

AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

Title Code - UPENG04488

NATIONAL ENGLISH DAILY

MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ

Saturday 24 February, 2024

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

Those who've lost their senses calling UP youth 'nashedi': PM

VARANASI: The scion of a party that kept UP "sick and backward" for years has committed the "senseless" travesty of branding the state's youth "nashedi (alcoholics)" just when they have embarked on a journey to a brighter future, PM Narendra Modi said Friday in a broadside at Rahul Gandhi for his Feb 20 remark in Amethi.

"What kind of language is this?" Modi said during a rally at Karkhiyaon in Varanasi after inaugurating 23 projects and laying the foundation for 12 more worth Rs 13,000 crore. "Kashi and Ayodhya's new image is increasing their frustration. Their remarks on Ram Mandir make it clear how much they hate Ram. They are unable to think beyond family and vote bank." Referring to Rahul as "yuvraj (prince) of Congress's royal family", PM said his words reflected the party's mindset. "They kept abusing me for two decades, and now they



PM Modi slams INDIA bloc over caste politics

VARANASI: PM Narendra Modi targeted INDIA bloc on Friday citing a couplet of 15th century poet-saint Sant Ravidas, saying humanity was harmed when people gave priority to caste and community. "Jaat-paat ke pher mahi, urajhi rahin sab log... (People are entangled in matters of caste)," Modi said, quoting Ravidas at his 647th birth anniversary celebrations near BHU.

are spewing the venom of frustration on youth. This insult by the INDIA

INDIA bloc leaders want the people to remain focused on issues of caste and oppose every govt scheme for the benefit of Dalits and other deprived sections, PM said. Cautioning against such forces, he said such people indulge in politics of dynasty under the garb of caste politics. "We have to avoid the negative mentality of casteism and follow the teachings of Ravidas ji."

bloc won't be forgotten. Rahul's remark came

three days after his Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra passed through Varanasi. At Amethi, the family bastion he lost to BJP's Smriti Irani in 2019, the Wayanad MP said, "During my Varanasi visit, I saw people lying on the roads drunk. The youth of UP are on a liquor trip. Then there is the Ram Mandir, which is only visited by the likes of PM Modi, Ambani and Adani. Your place is limited to roads for begging while they (industrialists) keep minting money."

Modi said "dynasts" were given to thinking like that. "They feel giving the youth opportunities will translate into challenges for them. They like only those who keep cheering for dynasts day and night." Alluding to SP and Congress's seat-sharing deal as part of INDIA, the PM said, "They are the kind who join hands before elections, but after losing polls, they blame each other for their defeat."

Finally, opposition's INDIA bloc gathers momentum

NEW DELHI: After months of dithering and bickering, opposition's INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc finally seems to be gathering some momentum and moving ahead as the allies have fast-tracked negotiations to reach consensus on the complex issue of seat-sharing. While Congress and Samajwadi Party have already crossed the seat-sharing hurdle, INDIA partners in Delhi and Maharashtra are also on the verge of achieving a breakthrough. In another positive development for the anti-BJP grouping, reports say, talks between



the Congress and West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee that had hit a dead end, has resumed once again. What has made the negotiations tough is the fact that most of the regional parties which have joined hands at the national level with the Congress to form INDIA bloc, are political rivals of the grand old

party in their respective states. INDIA bloc registered its first breakthrough in politically crucial Uttar Pradesh where Samajwadi Party and Congress agreed to 63-17 division of 80 Lok Sabha seats in the state. The Congress wanted 20 seats, but eventually settled for 17. According to Congress, party general secretary

Priyanka Gandhi played a key role in breaking the deadlock between the two parties by talking to Rahul Gandhi and SP chief Akhilesh Yadav. The two parties also sealed agreement for Madhya Pradesh, where the Congress agreed to leave one seat for the SP. The coalition faces a tough electoral challenge from the BJP which hopes to gain not just from the grand Ram Mandir inauguration but also CM Yogi Adityanath's rule in the state. In Delhi, Congress and Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party are close to finalising a deal.

Odysseus becomes first US spacecraft to land on moon after 1972

NEW DELHI: US achieved its first touchdown on lunar surface in over 50 years on Thursday as a spacecraft built and flown by Texas-based company Intuitive Machines landed near moon's south pole. According to a joint

webcast from Intuitive Machines' mission operations center in Houston, the robot lander, Odysseus, touched down at approximately 6:23 pm EST. Signals sent back to mission control confirmed the successful landing of the spacecraft.

However, there was a delay in re-establishing communication with the lander, causing uncertainty about its condition and position. The spacecraft was not equipped to provide live video coverage of the event. The landing

took place as planned at a crater called Malapert A near the moon's south pole. The touchdown came after a last-minute issue with the spacecraft's navigation system, which was resolved by engineers on the ground.

Assam takes big step towards introducing Uniform Civil Code, scraps Muslim Marriage Act



NEW DELHI: In a late night development, the Assam cabinet on Friday took the first big step towards introducing the Uniform Civil Code in the state by scrapping the Assam Muslim Marriage & Divorce Registration Act 1935. The move comes less than three weeks after Uttarakhand became the first state to pass the Uniform Civil Code. Cabinet minister Jayanta Mallabarua termed it as a step towards achieving UCC. He stated that now all matters pertaining to Muslim marriages and divorces would be taken care of under the Special Marriages Act. The decision was taken today in a cabinet meeting which was chaired by chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. "The CM had recently stated that we are moving towards Uniform Civil Code (UCC). In this journey, a very important decision has been taken. The Assam Muslim Marriage & Divorce Registration Act 1935, under which 94 Muslim registrars are still functioning, has been repealed today. The cabinet has today ended this Act and now under this act no Muslim marriage or divorce would be registered. Since we have a Special Marriages Act, hence we want all matters settled through that particular Act," said Mallabarua. The cabinet minister further said that through this decision they are also trying to curb child marriage in the state.

Karnataka's temple tax bill in limbo after defeat in council

BENGALURU: Two days after Karnataka assembly passed the Hindu Religious Institutions & Charitable Endowment (Amendment) Bill, 2024, which rejiggered existing matrix to collect more taxes from earnings of state-owned temples, the contentious bill fell through in legislative council Friday, with BJP and JD(S) joining forces to defeat it in a poten-



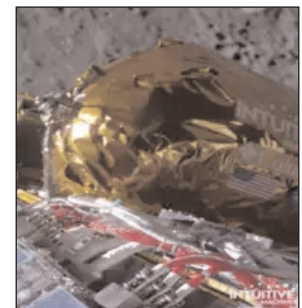
tial display of solidarity ahead of Lok Sabha elections. Congress had ensured smooth passage of the bill in the assembly as it has a majority in Lower House. However, BJP-JD(S) combine, taking

advantage of their majority in the Upper House, threw a spanner in the works of govt and thwarted the proposal. The bill was rejected by a voice vote conducted by deputy chairperson M K

Parnesh. In the 75-member legislative council, BJP has 35 members, including the chairperson, while JD(S) has eight. Congress has 29 members, besides an independent. Two seats are currently vacant. Though existing rules allow govt to reintroduce a bill in assembly, Congress sources suggested the legislation could be pushed to backburner until after LS polls.

Why it took US 51 years to get back on the Moon

The moon is a harsh environment. It's difficult to design spacecraft that can navigate its surface and it's almost impossible to recreate those situations on Earth for testing. At 6:23pm New York time Thursday, Intuitive Machines Inc landed a robotic spacecraft on the moon, becoming the first private firm to place a vehicle intact on the lunar surface. Nasa, which paid nearly \$118 million for this mission, posted con-



gratulations on the X social media platform: "Your order was delivered ... to the Moon!" Intuitive Machines will eventually send two additional landers to the moon in partnership with Nasa. As

national space ambitions grow and the business of space expands, firms have raced to claim the title of landing the first private craft in one piece on the moon. None was successful until today. An Israeli nonprofit, SpaceIL, tried in 2019, but its craft came in too fast and crashed on the surface. Last year, Tokyo-based Ispac Inc. lost contact with its lander. And in January..

Reaching & maintaining China equilibrium a challenge: EAM Jaishankar

NEW DELHI: Cautioning against "mind games" by China, foreign minister S Jaishankar said Chinese violation of border agreements is the immediate issue for India and that arriving at an equilibrium and maintaining it will be one of the biggest challenges for the two countries.



Warning against mind games to restrict issues as "just between two of us", he said India should "leverage"

international system to create "best possible outcome". "Here is the immediate issue, which is: From late 1980s, we

had an understanding on the border precisely because it suited both of us. Now there was a departure after almost 30 years. A departure on their side in terms of how they behaved on the border.

And there was a pushback from our side," he said at Raisina Dialogue.

Elon Musk says Google service alternative Xmail is 'coming'

Elon Musk hints at X platform launching 'XMail' to rival Gmail. Some users considering the switch due to loss of trust in Gmail. Follower plans to use Gmail like Hotmail for junks. Musk's post quickly gained traction on the social media platform as people were greeted with rumours about Google's plans to phase out Gmail. Hours after it was a hoax image saying that Gmail is shutting down, causing a stir in the tech industry, owner of X platform (formerly Twitter) Elon Musk hinted that the social media platform will launch an email service to rival Google's offering. When asked if he is planning an email service, Musk said that the service is coming soon. Nate McGrady, a member of X's engineering and security team, inquired about the launch of 'XMail', to which Musk replied with a post saying, "Coming." Gmail shutdown 'fake news' His post quickly gained traction on the social media platform as people were greeted with rumours about Google's.

Bank cashier shot while fighting off robbers, now fighting for life

JAIPUR: A cashier at Punjab National Bank (PNB) is fighting for life after being shot at on Friday while thwarting two armed men from robbing its Jaipur branch which, inexplicably, did not have a guard. Narendra Singh Shekhawat (49) waged a lone battle despite multiple gunshot wounds to defend the branch on Joshi Marg and forced the robbers to retreat. This eventually led the two robbers to be arrested with the help of locals and cops. One of the robbers was pinned down by a woman constable who happened to be passing by.

Shekhawat's wife is a homemaker and the couple have two kids. "Doctors said his kidney is damaged and may have to be removed.

They have also reported damage to his intestine," said a relative. Additional police commissioner Kailash Chandra Bishnoi said the robbers - Bharat Meena (36) and Manoj Meena (29) - were cousins, and described the former as the mastermind. Both are from Rajasthan. Jaipur police chief Biju George Joseph said the two are being questioned to ascertain whether they were involved in other such robberies. According to Bishnoi, the robbers entered PNB at 9.45am, before it opened for business and when only few staff were present. "One stood guard at the gate and the other ordered employees, including the manager, to huddle in a cabin," Bishnoi said.

UP's first sports university will be set up in Meerut: CM Yogi Adityanath

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Saturday said the state's first sports university will be set up in Meerut, adding that the "culture of sports" has seen a revival in India under the Narendra Modi-led government. Speaking in Lucknow, the CM thanked the for the event and conferring the 'changemaker of the year'

award on the state. Adityanath, who was the chief guest of the event, facilitated sports achievers across 23 regular sports and 10 para sports categories, encompassing individual brilliance and team triumphs. "In the last 10 years, the culture of sports has seen a great revival ... PM Modi's initiatives such as Khelo India Khelo and Fit India

Movement has sparked a new interest in sports," he said, adding that sports has become a way for athletes to showcase their, as well as the nation's, strength and determination in the international arena. The CM said the state government's investment in sports infrastructure and its athletes. is already showing results.

Meja Urja Nigam CEO Sunil Kumar Receives Economic Times People Focused CEO Award



Meja: In a testament to his visionary leadership and unwavering commitment to societal impact Sunil Kumar the esteemed CEO of Meja Urja Nigam, has been honored with the prestigious Economic Times' People-Focused CEO award. This recognition acknowledges his extraordinary contributions & transformative initiatives undertaken for the company and society in large. The accolade was presented to Sunil Kumar during the Next Tech HR India Summit 2024 held at the Leela Ambience in Gurugram. The summit, a gathering of industry leaders and visionaries provided the perfect platform to celebrate the exceptional leadership demonstrated by Sunil Kumar. Under his stewardship Meja Urja Nigam has witnessed remarkable growth and innova-

tion, propelled by Sh. Sunil Kumar's visionary strategies. His relentless focus on people-centric initiatives has not only driven business success but has also positively impacted communities and individuals across the region. Speaking at the award ceremony Sunil Kumar expressed his gratitude for the recognition, stating it is truly an honor to receive this prestigious award. At Meja Urja Nigam we believe in the power of business to drive positive change in society and in the development of all. This award is a testament to the collective efforts of our dedicated team and our unwavering commitment to making a meaningful difference. His transformative initiatives have not only enhanced the company's reputation but have also inspired others to prioritize social responsibility and community engagement. During the Summit, MUNPL Head of HR Akhila KP Pattnaik and Public Relations Officer Pratigya Yadav were also present.

PM Modi condoles demise of former Lok Sabha speaker Manohar Joshi

NEW DELHI:

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday condoled the demise of Manohar Joshi, the former Lok Sabha Speaker and the former Chief Minister of Maharashtra. The Prime Minister said that he was 'pained' by the passing away of the veteran leader adding that the latter made noteworthy contributions as a Union Minister. "Pained by the passing away of Manohar Joshi. He was a veteran leader who spent years in public service and held various responsibilities at the municipal, state and



national levels. As Maharashtra CM, he worked tirelessly for the state's progress. He also made noteworthy contributions as a Union Minister," PM Modi said in a post on X.

The Prime Minister further said that Joshi will be remembered for his diligence as a legislator. "During his tenure as the

Lok Sabha Speaker, he strove to make our Parliamentary processes more vibrant and participative. Manohar Joshi Ji will also be remembered for his diligence as a legislator, having had the honour of serving in all four legislatures. Condolences to his family and supporters," the post mentioned.

Fast-food giant replacing cheese with cheaper vegetable oil: FDA

MUMBAI: Maharashtra FDA has cracked down on fast food giant McDonald's, slamming it for a cheesy deception - using substitutes in burgers and nuggets instead of real cheese. It has suspended the license of a McDonald's outlet in

Ahmednagar, prompting the chain to erase the word "cheese" from various items.

FDA is pushing the chain to extend the corrective action state-wide & even nationally. Cheese alternatives, or cheese analogues, are

designed to replicate taste, texture, and functionality of traditional dairy cheese. The substitutes, allegedly identified in several McDonald's items, typically replace milk or dairy fat with cost-effective vegetable oil.

Punjab CM Bhagwant Mann announces Rs 1 crore ex-gratia for farmer who died during farmers protest

NEW DELHI: Punjab chief minister Bhagwant Mann has declared a financial aid of Rs 1 crore for the family of Shubhakaran Singh, who lost his life during the ongoing farmers' protest at Khanauri border. The announcement also includes a government job for Shubhakaran Singh's younger sister, with the assurance of appropriate legal action against the responsible individuals. The announcement follows the death of a farmer at Khanauri Border crossing in Sangrur district, Punjab. Bharatiya Kisan Union (BKU) leader Rakesh Tikait declared a 'Black Friday' protest to be observed by the protesting farmers, led by the Sanyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM), in response to the death. Addressing concerns over potential damage during the protests, Haryana Police in Ambala District said that any harm to government and private property will be compensated by attaching protestors' property and seizing their bank accounts. Union Minister Arjun Munda emphasized the Central Government's dedication to resolving issues through dialogue and expressed the government's commitment to the welfare of the farmers. The agriculture ministry is actively addressing concerns raised by farmers' associations, union minister said.



33 non-profit bodies to participate in second India Giving Day in US

WASHINGTON/New Delhi

As many as 33 top Indian American non-profit organisations are participating in the India Giving Day on March 1, during which organisers expect to raise money for important social welfare programmes in India. "The number (results) we're going to announce at the end of India Giving Day is going to be significantly larger than last year. That's because we have a track record as we've been working all year long and people are excited," Alex Counts, executive director of the India



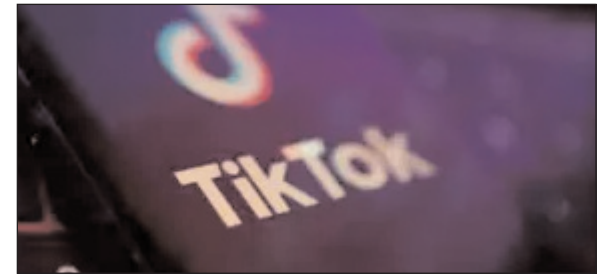
Philanthropy Alliance and India Giving Day told PTI in an interview. India Philanthropy Alliance is a network of non-profit organisations that mobilise people and funding in the US for high-impact development programmes in India. The second edition of the annual India

Giving Day organised by India Philanthropy Alliance has launched a nationwide campaign to generate among Indian Americans and "friends of India" in the US to donate generously on this important day dedicated to raise funds for a host of critical social and economic issues in

India. The inaugural edition last year raised USD 1.3 million in one day. All funds raised through India Giving Day will be used to support programmes based in India or to build a more robust fundraising operation in the US to benefit India, Counts said. "The three (issues) that were most common, perhaps almost exclusive issues last year were education for the poor, healthcare for the poor, wellbeing and third was we put a broad category of livelihoods, the ability of people to generate economic sustainability.

India's Tiktok ban has set gold standard for the world on how to deal with Chinese threats

US Federal Communications Commission (FCC) commissioner Brendan Carr is on his very first visit to India. During the visit, he reportedly acknowledged India's proactive measures against cybersecurity threats from Chinese companies or those associated with its political ideology. In an exclusive interaction with Economic Times, he said that India's actions against potential commercial and security risks in the growing digital economy could serve as a model for the world.



He said that India's actions on the short-video platform TikTok and telecom equipment suppliers Huawei and ZTE have "set the gold standard in terms of appropriate and strong actions to deal with the threats posed by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP)." Carr suggested that the US could learn

from India's approach to device safety and security, and the authorization process to ensure only trusted devices are used in telecom networks. He also emphasized the need for India and the US to maintain a shared vision of an open and inclusive internet, as an alternative to China and its allies who have

created a version of the "splinter net." Carr reportedly expressed concern about countries allied with China potentially engaging in heavy censorship and creating a closed Internet. He stressed the importance of monitoring data localization to ensure it does not hinder the free flow and operation of the internet. Carr also highlighted the need for 'common sense guardrails' to regulate tech companies, especially those working with emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI).

Courts cannot direct states to implement particular schemes: SC

NEW DELHI: The scope of judicial review in examining policy matters of the government is very limited and the courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a "better, fairer or wiser" option is available, the Supreme Court has said. The observation came while disposing of a PIL seeking formulation of a scheme on setting up of community kitchens to combat hunger and malnutrition. The top court refused to pass any direction in the matter observing that the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes are being implemented by the Centre and states. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mishra said legality of the policy, and not the wisdom or soundness of the policy, would be the subject of judicial



review. "It is well settled that the scope of judicial review in examining the policy matters is very limited. The courts do not and cannot examine the correctness, suitability or appropriateness of a policy, nor are the courts advisors to the executive on the matters of policy which the executive is entitled to formulate. The courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a better, fairer or wiser alternative is available," the bench said. The apex court said it was open to states and union territories to ensure

implementation of alternative welfare schemes. "When the National Food Security Act (NFSA) with a 'right based approach' for providing food and nutritional security, is in force and when other welfare schemes under the said Act have also been framed and implemented by the Union of India and the States, to ensure access to adequate quantity of quality food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity, we do not propose to give any further direction in that regard. "We have not examined whether the concept of community kitchens is a better or wiser alternative available to the States to achieve the object of NFSA, rather we would prefer to leave it open to the States/UTs to explore such alternative welfare schemes as may be permissible under the NFSA,".

India has to be part of peace-finding solution: Ukraine Dy FM on conflict with Russia

NEW DELHI: Terming India as a voice of the Global South, Ukraine's Deputy Foreign Minister, Iryna Borovets, said that India has to play a "crucial role" in finding a peaceful solution to the ongoing Russia-Ukraine conflict. She further said that Ukraine has invited India to the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland in March. Speaking to ANI, Borovets said, "India has a crucial role. First of all, India is a global leader, it is certainly powerful voice of the Global South countries.

India respects the territorial integrity of my country. So in that sense, we have full support. But, India could be more vocal on it, could take more action towards finding a peaceful solution." "India has to be a part of the peace-finding



solution. We have invited the Indian government to be present at the Global Peace Summit in Switzerland last year. The statement even made to the G20 communique under the presidency of India. Earlier, Norwegian Deputy Foreign Minister Andreas Motzfeldt Kravik lauded the ties between India and Norway, saying the two countries have a strong and

equal commitment to multilateralism, international law, and finding solutions to global issues. "Our relations are very strong. We have an equal commitment to multilateralism, to international law, to finding solutions to some of the global issues that we're tackling, climate change, inequality, and reforming international institutions. So we have had very good discussions about those issues and other issues, also bilateral issues," he told ANI. "We have a free trade agreement that we're close to finalising, and we have various interactions between our two countries. The conversations I have had with various Indian officials have been fantastic, and very productive," Kravik added.

equal commitment to multilateralism, international law, and finding solutions to global issues. "Our relations are very strong.

We have an equal commitment to multilateralism, to international law, to finding solutions to some of the global issues that we're tackling, climate change, inequality, and reforming international institutions. So we have had very good discussions about those issues and other issues, also bilateral issues," he told ANI. "We have a free trade agreement that we're close to finalising, and we have various interactions between our two countries. The conversations I have had with various Indian officials have been fantastic, and very productive," Kravik added.

Thieves steal Rs 20,000 from temple donation box in Navi Mumbai



MUMBAI: Police have registered a case after thieves broke into a temple in Airoli, Navi Mumbai and stole Rs 20,000 from a donation box. The incident occurred between the night of February 21 and February 22. The temple trustee filed a complaint, leading to the Rabale police registering a case. The station house officer stated that they are currently reviewing the temple's CCTV footage to identify the culprits responsible for the theft.

Government allows donor egg & sperm in surrogacy



"It further says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple".

NEW DELHI: There is new hope for couples dreaming to become parents via surrogacy. The Centre has amended Surrogacy (Regulation) Rules, 2022 to allow use of a donor gamete – ova or egg cells and sperm – if one of the partners is certified to have a medical condition that prevents use of his or her own gametes. In usual circum-

stances, a couple undergoing surrogacy must have both gametes from the intending couple. The story But Surrogacy (Regulation) Amendment Rules, 2024, that have been notified by the government, state that the district medical board must certify that either spouse is suffering from such a condition. It further

says that "surrogacy using donor gamete is allowed subject to the condition that the child to be born through surrogacy must have at least one gamete from the intending couple". It adds, "Single women (widow or divorcee) undergoing surrogacy must use self-eggs and donor sperm to avail surrogacy procedures."

Akul Dhawan had frozen to death after being denied entry to US club, say police

NEW DELHI: A teenage Indian-origin student at Illinois University froze to death near a club that denied him entry. Akul Dhawan, 18, was on a night out with his friends, according to a report by the Champaign County Coroner's Office in Illinois, a month after the incident. The Indian-American student died of hypothermia following "acute alcohol intoxication and prolonged exposure to freezing temperatures, which significantly contributed to his death."

Akul's parents had filed a complaint with the University of Illinois Police and questioned the police about the protocol they followed during the search.

Akul's parents alleged that cops carried out no search near the Busey-Evans Residence Hall and University police failed to follow their missing search protocols. The parents have accused the University of Illinois Police of being negligent.

In an open letter released in The News Gazette, Akul Dhawan's parents had said, "As parents, we need answers. We have filed an official complaint with the UI police. We have the following questions for the university officials and police: The police say that



they searched around the Busey-Evans Residence Hall at 2:09 a.m."

Earlier on January 31, the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign in a press release said that the University of Illinois Police continue to probe the circumstances surrounding the January 20 death of Akul Dhawan, a student at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. It said that the information collected so far supports the initial belief that the death was accidental, and no foul play occurred. It said that Dhawan was found deceased at about 11:08 am (local time) on

January 20 in the 1200 block of West Nevada Street, Urbana.

According to the press release, a friend who lost contact with Dhawan called the police at 1:23 am (local time). According to the statement, investigators have shared a timeline of the police response to that call.

A series of tragic deaths among Indian students at US colleges has sparked widespread concern, highlighting broader issues of mental health and campus safety for international students.

"No excuse for violence..." US on attacks against Indian stu-

dents

In 2024, seven young men of Indian and Indian American descent have met untimely deaths under various circumstances, ranging from suspected suicides and overdoses to violent acts. Last week White House official

John Kirby condemned attacks on Indian students and asserted there is "no excuse for violence based on race, gender, or any other factor".

"The president and this administration have been working very, very hard to make sure we're doing everything we can to work with state and local authorities to try to thwart and disrupt those kinds of attacks and make it clear to anybody who might consider them that they'll be held properly accountable," Kirby said amid a slew of attacks on Indian and Indian American students in various parts of the United States.

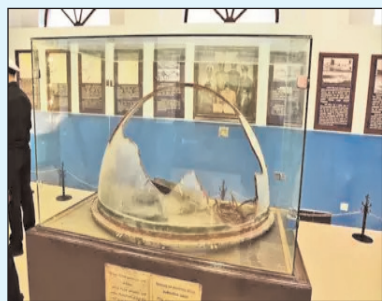
Also, Eric Garcetti, the US Ambassador to India, said that the Biden-led administration is "very committed" to assuring Indians that the US is a "wonderful and safe" place to pursue higher studies.

The Indian government and the mission in the US offered support and counselling to the distressed students and their relatives.

Wreckage of Pakistan submarine, which sank in 1971, found off Vizag

VISAKHAPATNAM: A newly acquired Indian Navy deep submergence rescue vehicle (DSRV) has recently located the wreckage of PNS Ghazi, the Pakistani submarine that sank on December 4, 1971 during the India-Pakistan war. The Tench-class submarine, which served earlier in the US Navy as USS Diablo, was found at a depth of around 100 metres about 2 to 2.5 km off the coast. However, Indian Navy does not want to touch it out of respect for those who fell in action, in true Navy tradition, sources here said.

The sinking of PNS Ghazi with 93 men (11 officers and 82 sailors) on board off the coast of Visakhapatnam was consid-



ered a high point in the war, which ended with the creation of Bangladesh in 1972. Pakistan had despatched US-made PNS Ghazi to mine India's eastern seaboard and to locate, shadow and sink INS Vikrant, India's British-built Majestic-class aircraft carrier.

'2 submarines lying at bottom of sea off Vizag coast' Ghazi left Karachi on November

14, 1971 and quietly sailed 4,800 km around the Indian peninsula to reach Vizag coast. India despatched its destroyer, INS Rajput, which tracked the Ghazi and dropped depth charges, leading to its sinking. The Pakistani military has a different view, attributing its sinking to accidental explosions. PNS Ghazi is not the only submarine that lies on the floor of the Bay of Bengal near Vizag. A Japanese submarine of the Imperial Japanese Navy (RO-110) was sunk off the coast of Rambilli locality, in undivided Vizag district, during World War II (Feb 12, 1944). The submarine was sunk by HMAS Launceston and HMIS Jumna using depth charges.

After fresh arson, section 144 again in 9 Sandeshkhali areas

SANDESHKHALI: In a fresh incident of arson at Sandeshkhali, locals mobbed a bheri controlled by absconding Trinamool functionary Sheikh Shahjahan's brother and torched a structure set up to oversee fishing operations there on Thursday afternoon, prompting police to once again clamp fresh prohibitory orders under section 144 of CrPC in nine places under five gram panchayats - Trimoni Bazar, Kaharpara, Patrapara, Khulna Hat and Jeliakhali - from



Thursday night. Villagers alleged the bheri, spread over six bighas, was one of several farmlands forcibly grabbed by Shahjahan's brother Siraj and converted into fishing

farms. "The prohibitory restriction will continue till 12pm on Feb 24," a senior district police officer said. As news of the arson spread, hundreds of women gathered at the spot and

staged an agitation demanding the arrest of the two brothers. The locals alleged the arson took place soon after Siraj and his men visited Jhupkhali under Bermajur gram panchayat II on Thursday morning and threatened women with dire consequences. "Siraj and his gang roamed around the bheri area and threatened women. Villagers chased them out. Later, a mob set the structure (ala ghar) adjacent to the bheri on fire," a villager said.

Ex-model held for stalking motivational speaker for 6 months

LUCKNOW: Lucknow police arrested Deepesh Thakur, 26, for stalking a motivational speaker on her multi-city tours over a period of six months. A fashion model and son of a prominent hotelier in Maharashtra, Thakur had been relentlessly following the speaker to her events, aspiring to marrying her. According to police, Deepesh meticulously tracked the speaker's movements, attending all her programmes across the country.

His obsession escalated to the extent that he would book rooms in five-star hotels in advance ahead of her scheduled appearances, even flying from Mumbai to attend the events in different cities. During the event in



Lucknow, the man's relentless pursuit prompted intervention from law enforcement agencies. Lucknow police swiftly responded to the situation, thwarting his bid to spoil the show. Additional DCP, Central Zone, Manisha Singh, confirmed the arrest and subsequent booking of the suspect. Investigations revealed that the accused, before his

infatuation with the motivational speaker, worked in the entertainment industry and appeared in advertisements for skincare products. He is a commerce graduate from a reputed college in Mumbai. Police disclosed that similar cases of stalking involving the same speaker have been reported in other cities, too, including Jalandhar and Kolkata.

Manohar Joshi passes away: His journey from being a corporator to Maharashtra CM

● "Joshi holds the unique feat of serving as a corporator of BMC, Mayor, Member of Legislative Council and Assembly, chief minister of Maharashtra"

MUMBAI: Shiv Sena veteran and former Maharashtra chief minister Manohar Joshi passed away in the early hours on Friday. He was 86. Joshi was admitted to Mahim's Hinduja Hospital and family members said that he died following prolonged health issues. Joshi's mortal remains will be kept at his Matunga Road home where leaders and his supporters would be able to offer their last respects on Friday morning. His funeral will be conducted at the Shivaji Park crematorium on Friday afternoon. Officials said that Joshi will get a state funeral. Shiv Sena (UBT) chief Uddhav Thackeray has cut short his state wide tour from



Buldhana and is expected to arrive to attend Joshi's funeral later on Friday. Joshi was not very active in politics for some time now.

Joshi holds the unique feat of serving as a corporator of BMC, Mayor, Member of Legislative Council and Assembly, chief minister of Maharashtra, Member of the Lok Sabha Union minister of heavy industries, Speaker of Lok Sabha and member of Rajya Sabha too. Joshi also founded the Kohinoor Business School & Kohinoor-IMI School of Hospitality Management in Khandala. In later years, he took the Chancellorship of Dnyaneshwar Vidyapeeth. In September 2022 after the split

in the Shiv Sena chief minister Eknath Shinde visited several homes for Ganapati darshan as part of his 'Ganpati diplomacy' including that of Joshi, which created a flutter in Sena circles. While Joshi lived in the Shivaji Park area for a long time, he had recently moved to a new building in Matunga Road. Sena (UBT) MP Sanjay Raut said that Joshi had made a rare journey from being a Corporator to chief minister and then the Lok Sabha Speaker. Joshi was a close aide of late Sena founder Bal Thackeray. "Creator of the world from zero. Staunchly proud of Maharashtra. Lived as a Shiv Sainik till his last breath. Homage to Manohar Joshi!" Raut said in a post on X.

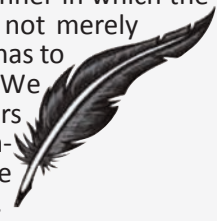
Courts cannot direct states to implement particular schemes: SC

NEW DELHI: The scope of judicial review in examining policy matters of the government is very limited and the courts cannot direct the States to implement a particular policy or scheme on the grounds that a "better, fairer or wiser" option is available, the Supreme Court has said. The observation came while disposing of a PIL seeking formulation of a scheme on setting up of community kitchens to combat hunger and malnutrition. The top court refused to pass any direction in the matter observing that the National Food Security Act (NFSA) and other welfare schemes are being implemented by the Centre and states. A bench of Justices Bela M Trivedi and Pankaj Mithal said legality of the policy, and not the wisdom.

Editorial

India's security and the fencing of the Myanmar border

There are many naysayers who are of the vehemence that the fencing of the entire 1,643 km India-Myanmar border is not a good idea. Such personages — and they unfortunately include people such as a former Indian envoy to Myanmar — cite aspects ranging from the virtual end of the Free Movement Regime (FMR) which permits people living along the border on either side to travel 16 km into each other's country, without visa, for primarily trade to the human aspect pertaining to the demographic contiguity, that characterises both India and Myanmar in the borderlands. But if a dispassionate cost-benefit analysis of Union Home Minister Amit Shah's decision to fence the border is undertaken, then the pros will outnumber the cons. The ongoing turmoil in Manipur is a direct result of the open border with Myanmar. As I have written earlier in these columns, the Valley-Based-Insurgent Groups (VBIGs), including the United National Liberation Front (Koirang), the People's Liberation Front (Manipur), the People's Revolutionary Party of Kangleipak, the Kangleipak Communist Party and the Kanglei Yawol Kanna Lup (collectively known as the Group of Five (G-5), which is the new avatar of the Coordination Committee (CoCom) after the return of the United National Liberation Front (Pamei) to the mainstream, are billeted in three neat clusters in Myanmar's Sagaing Division. After the military takeover of February 1, 2021, the above underground groups came to an understanding with the Myanmar Army (MA). The VBIGs will no longer be touched, harassed or ousted from their safe havens in what has come to be known as the Northern, Central and Southern clusters in Sagaing Division. In return, the VBIGs would have to aid the MA to quell the civil unrest that erupted after the coup d'état. The development not only led to an end to the modicum of military cooperation that had been witnessed in the years preceding the military takeover by way of Operations Sunrise-I and Sunrise-II, which demolished several India Insurgent Groups' (IIGs) camps in and around Taga (a hunting ground for IIGs just West of the Chindwin river), but the unprecedented situation in Manipur saw hordes of VBIG cadres entering Manipur to battle the Kukis and the security forces. The fact that the porous border also facilitated illegal migration, drugs and arms smuggling from Myanmar by social formations that had affiliations with people in Manipur and have begun to occupy forest lands in the state seems to be borne out by a plethora of facts. Also, several thousand anti-Junta rebels have fled to India since the February 1, 2021 military coup in Myanmar. Of late, even MA personnel had begun to enter Mizoram in a bid to escape the pursuing People's Defence Force (the National Unity Government's armed wing) and various ethnic militias. It is in this backdrop that I wish to examine the issue of the India-Myanmar border fence. At the very outset, it must be understood that fences are not walls. They are created to manage legal, regulated movement. I was an international visitor to the United States at the invitation of the US Department of State in 2003. One of the tours took 25 other law enforcers and conflict theorists from around the world as well to many places in the US including the US-Mexico border in San Diego. The manner in which the completely (and concretely, not merely fenced) sealed border is run has to be seen to be believed. We watched as US law enforcers carefully checked the credentials of Mexicans entering the US territory for a day's work.



India and the problems with Chinese manufacturing overcapacity

Manufacturing overcapacity is a cause of concern for any economy. However, it has wider global ramifications. For instance, the US steel industry also went through this phase. In the 1970s and 1980s, the US steel industry experienced significant overcapacity. Despite declining demand for steel in the United States due to various economic and technological changes, steel manufacturers continued to produce at high levels. This overproduction led to a glut of steel in the market, causing prices to plummet and profits to erode. The industry's overcapacity resulted in severe consequences, including widespread plant closures, job losses, and a long period of economic hardship for communities reliant on steel production. The situation was exacerbated by the industry's slow response to global competition and technological innovation, which made it difficult to adjust to the changing market conditions. Relating this to the current situation of manufacturing overcapacity in China, we see parallels in the potential for economic disruption. Like the US steel industry, China's aggressive expansion in manufacturing capacities, particularly in green goods like EVs and solar panels, is creating a surplus that exceeds both domestic and global



demand. This overcapacity risks leading to similar outcomes as those experienced by the US steel industry, including price pressures, reduced profitability for manufacturers, and potential trade tensions as other countries respond to the influx of cheap Chinese products. The situation is compounded by subsidies and state support, which can distort market signals and lead to inefficient allocation of resources. But why is this happening now? The answer is simple. Chinese lending is shifting from the property sector to manufacturing, leading to concerns about overcapacity. Within a span of less than four years, Chinese banks have transitioned from granting over one trillion dollars in new loans annually to the property sector to observing a net reduction in

outstanding debt for the first time since records began in 2005. In contrast, the third quarter of 2023 saw these banks extend nearly \$700 billion in new loans to the manufacturing sector, often at interest rates below market levels. This surge in lending has facilitated the rapid expansion of new manufacturing facilities across China, specializing in products like electric vehicles (EVs) and batteries.

However, with domestic consumption not being able to fully absorb this increased production, there are reports of China dumping this overcapacity in the international markets. In the lithium-ion battery cell industry, for example, the expansion has surpassed demand, leading to predictions of industry consolidation. The utilisation rates of gigafactories, which

are crucial for battery production, were at 45 per cent in 2022 and have further declined in the first half of 2023, highlighting the extent of the overcapacity problem. The oversupply has led to dramatic price reductions in key components, such as lithium carbonate, a critical material for rechargeable batteries. Prices have plummeted more than 80 per cent from their peak, which has had a significant impact on the profitability and sustainability of companies within the sector. It's becoming increasingly evident that this maneuver may not be merely an economic realignment but could also be construed as a calculated move by China to unsettle global market dynamics. This development demands a closer examination, as its repercussions extend beyond national borders, challenging the equilibrium of international trade and industry competition. In fact, the US has recently warned Beijing against dumping goods on global markets as it fears China would be easing domestic overcapacity with cheap exports. However, addressing overcapacity has become a persistent challenge within Chinese industrial strategies. This issue, akin to a resilient virus, proves tough to eradicate and necessitates ongoing

efforts to manage. Typically, this involves state-led consolidation of industries, which results in the elimination of less competitive firms. The survivors, having weathered the storm, emerge stronger and more aggressive, particularly in international markets, thereby intensifying the original problem. BYD is greatest example. It has become world's largest EV company, overtaking Tesla. The impact of this overcapacity is multifaceted. In Europe, the influx of cost-competitive Chinese EVs, for example, is threatening the continent's nascent EV production, prompting the European Commission to launch anti-subsidy investigations into imports of Chinese-made passenger battery electric vehicles. Similar concerns are arising in other green technology sectors, with potential for further trade disputes and investigations into China's dominance in clean energy supply chains, including wind turbines and heat pumps. Moreover, the situation in China's manufacturing sector is characterised by heightened volatility, with industries like steel and automobiles experiencing significant fluctuations in demand and profit margins. This volatility, exacerbated by the uncertain global economic environment since 2008.

Modi government's move to regulate and elevate online gaming

India's online gaming industry, despite being the world's second-largest market for online gamers, grapples with regulatory inconsistencies. These challenges hinder not only investments but also talent retention, innovation, and growth projections. Yet, there is a palpable sense of optimism within the ecosystem. In their last two terms, the Modi administration has introduced many progressive reforms including - GST which unified the complex indirect tax structure into a single tax system; UPI and Jan Dhan Yojna, which revolutionised the way payments are made in India; or the recently announced Digital Personal Data Protection Bill, that establishes a comprehensive legal frame-

work for data protection, aligning with global standards for privacy and data security. As it embarks on a third term, the government seems intent to regulate the online gaming space, despite the challenges in defining an ideal regulatory framework. There are ongoing efforts with the formation of an 'informal Group of Ministers' (GoM) to resolve these issues comprehensively. This group, according to media sources, encompasses key ministries that are directly or indirectly involved with the sector i.e. MeitY, MIB, MoF, MHA and PMO. Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar's remarks at a recent event underscore the government's commitment to an open, trans-

parent, and consultative approach to regulation. As the government embarks on its ambitious journey to transform India into a Viksit Bharat by 2047, it's imperative to recognise a sunrise sector such as online gaming as a pivotal force in this quest. The economic impact of the online gaming industry is already evident. With the implementation of the new tax framework in October 2023, the sector's GST contribution surged by 400 per cent to Rs. 1,200 crore per month. Regulating skill-based real-money games, which are a major revenue driver, could further enhance government earnings and job creation. Currently employing over one lakh professionals directly and indirectly.

India and Greece: Millennia-old dialogue between two civilisations

Since childhood, we have started learning about the Indian and Greek sages, from Kautilya and Manu to Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle. In antiquity, both countries had magical and universal shared values of time, space, ideas, and philosophies. Prime Minister of Greece Kyriakos Mitsotakis was on a state visit to New Delhi and was also the chief guest of the well-known Raisina Dialogue organised by the Observer Research Foundation, a Delhi-based India's premier think tank. PM Mitsotakis came to New Delhi along with the business delegation for the two-day visit starting February 21. This was the first head-of-state visit from Greece to India in 15 years. The last prime ministerial visit from Greece to India occurred in 2008, when former Prime Minister Kostas Karamanlis visited India. PM Mitsotakis's visit came after India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi visited Athens on August 25, 2023, at the invitation of the Greek prime minister. Modi's visit to Athens filled the 40-year drought of bilateral visits from the Indian side in 2023. The last prime minister's visit to Greece occurred in September 1983, when Indira Gandhi travelled to the country.



Sharing traditions across cultures

Since PM Modi came to power in 2014, India has thrived on multiple fronts, including cultural and civilisational fronts. The inauguration of Lord Ram temple at Ayodhya, the renovation of Kedarnath temple, the Kashi corridor, and many other historical, cultural, and civilisational values, symbols, and institutions have been created, renovated, and promoted by the government. Indian society, like Greece, has many things in common, including community values, shared beliefs, and respect for the ancient past. New Delhi and Athens have multiple things to be proud of: history, ancient trade, culture, family values, welfarism, and strong societal values. We can learn so many things from each other in multiple sectors, especially where we have shared beliefs. Currently, more than 12,000 Indians live and work in Greece. During

Modi's visit in August 2023, he interacted with the Indian diaspora, where the famous songs of Shahrukh Khan's movies were sung.

Building bridges

In the past, following India's nuclear tests in May 1998, when most Western countries were contemplating sanctions against India, the Greek defence minister visited India in December 1998. The visit was important because it was the first defence minister from a NATO country after the tests, and it signed an MOU on defence cooperation.

In defence, high-level dialogues and MoUs are at the ministerial level. India-Greece defence cooperation gained momentum after 1994 ministerial visits, leading to a 1998 MoU. Interactions were limited to occasional ship and aircraft visits until 2017, when renewed engagement included joint exercises and industry participation.

From West to India, reversing the brain drain

Western media is full of stories of Indian entrepreneurs "fleeing" to the West. Sections of the Indian media parrot this narrative. In a globalised world, Indian startup entrepreneurs obviously seek global markets. Hubs in Dubai, Singapore, London and San Francisco have long attracted talented Indian entrepreneurs. But the "brain drain" theory is now being turned on its head.



According to several startup entrepreneurs, the fear of missing out (FOMO) is about missing India's digital, financial and infrastructure boom. Europe is in recession and traumatised by the grinding

Russia-Ukraine war. Japan slipped into recession in the October-December 2023 quarter. China's economic slowdown and geopolitical tensions with the West have alarmed foreign businesses.

Dubai and other Gulf entrepôts remain a hub for global Indian firms but the Gaza conflict could disrupt trade in the region, especially around the Red Sea. India in contrast is a picture of economic stability

and opportunity. It's not only the business environment that draws successful Indian entrepreneurs back home. As Hemant Mohapatra, who worked for several years in the West for AMD, Google and Andreessen Horowitz, wrote in a blog on Medium: "For those that don't know me well, I went to the US in 2003 and have been visiting India 1-2 times a year till 2014 and often 3+ times a year since 2014. So I've been able to observe the small shifts better than most locals did, and of course, the macro-trends that are now obvious to most. "India fintech is way, way ahead of the US/EU.

Paytm shares start flat on bourses after declining 3.74% on Thursday

NEW DELHI:

Shares of One97 Communication, owner of brand Paytm, were trading flat on BSE and NSE on Friday. Shares were trading at 391.00, marking an increase of 0.68% or 2.65 points from its previous close at 09:27 am.

Earlier, shares of Paytm dropped by 3.74% to settle at 380.45 on Thursday, after hitting upper-circuit for four consecutive sessions.

The stock prices, on Wednesday rose to Rs 395.25 and Rs 395.05 on the BSE and NSE, respectively, defying broader market trends.

This surge follows Paytm's recovery from a recent slump, with its stock rebounding more than 21% from last Thursday.

Reports indicate that Enforcement Directorate (ED) found no significant violations of foreign exchange rules in its ongoing investigation into Paytm Payments Bank Ltd (PPBL). However, it came



across some lapses in the company's KYC processes and reporting of suspicious transactions. The scrutiny on Paytm has intensified as the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) tightens oversight on fintech firms globally. Recent actions by the RBI include directing to cease certain operations of PPBL due to non-compliance issues, affecting One97 Communications despite its 49% stake in the banking entity. The RBI's stricter stance comes as concerns over customer due diligence, data privacy, and systemic risks prompt a reevaluation of oversight mechanisms, primarily

focusing on digital customer identification practices.

In response, the RBI has increased inspections and meetings with fintech companies, aiming to tighten compliance and ensure the integrity of the financial ecosystem.

The evolving regulatory landscape may lead to higher compliance and capital requirements for fintech firms, potentially resulting in sector consolidation. Industry stakeholders like Ashish Fafadia of Blume Ventures believe this scrutiny will foster compliance and support investment in law-abiding companies.

Premature move on monetary policy front could undermine efforts to check inflation: RBI

MUMBAI: The Reserve Bank of India's job to bring down inflation is not over, and any premature move on the policy front could undermine the success achieved so far on the price situation, according to RBI governor Shaktikanta Das. According to the minutes of the February Monetary Policy Committee (MPC) meeting released by the central bank on Thursday, Das had said at this juncture, monetary policy must remain vigilant and "not assume that our job on the inflation front is over". He stressed that the MPC must remain



committed to successfully navigate the "last mile" of disinflation that can be sticky. Das made the remarks while voting for status quo in the key interest rate earlier this month.

"As markets are front-running central banks in anticipation of policy pivots, any premature move may undermine the success achieved so far," the governor said, as per the minutes.

100% FDI in space sector a game changer: IN-SPACE chairman Pawan

BENGALURU: A day after the union cabinet, in line with the Centre's reforms to open up the space sector, allowed 100% foreign direct investment (FDI) under the automatic route, space regulator and promoter Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre

(IN-SPACE) chairman Pawan Goenka termed it a "game-changing decision that will propel India to new heights in the space sector". Lauding PM Narendra Modi's vision Goenka said the move will boost participation of non-government entities in space research and man-

ufacturing. "By opening doors for massive investment and global collaboration, this move will transform India's space capabilities," he said. Elaborating on the impact, Goenka said that this reform comes at an opportune time when the space sector is witnessing massive growth.

CAPSULES

Byju Raveendran, board to skip 'procedurally invalid' extraordinary general meeting

MUMBAI: A day ahead of the extraordinary general meeting (EGM) which a group of Byju's major investors have called to seek removal of Byju Raveendran from position of CEO as well as a reconstitution of the firm's board, Byju's said that Raveendran and the board members will not attend the EGM which it said is "procedurally invalid." Following the resignation of representatives of Prosus, Peak XV Partners and Chan Zuckerberg Initiative from the board of Byju's in June last year, it has been reduced to a family-run entity, comprising Raveendran, his wife and co-founder Divya Gokulnath and his brother Riju Raveendran. "This EGM is procedurally invalid, contractually in contravention of our AOA (Articles of Association) and SHA (Shareholders Agreement), legally on the wrong side of the Companies Act, 2013," a company spokesperson said in a statement on Thursday. Byju's said that with Raveendran and board members deciding to skip the EGM, it will not have the required quorum and cannot proceed to discuss or vote on the agenda. "As custodians of Byju's, it is the responsibility of the founders to respect the established procedures of law and protect the company's integrity," the company added. The EGM is supposed to take place on Friday morning, according to the EGM notice reviewed by investors claim that they will hold the EGM as per plan but if the resolutions are put to vote, then they will test the law in court, lawyers said.

Indians extremely demanding, but unwilling to pay: Uber CEO

BENGALURU: Uber CEO Dara Khosrowshahi said that Indians are extremely demanding, but unwilling to pay. The Uber top boss was in conversation with Infosys co-founder Nandan Nilekani in Bengaluru on Thursday at an interactive session on building population scale technology. "India is one of the toughest markets out there. If we can succeed here, we can succeed anywhere," Khosrowshahi said. Uber is also planning to expand to low-cost service segments of two-



and three-wheelers in India. The company will be getting into bus services in some of the geographies. "It is also an extraordinary opportunity for us to expand our services to a wider population. We don't just want to be an upper-middle-class product. We want to be available to everybody."

Khosrowshahi said companies and govts around the world can learn from the scale and ambition of India's digital public infrastructure. He added that as a technology company, Uber views open-source tech stacks with a lot of interest and recognises the opportunities they bring for everyone.

Khosrowshahi said that Uber's approach has changed since the pandemic. As much as the focus is on the customers, he also said there is a growing focus on improving the experience for its drivers. Uber has signed an MoU with the Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) to explore an integration with the network to expand the range of mobility offerings on the Uber app. Khosrowshahi said that Uber made \$3 billion in terms of profits during the pandemic.

Bank deposits losing sheen? Why more savers are moving to higher-yielding investment

One of the reasons for the decline in CASA ratios could be the increase in bank fixed deposit rates. Bank deposits losing sheen? Indian banks are facing a significant challenge as the preference of urban savers shifts towards higher-yielding investment options like mutual funds and direct stock ownership. This trend is eroding the banks' biggest strength - access to low-cost current and savings account deposits. The rise of technology and the increasing familiarity with Dalal Street (the Indian stock market) among rural savers are



further intensifying the struggle for deposits in the banking industry. This democratization of technology is fundamentally changing the dynamics of financial savings, to the disadvantage of traditional high-street banks.

As of September 2023, the collective CASA ratio (current and savings account deposits) of all commercial banks in India stands at 40.5%, down from 43.1% in March 2023 and 45.2% in March 2022. This is a decline of nearly 5 per-

centage points in 18 months, according to report. One of the reasons for the decline in CASA ratios could be the increase in bank fixed deposit rates. State Bank of India's CASA ratio dropped to 41.18% as of December 31, 2023, a decline of 330 basis points compared to the previous year. P R Rajagopal, executive director of Bank of India, highlighted the shift in savings patterns, particularly in urban areas. Digitization has provided savers with access to alternative savings products like mutual funds, reducing their reliance.

'India to be small aircraft maker ATR's biggest market in 5 years'

NEW DELHI: Franco-Italian regional aircraft major ATR sees India emerge as its biggest market in the next five years. And as that happens, the turboprop-maker says "it will be foolish not to increase our footprint here" in terms of sourcing of components, pilot training and others. "India currently has 65 ATRs - 45 with IndiGo and 20 with Alliance Air. IndiGo is to get five more. Startup carrier Fly91 (which is being launched by aviation industry veteran Manoj Chacko) will get its first leased ATR anytime now and the second in a week or so," Jean-Pierre Clercin, ATR's head of commercial for Asia Pacific, said. "Indonesia has about 100 ATRs and is currently our biggest mar-



ket. India and Brazil come after that. But the way Indian economy and air travel in the country is booming, within five years India will have the maximum ATRs given the government's focus on regional air transport through ude desh ka aam naagrik (UDAN) scheme," Clercin said. ATR feels India will need 50-150 such planes in the next decade. "That is the official estimation. But given the way India is developing, the actual number could be even higher. Much higher," he said. The turboprop major is

in talks with several Indian airlines for more orders. "The focus here is on regional and ATR is for that. So we are talking to all the airlines in India," he said. Asked if ATR plans to make in India, Clercin said: "We do already have a presence in India. There are some simulators (for pilot training) operated by third parties in India. The footprint depends a lot on the size of the markets, and India is one of the most promising aviation markets globally. We've seen the amazing resilience of the country.

Foreigners pursue every avenue to access hot India bond trade

Overseas investors are showing such keen interest in India assets that they are taking proxy exposure to the country even if they don't have the license or physical presence to trade there.

Foreign funds lacking direct access to India's \$1 trillion government debt market are increasing their exposure via instruments such as supranational bonds and swaps ahead of the nation's upcoming inclusion in global bond indexes. There's an "increased engagement from global investors, with momentum picking up this year," said Siddharth Bachawat, head for markets at Barclays Bank India. "In addition to interest from index-tracking managers ahead of the inclusion, discretionary activity from a



wider investor base has also been notable." Indian sovereign bonds have gained prominence after JPMorgan Chase & Co's move to add them to its global debt indexes from June. The number of issuances by sovereign, supranational and agency entities offering investors an exposure to the country rose to a record in 2023, with the value of such offerings reaching \$3.2 billion, a five-year high, data compiled by

Bloomberg show. "There's been a marked increase in the sales of rupee-denominated supranational, sovereign and agency debt," said Wontae Kim, research analyst at Western Asset Management. Investors such as William Blair Investments and M&G Investments are venturing into supranational bonds. Issued by multilateral agencies like the World Bank and denominated in Indian rupees, these

triple-A rated notes give overseas investors exposure to local debt without having to secure a license to operate onshore.

"Given India's disinflation trend and improved technical outlook with impending index inclusion, we favor duration in India," said Johnny Chen, fund manager at William Blair in Singapore. Also, buyers don't have to pay 20% withholding tax as these securities are settled offshore, which results in higher yields, according to Claudia Calich, head of emerging-market debt at M&G Investments in London. "Even if the pretax yield on supranational bonds tends to be lower than on India government debt, the yield is higher on an after-tax basis.

Attach bank accounts of ex-promoters of DHFL: Sebi



NEW DELHI: Markets regulator Sebi has ordered the attachment of bank accounts as well as shares and mutual fund holdings of Dheeraj Wadhawan and Kapil Wadhawan - former promoters of Dewan Housing Finance - to recover dues totalling over Rs 22 lakh. This came after the brothers failed to pay the fine imposed on them by Sebi in July last year in a case concerning the flouting of disclosure norms. The pending dues of Rs 10.6 lakh each from the Wadhawans comprise the initial penalty amount, interest, and recovery cost, it added. In July 2023, the regulator imposed a Rs 10 lakh penalty each on Wadhawans.

4th Test: Akash Deep, spinners leave England reeling



NEW DELHI: Debutant Indian fast bowler Akash Deep made an impactful entry by claiming three early wickets, including dismissing Ollie Pope for a duck, leaving England in a precarious position at 112-5 at lunch on the opening day of the fourth Test in Ranchi on Friday. Joe Root was holding the fort at 16 runs, with Ravindra Jadeja dismissing skipper Ben Stokes for three just before the break in Ranchi. Coach Rahul Dravid

bestowed Deep with his first Test cap, evoking emotional moments as the debutant's mother watched from the sidelines. The 27-year-old Deep, replacing the rested Jasprit Bumrah, was India's sole change as they aimed to secure a 3-1 lead in the series. Deep's impressive start saw him almost dismissing opener Zak Crawley on four, only to be foiled by a no-ball. Despite Crawley's aggressive response with four consecutive boundaries off

Mohammed Siraj, Deep struck, claiming his maiden international wicket by dismissing Ben Duckett for 11, followed swiftly by trapping Pope lbw, a decision upheld after a successful review by India. Deep's relentless pressure led to Crawley's downfall, bowling him out as England stumbled to 57-3 within the first hour. Crawley's brisk 42-run knock ended as Root and Jonny Bairstow sought to stabilize with a 57-run partnership.

I always dreamt of being a cop, Deepti Sharma after becoming DSP in Uttar Pradesh Police

NEW DELHI: Indian women's cricket team all-rounder Deepti Sharma has realized a childhood dream by being appointed as a Deputy Superintendent of Police (DSP) in the Uttar Pradesh Police, despite pursuing a different career path. Hailing from Agra, Sharma received this prestigious appointment last month and was honored by state Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with a cash prize of Rs 3 crore for her exceptional performances in recent years, including winning the Asian Games gold and the



Commonwealth Games silver in 2022. "I always dreamt of becoming a police officer. I used to see that it is a difficult job but I always wanted to wear that uniform once and wanted to see how it felt," Sharma shared with PTI Video, expressing her childhood aspirations and gratitude for her family's support

in pursuing this dream. Recognized as the women's international cricketer of the year for the 2022-23 season in the annual BCCI honors, Sharma's all-round skills have been pivotal. She claimed 38 wickets and scored 313 runs, including two half-centuries, in the T20 format during the award period.

Ranji Trophy: Red-hot Mumbai bowling unit braces for Baroda challenge

MUMBAI: It's been a season in which Mumbai, having scored five outright wins in seven games in the league stage, have brought back memories of the days they used to dominate the Ranji Trophy. Yet, in a way, it's been a different kind of

season. For a city known for having produced some of India's most decorated batsmen, Mumbai, refreshingly, have been arguably the best bowling side of the competition so far, even though their batting hasn't been at its best, by far. With their bowling

unit looking like a well-oiled machine, till the league stage of the Ranji Trophy, Mumbai have taken an astounding 138 wickets in 14 innings. The batsmen, in comparison, have rustled up just four hundreds, with two of them being hit by all-rounder Shivam Dube.

CAPSULES

Ishan Kishan, Shreyas Iyer face contract axe over Ranji Trophy absence

MUMBAI: Not playing in the ongoing Ranji Trophy may cost Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer heavily. Both Kishan and Iyer are likely to lose their central contracts

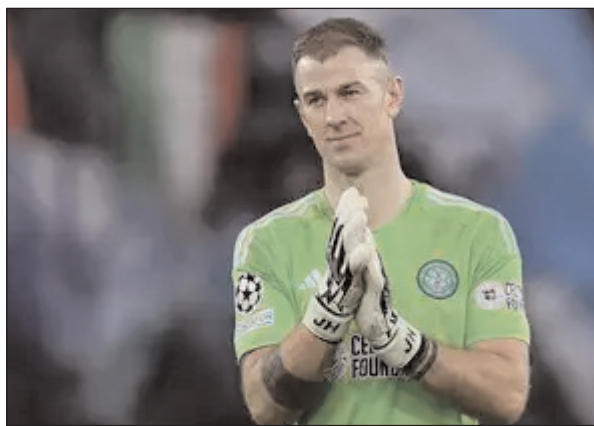
when the BCCI announces the list, which is likely to be soon. "The selectors, led by Ajit Agarkar, has almost finalised the list of centrally contracted players for the 2023-24 season too, which the BCCI will announce soon. Kishan and Iyer are likely to be excluded from that list, as both haven't been playing domestic cricket despite the BCCI's diktat to do so," a source. Kishan has been on an extended break "due to personal reasons" since coming back from the India tour of South Africa in December-January. He has been practicing with his Mumbai Indians captain Hardik Pandya at Baroda, but has not turned out for Jharkhand in the Ranji Trophy. Iyer was absent from Mumbai's final Ranji Trophy league match against Assam at BKC and will also miss the Ranji Trophy quarter-final against Baroda starting Friday. The middle-order batsman had informed the Mumbai Cricket Association that he was not available for selection due to back spasms, but Nitin Patel, the head of sports science and medicine at the National Cricket Academy, in an email to the BCCI and the national selectors.



Social media reacts as Celtic goalkeeper announces retirement

NEW DELHI: Celtic's seasoned goalkeeper, Joe Hart, has confirmed that he will hang up his gloves at the conclusion of the current season. The former England international and Manchester City stalwart, now 36, will see his three-year contract with Celtic expire in the summer.

Hart, who made his first-team debut for Shrewsbury in April 2004 and earned 75 caps for England, revealed his retirement decision in an interview with Celtic TV. The announcement comes as Celtic navigates through a successful season, defending their



Premiership title and vying for success in the Scottish Cup. "This is something I have thought about for a while," said Hart. "There's no right or wrong time is there? But the way this club works is that I'm playing out at the

moment. There's so much on it. There's so much heart and soul poured into what we're doing as a football club." The experienced goalkeeper expressed gratitude for the club's open-mindedness and the

understanding he received from key figures such as Brendan Rodgers and goalkeeping coach Stevie Woods. Hart emphasized his continued commitment to the team's ongoing campaigns, stating, "I'm so up for it. I'm still so involved and still so committed." Hart, who secured winners' medals in the three major trophies in England and Scotland with Celtic's Scottish Cup triumph last season, joined the Scottish side from Tottenham in 2021. Despite feeling "great" physically, the veteran goalkeeper believes the timing is right.

East Bengal seek another 'Super' show against Jamshedpur FC

East Bengal FC — buoyant after collecting their first win in the new year — take on Jamshedpur FC at the JRD Tata Sports Complex on Thursday with twin objectives in mind: Staying in the mix of Indian Super League's playoffs fight and ending a long hoodoo in the tournament.

If eighth-placed East Bengal, who have 15 points from 14 games, get the better of Khalid Jamil's hosts, they can move up to just a point behind NorthEast United FC,



who are occupying the sixth place after beating FC Goa 2-0. However, for that to happen, Carles Cuadrat's Super Cup champions needs to bring a forgettable spell to an end.

Since their debut in the 2020-2021 season of ISL,

East Bengal are yet to win two matches in a row in the league. They scraped past bottom-placed Hyderabad FC 1-0 in the previous match, thus ending their winless run in 2024, which included back-to-back losses to NEUFC and Mumbai City FC. Cuadrat, how-

ever, is seeking inspiration from his team's convincing 2-0 win over Jamshedpur FC in the Super Cup semifinal last month. "Both East Bengal and Jamshedpur are fighting for playoff spots. We were the last team to beat them and we will try to repeat the same," Cuadrat said. Despite the setback in the Super Cup, Jamil's side has been unbeaten this year, having beaten the likes of Mumbai City and Punjab FC on the road and lying 2 points above East Bengal.

Messi inspires Inter Miami to victory in MLS season opener

NEW DELHI: Lionel Messi orchestrated both goals in a dazzling display as Inter Miami commenced the new Major League Soccer season with a commanding 2-0 triumph over Real Salt Lake. The Argentine maestro, who showcased his enduring brilliance throughout the entire match, dispelled any doubts about his fitness with a stellar performance under the helm of Gerardo "Tata" Martino. Facing off against a cautious Real Salt Lake side, Messi came agonizingly close to breaking the deadlock in the 18th minute with a sublime curling free-kick from 30 yards out, only to be denied by a headed clearance off the line by Justen Glad. However, Inter Miami surged ahead when Spanish midfielder



Sergio Busquets linked up with Messi, who astutely threaded a pass to Finnish forward Robert Taylor. Taylor's composed finish eluded RSL goalkeeper Zac, putting Miami in the lead. Despite Real Salt Lake's more assertive approach in the second half, with Cristian Arango and Andres Gomez threatening, Messi's relentless work ethic and vision elevated Inter Miami's

performance. The 36-year-old talisman orchestrated a mesmerizing move, combining with former Barcelona teammate Luis Suarez, who then set up Diego Gomez to slot home a precise shot into the far corner, doubling Miami's advantage. Messi continued to orchestrate chances, nearly setting up Suarez for a third goal, only to be thwarted by reflex save.

Napoli hold Barcelona to a 1-1 draw in Champions League clash

NEW DELHI: Napoli held Barcelona to a 1-1 draw in their Champions League last-16 first leg in a lackluster match. Robert Lewandowski opened the scoring for Barcelona, but Victor Osimhen equalized for Napoli. Both teams, who have been struggling this season, failed to showcase their attacking prowess. Barcelona dominated the first half, while Napoli struggled to break free from their defensive shell. Barcelona manager Xavi Hernandez expressed his disappointment with the result, stating, "It is not a good result for the return leg. We were better in all aspects of the game, but we lacked effectiveness upfront. It was a summary of our season." This was



Barcelona's first Champions League knockout match in three years, while Napoli, currently ninth in the Serie A standings, were led by new coach Francesco Calzona. Napoli found themselves frustrated by Barcelona's high pressing and struggled to connect simple passes. Lamine Yamal, the youngest player to appear in the knockout phase

of the Champions League at 16 years and 223 days, had a couple of chances but failed to find the back of the net. It was Lewandowski who finally broke the deadlock in the 60th minute, scoring a powerful shot from inside the box. However, Napoli quickly responded, with Osimhen scoring a brilliant goal from inside the box, leveling the tie. The

Nigerian striker, playing his first game since the Africa Cup of Nations, showed great composure. Napoli coach Calzona praised his team's fighting spirit, saying, "We have a lot of work to do, but I congratulated the team for rediscovering the desire to fight. The players gave their heart and soul to avoid defeat against a very strong opponent." The result leaves the tie evenly poised, with the return leg taking place in Spain on March 12. Barcelona will need to improve their attacking effectiveness if they want to advance in the tournament. Meanwhile, Napoli will look to build on their fighting spirit and continue their journey in the

Spanish court sentences Brazil's Dani Alves to prison over sexual assault

NEW DELHI: Catalonia's highest court on Thursday convicted former Brazilian footballer Dani Alves of sexual assault against a woman at a Barcelona nightclub in 2022. He has been sentenced to four and a half years in prison and ordered to pay 150,000 euros (\$162,990) to the victim. "The sentence considers that it has been proven that the victim did not consent, and that there is evidence, in addition to the testimony of the plaintiff, to consider the rape proven," the court said in a statement. Alves had maintained the sex was consensual. The prosecutor was seeking a nine-year prison term. The 40-year-old former Barcelona defender was arrested in January last year and has been held on remand since. The case has attracted significant attention not only because of Alves' profile but because gender violence has become an increasingly dominant topic in Spain.

Karnataka move to tax temples earning above Rs 1 crore sparks row

BENGALURU:

Congress-governed Karnataka has passed a bill to rejig taxes on state-owned temples, requiring those with earnings of over Rs 1 crore to contribute 10%, and stoked a controversy. Under the Hindu Religious Institutions and Charitable

Endowment Bill, passed by the assembly late Wednesday, 5% is to be paid by shrines with revenues of Rs 10 lakh to Rs 1 crore. The collections flow into a common state pool managed by a panel, the Dharmik Parishad. The tax/contribution rates were almost similar earlier, but what appears to have ignited the row is the amendment specifically mentions a category of Rs 1-crore plus earnings. This has led to BJP's allegations that the Siddaramaiah-led govt was targeting rich temples and trying to divert their "taxes" to other religious institu-



tions. K'taka row over revision in tax matrix on temple earnings. Karnataka chief minister Siddaramaiah defended the bill, saying the taxes will be deposited into Dharmik Parishad - which deals only with Hindu shrines. He argued that the money will be spent on welfare of priests, upgrading pilgrims' facilities and ramping up infrastructure of temples with meagre earnings. "It won't be utilised for non-Hindu institutions," the chief minister asserted. For perspective, Karnataka has over 1.5 lakh temples. Of them, the state's muzrai (shrine) department is the custodian of 36,000 tem-

ples and classifies them under three categories based on income - 205 'A' category temples with more than Rs 25 lakh a year; 193 'B' category temples with Rs 5 lakh to Rs 10 lakh and less than Rs 25 lakh a year; and 30,000 'C' category temples with less than Rs 5 lakh yearly income. Likening it to Jaziya, BJP called the amendment "a new low of appeasement politics" by Congress. Historically, Jaziya was a tax paid by non-Muslims to Muslim rulers. It was imposed in India by Qutb-uddin Aibak. Akbar abolished it in 16th century. Aurangzeb reinstated in the 17th.

High court: Rename lioness to avoid controversy

SILIGURI: Calcutta HC bench in Jalpaiguri on Thursday said the name of Sita, the lioness in Siliguri's Bengal Safari Park - which has been in the eye of a stir after VHP filed a petition alleging that it has hurt religious sentiments - should be changed "to avoid controversy." "Direct authorities to avoid controversy, discontinue with present names and give separate names to animals," Justice Saugata Bhattacharyya told Bengal additional advocate general. "A zoo officer can give any name to a pet dog. But in a welfare state, why should one invite controversy by naming animals in a zoo



after a revered individual - be it a God, a mythological figure, a freedom fighter or a Nobel laureate?" Justice Bhattacharyya asked the additional advocate general. Observing that naming the lioness Sita had needlessly invited controversy, the judge said he was also against the lion in the safari being named Akbar, after a Mughal emperor, who was both

successful and secular. Pointing out that the big cats had been christened by authorities at Sepahijala Zoological Park in Tripura, from where they had been brought to Bengal on an exchange programme, the additional advocate general said he was in favour of the animals being renamed but added that the decision rested with state authorities.

Gang barges into Bengaluru villa, robs Rs 1 lakh valuables at gunpoint

BENGALURU: A three-member gang allegedly barged into a villa in a gated community in North Bengaluru, threatened a woman and her two teenage sons before robbing them of mobile phones, silver articles, a gold chain and Rs 10,000 in cash - all amounting to

Rs 1 lakh - at gunpoint on Friday afternoon, reports Swamy. Bagalur police have filed a case based on a complaint filed by the woman's elder son, 15, and are searching for the trio, who struck terror for 30 minutes. Only after intruders' arrest, police said, they can confirm

whether the guns were real. The incident took place between 12.30pm and 1pm at the duplex in Royal Palm Enclave, near Sathanur, on Bagalur Main Road, off Yelahanka. Gang of robbers made away with phones, ornaments & 10k cash from villa. The elder.

Trilateral exercise 'Dosti-16' kicks off in Maldives with Chinese research vessel nearby

NEW DELHI: During the 16th edition of the India-Maldives-Sri Lanka trilateral exercise "Dosti" with Bangladesh as observer, ICGS Samarth (with integral helo), ICGS Abhinav & ICG Dornier arrived in Male. According to media reports, a Chinese research vessel was anchored near Male port. "The Chinese research vessel Xiang Yang Hong 03 was moored close to Male City this morning. Around noon, the ship was shown to be near Thilafushi," local media reported, quoting the Marine Traffic website



that tracks all ocean liners across the globe. The Maldives government granted permission for the research vessel, capable of conducting research and surveys, to dock at Male port on January 23. Authorities said that the vessel's stopover was

solely for replenishment purposes and assured that it would not engage in any research activities while in Maldivian waters. India has expressed concern about the movement of the Xiang Yang Hong 03 vessel in Indian Ocean waters and also

prevailed on Sri Lanka to refuse permission for the ship to dock at Colombo port. In February, Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin said the ship's activities complied with the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS). "China's scientific research activities in relevant waters are for peaceful purposes and aimed at contributing to humanity's scientific understanding of the ocean," Wang said in response to a question on the research ship's plan to dock at the Maldives.

Creepy obsession with successful women': BJP on Rahul Ayodhya comment on Aishwarya

NEW DELHI: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) on Thursday launched a stinging attack at Congress leader Rahul Gandhi over his multiple remarks linking actress Aishwarya Rai to the Ayodhya Ram Mandir consecration ceremony. The Karnataka unit of the BJP slammed the former Congress chief, accusing him of having a "creepy obsession" with "successful & self-made women". "Congress Clown Prince Rahul Gandhi now has a dangerous & creepy obsession with successful & self-made women.



Frustrated by constant rejections by Indians, Rahul Gandhi has sunk to a new low of demeaning India's Pride Aishwarya Rai," Karnataka BJP wrote on X (formally Twitter). BJP's attack on his arch-rival comes after Rahul Gandhi claimed that

only OBCs, Dalits, and Backward Class people, who represent 73 per cent of the total population of the country, were nowhere seen during the event. The BJP would never want them to assume the reins of the country," the Congress scion added. He further said that 'Aishwarya Rai would be dancing' while Amitabh Bachchan will do 'Balle Balle'. He has mentioned Aishwarya in his speech several times

single OBC face? There was Amitabh Bachchan, Aishwarya Rai, and Narendra Modi," Rahul Gandhi had said. "People who constitute 73 per cent of the total population of the country were nowhere seen during the event. The BJP would never want them to assume the reins of the country," the Congress scion added. He further said that 'Aishwarya Rai would be dancing' while Amitabh Bachchan will do 'Balle Balle'. He has mentioned Aishwarya in his speech several times

NDIA bloc set to cross another hurdle as Congress-AAP seat sharing talks for Delhi in final stages

NEW DELHI: Opposition's INDIA (Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance) bloc on Thursday appeared set to cross yet another hurdle as reports claimed that the Congress and Aam Aadmi Party have agreed to seat-sharing pact in Delhi and some other states for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections.

As per reports, Aam Aadmi Party would contest on 4 Lok Sabha seats in the national capital while the remaining three will go in Congress's kitty. News agency PTI quoting sources said that a formal announcement will be made soon by both the parties. If the deal is sealed, it will be the second seat-sharing success registered by the INDIA bloc



partners after months of disappointments and disagreements that saw Mamata Banerjee announcing solo contest in West Bengal. On Wednesday, in a significant first for the INDIA bloc, the Congress and Samajwadi Party had announced seat-sharing pact for Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Congress general secretary Priyanka Gandhi played a key role in breaking the deadlock between the two parties. In UP, the Congress

got 17 Lok Sabha seats while in Madhya Pradesh the Samajwadi Party got one seat. INDIA bloc faces a tough challenge in Delhi where the BJP won all the 7 Lok Sabha seats in the last two elections. Arvind Kejriwal's Aam Aadmi Party, which has got overwhelming majority in the assembly polls for two consecutive terms, has failed to make a mark in the national elections. In 2015, AAP won 67 out of 70 seats in Delhi assembly.

CBI searches J&K ex-governor premises over 'corruption' in hydel project

NEW DELHI: CBI on Thursday claimed to have found evidence of huge cash stash, fixed deposits and investments in properties in various cities during searches it carried out at over 35 locations, including premises linked to J&K ex-governor Satya Pal Malik, in connection with its probe into alleged corruption in awarding civil work contract for the Rs 2,200 crore Kiru Hydro Electric Power Project in the UT being executed by Chenab Valley Power Projects Pvt Ltd. The places searched included Malik's ancestral house in western UP's Baghpat. Evidence gathered was both digital and documentary, CBI sources said. The case arose out of Malik's disclosure of having been offered a Rs 200-crore bribe for clearing two files related to the project. Satyapal Malik, who had earlier alleged that Pulwama terror attack in 2019 could have been averted had govt heeded his advice to move troops deployed in Valley by air, said he was ill and was hospitalised for 3-4 days. "Instead of investigating people involved in corruption I had complained against... my house is being raided by the dictator... by misusing govt agencies. They (CBI) will not get anything except 4-5 kurtas and pyjamas. My driver and my assistant are being raided unnecessarily.

Pawar camp of NCP gets 'man blowing turha' as poll symbol



NEW DELHI: The Election Commission of India on Thursday allotted "man blowing turha (a traditional trumpet)" as the symbol of the Nationalist Congress Party-Sharadchandra Pawar. "Our candidates will contest the upcoming Lok Sabha polls on this symbol," NCP-Sharad spokesperson Clyde Crasto said. The Sharad Pawar-founded NCP split in July last year after Ajit Pawar and eight other MLAs joined the Eknath Shinde government. The poll panel later gave the party name and 'clock' symbol to the faction led by deputy CM Ajit Pawar.

Farmers: Book Haryana cops for Punjab 'intrusion'



BATHINDA: Farmer leaders on Thursday demanded registration of FIRs against Haryana police officers for allegedly intruding into Punjab territory, using force, and vandalising vehicles. They also urged govt to recognise Shubhakaran Singh, a 22-year-old farmer from Bathinda district during clashes on Punjab-Haryana border on Wednesday, a "martyr". In response to the death, Samyukta Kisan Morcha (non-political) and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha (KMM), two farm unions leading the current protests, had announced a two-day suspension of their "Delhi Chalo" march, seeking legal guarantee of minimum support price (MSP) for 23 crops and a loan waiver, among other demands. Many were wounded as Haryana authorities fired tear gas shells and rubber bullets to stop the protesters from breaching the barricades at Shambhu and Khanauri en route to Delhi.

Govt's intentions towards the upliftment of dalits and the poor are clear: PM

Varanasi
Prime Minister
Narendra Modi on Friday hit out at the opposition I.N.D.I.A. bloc, accusing its members of exploiting people in the name of casteism. During the 647th Prakash Parv celebrations of Guru Ravidas, Prime Minister Narendra Modi reflected on the words of Sant Ravidas, who once said, "Everyone is worried about caste. Why just not focus on humanity? This obsession destroys people." Modi highlighted the detrimental effects of the caste system on society, echoing Sant Ravidas's teachings. He criticized the I.N.D.I. Alliance for exploiting caste divisions for political gain, claiming that they hin-



der progress for Dalits and the underprivileged. Modi emphasized the importance of following Sant Ravidas's teachings, which guide us on the right path and caution against the dangers of caste-based politics. Attacking the opposition parties, the Prime Minister also said, "They care for the well-being of their families, cannot think about the welfare of Dalits and tribals.

Everyone knows who opposed the country's first tribal woman becoming the President. These are the same dynastic parties, which start remembering Dalits during elections. We have to be cautious of them. The intentions of our government are clear for the poor, the deprived, the backward and the Dalits." Noting the participation of devotees from around

the country, the Prime Minister especially lauded the spirit of those coming to Kashi from Punjab and said that the Kashi started to resemble a mini Punjab. He stated, "Like you, Ravidas ji calls me again and again to his birthplace. Coming here provides an opportunity to uphold the teachings of Guru Ravidas ji and serve his millions of followers. It is a matter of great fortune for me. As a Member of Parliament and public representative of Kashi, it is my special responsibility to welcome you to Kashi and ensure your facilities are well taken care of."

The Prime Minister announced the launch of development

schemes worth several crores for the birthplace of Sant Ravidas Ji. These initiatives include the construction of access roads, arrangements for worship, prasad, etc. These enhancements aim to provide devotees with spiritual happiness and additional amenities. During the event, the Prime Minister inaugurated a new statue of Sant Ravidas and laid the foundation stone of a museum. He also paid tribute to Gadge Maharaj on his birth anniversary and expressed his long-standing admiration for Sant Ravidas, stating, "Even when I was not in politics, I used to seek guidance from the teachings of Sri Guru Ravidas Ji.

On the lines of Kashi, Seer Govardhanpur witnesses new development: CM Yogi

Varanasi
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath remarked that the transformed appearance of Seer Govardhanpur reflects the essence of Kashi. Speaking on the occasion of the 647th birth anniversary of Sant Ravidas, the Chief Minister stated, "A decade ago, this vision seemed distant amidst controversies and logistical challenges. However, under the guidance and leadership of the Prime Minister, today the holy shrine of revered Sant Ravidas Ji Maharaj is seen shining with new divinity and grandeur." During this, the Chief Minister inaugurated and laid the foundation of spiritual tourism development projects related to the Sant Ravidas Temple in Seer Govardhanpur worth Rs. 101 crore. He highlighted that it was the third visit of the Prime



Minister to Seer Govardhan, where he inaugurated the statue and park dedicated to Sant Ravidas Ji. "Today, the foundation stone of the museum has been laid. By the time we celebrate his 650th birth anniversary, we anticipate the completion of a grand memorial museum within the next three years." CM Yogi said that the country gained independence in 1947. 'Before that, people used to make announcements, but what work was done?' Prime Minister Narendra Modi, following the teachings of Jagadguru Ramanand and Ravidas, has imple-

mented initiatives on the ground. The mantra of 'Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas' is visible in society. Every poor person is getting a home, a toilet, and an Ayushman Bharat guarantee of Rs 5 lakh. All the essential needs of life are being fulfilled. "For the first time in independent India, the work of honouring Panch Teerths of Baba Saheb has been done. The entire country and society express gratitude to the Prime Minister for this", he further added. The Chief Minister said that through the land of Kashi, PM Modi has provided.

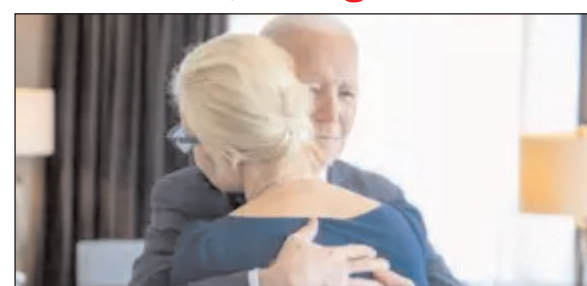
In reverse for 2km: i20 driver pulls off filmy escape in Ghaziabad

GHAZIABAD: It's not just 'Don' who does it when cops stare him down. A man driving an i20 pulled off a stunt from the script of the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer on Wednesday night, driving in reverse for almost 2km as a police vehicle closed down on him, the two vehicles locked in a chase that cut through high-speed traffic moving in the opposite direction. A 50-second clip circulated on social media shows a white i20 going in reverse on the Hindon Elevated Road. At one point, the police vehicle bumps the bon-

net of the i20, but its driver manages to steer the car in such a way that the cops can't get past him. Police eventually gave up, fearing the runaway car could crash into other vehicles and even trigger a pileup on the elevated road. Nimish Patil, DCP (trans-Hindon), said a commuter called up the police control room around 9.30pm on Wednesday, informing the cops that a white i20 was being driven rashly towards Vasundhara. The cops also had information that 3-4 youths were drinking inside the car.

"The nearest patrolling vehicle was alerted to head towards the elevated road. The car was just about to exit the ramp when the cops asked the driver to stop," Patel said. Instead, the driver put the car in reverse and stepped on the accelerator. "He was moving dangerously on the elevated road, steering the vehicle in a zigzag manner. There was a high possibility of an accident because cars move at high speed on the elevated road. Realising that the fugitive driver wouldn't stop.

Biden meets dead Russian leader Navalny's wife, daughter



NEW DELHI: In a meeting held in San Francisco, US President Joe Biden conveyed his condolences to the wife and daughter of the late Russian opposition leader, Alexey Navalny, who recently passed away in prison. During the conversation with Yulia Navalnaya and Dasha Navalnaya, President Biden expressed his appreciation for Alexey Navalny's courage and his commitment to combating corruption. "The President expressed his admiration for Alexey Navalny's extraordinary courage and his legacy of fighting against corruption and for a free and democratic Russia in which the rule of law applies equally to everyone," the statement read. Highlighting Navalny's legacy in the fight for a free and democratic Russia, President Biden acknowledged the widespread mourning

for Navalny's loss. He further announced that US will impose fresh sanctions against Russia. "He affirmed that his Administration will announce major new sanctions against Russia tomorrow in response to Aleksey's death, Russia's repression and aggression, and its brutal and illegal war in Ukraine," the statement added. Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya vows to continue husband Alexei's fight and says "Putin killed him" Navalnaya, the mother of the late Russian opposition leader, claimed that Moscow authorities are pressuring her to accept a secret burial for her son. The Washington Post reported that Navalnaya, after being allowed to see her son's corpse, received a death certificate stating he died of "natural causes," a claim disputed by Navalny's family and team.

Two villagers killed in Sukma, Naxalites claim responsibility

Chhattisgarh: Two men were allegedly killed by Naxals in Sukma village, Chhattisgarh, on suspicion of being police informers, according to the police. The victims, Sodi Hunga and Madvi Nanda, were residents of Duled village. The Palmed Area Committee of Naxalites has claimed responsibility for the murders.

The deputy chief minister and home minister of Chhattisgarh Vijay Sharma recently visited Silger village, located on the Sukma-Bijapur border in Sukma district, which is one of the most severely affected areas by Naxalism in the state. This visit followed a recent Naxal attack near Silger village on January 30, which

resulted in the deaths of three individuals and left 14 others injured. Sharma interacted with soldiers and local villagers in Bastar's Silger, showing concern for their well-being and gathering information about the prevailing situation. He took the opportunity to inform the villagers about various government schemes.

Here's how IIM-U is shaping leaders of tomorrow

Ashish was working as a mid-level manager at a leading tech firm when he found himself at a critical career juncture. Ashish had

excelled in executing tasks, solving problems, and meeting deadlines, but he sensed a new challenge looming—a call to leadership. As he reflected on his professional journey, he realised that leadership isn't just about overseeing operations but demands the ability to inspire, strategise, and drive meaningful change within the organisation. It was with this realisation that he decided to explore programmes that could power up his career to hone leadership roles. In a rapidly evolving business landscape, the transition from mid-level management to leadership excellence is now more critical than ever.

Russia job fraud: A vlogger lures youth into danger zone, another flags pitfalls

HYDERABAD: While many youth from India, who were trapped in a major job fraud in Russia that landed them in 'danger zone' near war-torn Ukraine, are desperate to get out of Russia, two vloggers from India have come under the scanner. While one of them, Baba, paints a rosy picture for youth to travel to Russia to take up jobs, including army jobs, another vlogger, Pathan, advises them against falling into the trap and landing themselves in danger. Some of those who were taken to Moscow in Dec 2023 on the promise of securing jobs of security person-



nel and helpers by Baba, who facilitated their entry into Russia, have spoken in videos - sent to their families - about the dangers they are facing on the Ukraine border and seeking help from Indian govt to bring them back. In one of his videos, Pathan also showed himself in army

fatigues surrounded by several guns. Possession of a contract that one of the youth was made to sign after he landed in Moscow. The contract looks 'official', is in Russian language and clearly indicates that their services are 'private'.

Baba, who advertises for recruiting

youngsters in various countries, including Russia, made it clear in his vlog - made on the streets of Moscow - that taking up jobs in Russian army was safe. "You will not be required to fight or handle a weapon," he said in his vlog. However, Pathan disputes this, saying safety is a big concern. "For the sake of making easy money by promising jobs, some recruiters are sending youngsters to Russia and putting them in a dangerous situation," he said in his vlog 'F2 Pathan Vlogs'. "Russians are friendly people. They have regard for Indians and love Bollywood movies.

Tribals evacuated from Imphal say 'militias' taking over homes

GUWAHATI: Kuki families evacuated by security forces from Imphal city in a post-midnight operation last Sept to purportedly shield them from ethnic violence alleged on Thursday that the houses they left behind in the New Lambulane locality have since been illegally occupied. Church official S Prim Vaiphei, who was among the evacuees, said "armed militias" had started taking over the unoccupied houses and accommodated "their people". "This illegal occupation of our houses is happening under the noses of Imphal East district administration and central security forces," Vaiphei alleged, terming it a violation of Supreme Court's order to Manipur govt on September 25 last year to protect the properties of those displaced by ethnic violence.



Pamban bridge, Indian Railways' first vertical lift bridge over sea, to be ready soon!

Pamban bridge nears completion! Railway Board chairperson Jaya Varma Sinha has announced that the Pamban railway bridge, India's inaugural vertical-lift bridge linking the mainland with Rameswaram Island, is on the brink of operational readiness. Varma, after a recent visit to Rameswaram to assess the project's advancement said that the reconstruction progress is proceeding smoothly. "Our team has demonstrated remarkable dedication amidst numerous obstacles encountered during the bridge reconstruction. Erecting a vertical-lift bridge, the first of its kind in the nation, over turbulent seas presents significant challenges," stated the Railway Board chairperson and chief executive officer (CEO) according to a PTI report.. The new Pamban bridge, India's first vertical lift railway bridge over the sea, is a breathtaking marvel. Serving as a link between Rameswaram on Pamban Island and Mandapam on the mainland, it is being constructed parallel to the old Pamban bridge by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited at an estimated cost of Rs 535 crore. One of the most distinctive features of the new Pamban bridge is its vertical lift capability, facilitating seamless passage for boats beneath the bridge. This vertical lift span will feature electromechanical controls integrated with the train control system. The new Pamban bridge has been designed to accommodate future electrification, aligning with Indian Railways' broader goal of transitioning to full electrification across its broad gauge network. The new Pamban bridge's substructure has been constructed to accommodate double lines, and provisions have been made for double lines in the navigational span as well. This vertical lift mechanism, a pioneering innovation in the country, will provide a full horizontal clearance of 72.5 meters for navigation. To facilitate the passage of shipping traffic beneath the vertical lift section of the bridge, rail traffic will be halted temporarily. The navigational span will ascend vertically to create adequate clearance for boats to navigate through. The new Pamban bridge will consist of 100 spans of 18.3 meters each and one navigational span of 63 meters. It will stand 3.0 meters taller than the existing bridge, providing a navigational air clearance of 22.0 meters above sea level. Cutting-edge technologies such as stainless steel reinforcement, composite sleepers, and a long-life painting system have been employed by the railways in the construction of the new bridge. The new 2.05-kilometer-long Pamban bridge, according to Southern Railway, will facilitate faster train operations and enhance traffic between mainland India and Rameswaram Island. Prime Minister Narendra Modi laid the foundation stone for the new Pamban bridge, running parallel to the old one, in November 2019. The construction, undertaken by Rail Vikas Nigam Limited (RVNL), commenced in February 2020.