, including villages, the poor, farmers, women, and youth, are making remarkable progress. The Chief Minister highlighted the substantial achievements of the double-engine government in

Uttar Pradesh, stating that 55 lakh 83 thousand people have been provided with housing, a benefit that was previously inaccessible to many. Additionally, over 2 crore 63 lakh toilets have been constructed, while 15 crore residents benefit from free ration distribution. Notably, 10 crore people are enrolled in the Ayushman Bharat scheme in Uttar Pradesh alone. The government is working to ensure that the benefits of every scheme reach every poor person. Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath further informed the villagers about the government's plan to issue a new Family ID Card, ensuring transparency in the distribution of scheme benefits.

Yogi govt to give another chance to intermediate students who missed their practical board exams this year

Lucknow/Prayagraj, Committed to conducting cheating-free board examinations and providing ample opportunities to all the students of the state to progress, the Yogi government is giving another opportunity to students who missed their practical exams. The state government is providing another opportunity for students, who have missed their practical examinations conducted by the Council of Secondary Education, to appear for the exams on February 16. Notably, the board examinations will be organized in the state from February 22 to March 9. Prior to the exams, the government wants to ensure that



every student could participate in main exams with peace of mind after completing their practical exams. Examination will be conducted under surveillance of C C T V cameras. Secretary of the Board of Secondary Education, Divyakant Shukla said that the intermediate practical exams of the year 2024, which

were scheduled between January 25 and February 9, and missed by some students, will be conducted again on February 16, 2024. Similar to the main examination, this practical examination will be conducted by examiners appointed by the regional offices of the Council under the surveillance of CCTV cameras.

Integrated township and railway coaches projects will be launched in Chandauli & Jhansi respectively

Lucknow

As the Yogi government's preparations for hosting the fourth edition of the highly anticipated Ground Breaking Ceremony (GBC@IV) in Lucknow to implement investment proposals worth Rs 10 lakh crore are in the final stage, the Uttar Pradesh State Industrial Development Authority (UPSIDA) is gearing up to launch 15 percent of the proposals worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore. This includes various significant projects covering diverse areas, such as integrated townships,

malls, private industrial parks, rail coaches, logistics and warehousing, food processing, cement industry, hospitals, bio-fuel and manufacturing. Once implemented, the projects will transform the image and destiny of several districts, including Chandauli, Lalitpur, Basti, Etah, Bulandshahr, Amethi, Moradabad and Jhansi, contributing to their economic growth along with the overall development of the state. It is noteworthy that UPSIDA had received proposals worth more than Rs 3.5

lakh crore through the Global Investors Summit held in February last year. Out of these, it is going to implement projects worth Rs 1.5 lakh crore in GBC@IV. It is noteworthy that the ground breaking ceremony 2024 will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Integrated township project in Chandauli will provide 18,000 jobs through GBC@IV, an Integrated Township is being constructed in Chandauli with an investment of Rs 7,000 crores.

Yogi govt to construct Sugriva Path connecting Hanuman Garhi and Ram temple to facilitate darshan

Ayodhya

In a significant move aimed at enhancing accessibility and easing congestion for devotees flocking to witness the divine presence of Ram Lalla, the Yogi government has announced plans to construct a new pathway, named Sugriva Path, linking the revered Hanuman Garhi Temple to the sacred Ram Janmabhoomi Temple in Ayodhya. The proposed Sugriva Path, spanning a length of 290 meters, will serve as a convenient thoroughfare, facilitating seamless entry for devotees into the sanctified precincts of the Ram temple. The initiative comes in response to the burgeoning footfall of approximately two to two and a half lakh devotees flocking daily for the divine darshan of Ram Lalla, necessitating measures to alleviate traffic congestion and ensure a hassle-free pilgrimage experience. The construction of Sugriva Path, estimated to cost Rs 11.81 crore, underscores the government's unwavering commit-

ment to enhancing infrastructure and facilitating smoother access for pilgrims. Out of this budget, Rs 5.1 crore has been earmarked for land acquisition, while the remaining funds will be allocated towards the development of the corridor, ensuring a width of approximately 17 meters, with five meters dedicated exclusively to pedestrian pathways. The Public Works Department has been entrusted with the responsibility of executing the construction of Sugriva Path. Chief Engineer S.B. Singh affirmed that the initial phase will focus on expediting the land acquisition process, paving the way for the commencement of construction activities in due course. As the wheels of progress set into motion, the Sugriva Path stands as a testament to the government's steadfast commitment to fostering an environment conducive to spiritual reverence and seamless pilgrimage experiences for devotees.

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

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



UPEIDA to exhibit UP's transformational journey through an expo from February 19-21

Lucknow

The Uttar Pradesh Expressway Industrial Development Authority (UPEIDA) will showcase the transformational journey of the state in the exhibition to be held on the sidelines of the Groundbreaking Ceremony@IV (GBC@IV) from February 19 to 21 at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan in Lucknow. The Yogi government is going to implement projects worth Rs 10 lakh crore through GBC@IV. The prominent features of UPEIDA's displays during the three-day exhibition to be held on an area of 75 square meters, will be advanced development of expressways, its key technological features, ongoing development projects under the Defence Corridor, and the establishment and operation of EV charging stations. Notably, the exhibition will serve as a medium to showcase the current progress and future possibilities of the state but also raise people's awareness about it. The exhibition will offer a cutting-edge multimedia experience, featuring state-of-the-art LED televisions and P2 high-quality LED walls. These dynamic displays, complemented by meticulously crafted brochures and leaflets, will serve as a captivating canvas, highlighting the vast investment opportunities and the latest advancements in expressways, the Defence Corridor, and EV charging infrastructure across the state. Moreover, visitors will be treated to a visual journey through captivating short films, showcasing the evolving landscapes and groundbreaking developments in expressway networks, defence infrastructure, and sustainable mobility solutions. Advertisements and short clips will further underscore the achievements and progressive policies of the state government, fostering a deeper appreciation for Uttar Pradesh's transformative journey. To enrich the visitor experience, the exhibition stall will feature an array of eye-catching flex boards, banners, and display standees, offering diverse information through various media channels. Additionally, investors will receive thoughtful mementos including diaries, souvenirs, and high-quality 8 GB drive cards, ensuring a lasting impression of their engagement with Uttar Pradesh's investment landscape. 3D models of defence equipment will garner attention at the heart of the exhibition, striking 3D models of defence equipment will command attention, offering a tangible representation of Uttar Pradesh's commitment to innovation and security. These meticulously crafted models of missiles, tanks and aircraft, illuminated with captivating lighting and adorned with intricate details, will create an immersive experience for the viewers. With a focus on functionality and aesthetics, the stall will boast an impressive facade towering at a height of 15 feet, complete with strategically positioned entry and exit points.

7 BJP candidates file nomination papers in presence of UP CM Yogi

Lucknow

Seven BJP candidates on Wednesday filed their nomination papers for the upcoming Rajya Sabha elections, in the presence of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Lok Sabha election in-charge Baijayant Panda. The nominations were filed by BJP spokesperson Sudhanshu Trivedi, RPN Singh, Sangeeta



Balwant, Sadhna Singh, Amarपाल Maurya, Tejveer Singh, and Naveen Jain at the Vidhan Bhavan. During this, Bharatiya Janata Party State President Bhupendra Singh

Chaudhary, Deputy Chief Minister Keshav Prasad Maurya, Brajesh Patshak, Cabinet Minister Suresh Khanna, Surya Pratap Shahi, Swatantra Dev Singh etc. were present.

CM Yogi offers prayers at Ravidas Temple in Varanasi

Varanasi

Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, offered prayers at the Ravidas

Temple in Seer Goverdhanpur area, on the second day of his tour to Varanasi. He also interacted with the temple's Mahant and inquired about his well-being. During the visit, the Chief Minister inspected the Langar Hall of the temple in view of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's proposed visit to Varanasi. Additionally, he observed the idol, which will be unveiled by the PM during his visit, along with other activities going on at the temple. It is worth mentioning here that in course of his two-day visit to Kashi, CM Yogi took stock of several ongoing developmental activities in the city.

Grant under Kanya Sumangala Yojana to be increased from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000

Goarakhpur

Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, on Wednesday, said that the grant under Mukhyamantri Kanya Sumangala Yojana will be increased from Rs 15,000 to Rs 25,000 per beneficiary annually from April, this year. The CM said that as per the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, the double-engine government is working diligently for the safety, respect, and dignity of women. Addressing the Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Samaroh organized on the fertilizer factory premises on the auspicious occasion of Basant Panchami, the Chief Minister said, "In 2014, PM Modi



launched the "Beti Bachao-Beti Padhao" campaign to ensure the safety, respect, and self-reliance of women. Only when daughters are protected and educated, can they contribute to the country and society." He emphasized that a daughter contributes to the advancement of the entire family, adding that several schemes are

being implemented at the central and state levels today to save and empower daughters. On this occasion, he also inaugurated 91 development projects costing Rs 252 crore. CM Yogi mentioned that after becoming the Chief Minister for the first time in 2017, he launched the Kanya Sumangala Yojana, which facilitates educa-

tion of a girl child right from her birth till graduation. He said that the government has provided Rs. 15,000 to more than 17 lakh daughters annually through this scheme so far. This amount will be increased to Rs. 25,000 from April. He said that under the "Mukhyamantri Samuhik Vivah Yojana", the state government has conducted three lakh marriages since 2017, spending Rs. 51,000 per couple, out of which Rs. 35,000 are sent to the bride's account. "It's heartening to see that children from both poor and affluent families are participating in the 'Samuhik Vivah Samaroh'", he stated."