

# AKHAND BHARAT SANDESH

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MORNING EDITION PRAYAGRAJ Wednesday 14 February, 2024 UNIQUE GIFT OF KRIYAYOGA ASHRAM AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE TO GIVE IMPETUS TO WORLD BUILDING AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT.

## Ready for talks but stop raising new issues, government tells farmers

**NEW DELHI:** Centre on Tuesday said it was ready for more talks with farmers but asked them to refrain from continuously adding new issues to their charter of demands, while also cautioning them about the possibility of certain elements seeking to defame their protest for political benefits. "In the two rounds of discussions in Chandigarh, we agreed to many of their demands. But there was no agreement on certain issues. Talks are still on," agriculture minister Arjun Munda said a day after farmers' unions walked out of talks. The govt side agreed to some demands, including those related to withdrawal of cases filed during the last agitation after following due process. Many cases have already been withdrawn over the last two years. The protesters should



understand that by continuously adding new issues, a resolution can't be reached immediately, I&B minister Anurag Thakur said in a statement. "If you talk about India's separation from WTO, about ending the free trade agreements, if you stop installing smart meters, say exclude us on the issue of stubble burning or talk about excluding agriculture from the climate issue, then these are not one-day decisions. For this, we will have to talk to other stake-

holders and states. And that is why the govt has proposed to form a committee," he said. Maintaining that many schemes have been brought for welfare of farmers during the last 10 years, he said govt discussions. "That is why we did not leave during the talks, but the protesters left first," Thakur said. Govt sources said that during talks after the last round of protests, Samyukta Kisan Morcha did not nominate representatives to a committee set up in July 2022 to

make MSP more effective and transparent. Ahead of the call for a 'Grameen Bharat Bandh' on Feb 16, SKM on Tuesday wrote to PM Modi seeking his intervention to initiate discussions on a 21-point charter of demands. Apart from legal guarantee for procurement of all crops at MSP using C2+50% formula - a comprehensive cost including imputed cost of capital and rent on land owned by farmers - in line with Swaminathan Commission recommendations, other key demands include farm loan waiver, no increase in power tariff (which is free in several states), free electricity up to 300 units, no smart meters (a provision of the Electricity Act), comprehensive crop insurance, punishment to guilty of Lakhimpur Kheri violence of 2021, and pensions for farmers and farm labourers.

## PM Modi in UAE, pacts signed on eco corridor investment

**NEW DELHI:** India and the United Arab Emirates Tuesday signed a bilateral investment treaty along with seven others agreements, including one for an inter-governmental framework on the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), following PM Narendra Modi's fifth bilateral meeting in the past eight months with UAE President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan. In a "special and warm" gesture, Modi was received at the airport by the president. The Union Cabinet



had earlier this month green-lighted the signing and ratification of the investment treaty with the UAE which is expected to promote investments and help India realise its Atmanirbhar goals by ramping up domestic manufacturing and exports. While approv-

ing the treaty, the government had said it would improve the confidence of large investors, resulting in an increase in foreign investments and overseas direct investment opportunities, adding this may help employment generation. "The treaty will have a

long-term impact. The fact that we are moving forward in this direction will be a significant piece of news also for the G20 group of countries," Modi said in his talks with the president. The treaty follows the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) that the two countries signed in 2022. The agreement resulted in an increase of 16% in bilateral trade last year. The UAE was the fourth largest source of FDI for India in 2022-23, accounting for \$3.5 billion investment.

## Kurta-pyjama to enter Navy messes as services shed 'vestiges of colonial era'

**NEW DELHI:** The humble kurta-pyjama has now made a formal entry into the spit and polish environs of naval messes, in the latest such move based on govt's directive to shed "vestiges of the colonial

era" and "Indianise" military traditions and customs. Navy has issued orders to all its commands and establishments to allow officers and sailors to wear the 'ethnic' attire of kurta-pyjamas, with sleeveless

jackets and closed formal shoes or sandals, in officers' messes and sailors' institutes. There are, however, strict guidelines about the colour, cut and shape of the kurta-pyjama, which can be worn when "the

prescribed rig is informal (open collar) or casuals" in the messes, as per one order seen by TOI. It must be a "solid tone" kurta, with the length just up to the knee, and cuffs at sleeves with buttons or cuff-links.

## No stress-related problem with Suchana Seth, court told

**PANAJI:** Calangute police informed a Goa children's court on Tuesday that Suchana Seth, a Bengaluru-based data scientist who allegedly killed her four-year-old son in Goa, does not suffer from any stress-related ailments. "She was examined by a panel of doctors, and questions posed to her were answered in a sane manner. In no context was any type of pressure of stress-related ailment noticed," stated the opinion of Institute of Psychiatry and Human Behaviour (IPHB) doctors. Calangute PI Paresh Naik said the medical report related to her mental health condition has been submitted to court. Suchana's father, Joy Gopal Seth, had approached the children's court seeking a direction to Goa police to get her examined by a civil surgeon or medical board to ascertain her mental condition. Joy Seth said it was beyond the stretch of imagination that a mother, in a proper frame of mind, would commit such an act against her own offspring. "I further add and say that Suchana is unable to make her defence or has been incapable of making her defence due to the mental illness she suffers from; she is in denial of her own illness," he had said. Responding to the application, Calangute police told court that they have already moved the medical superintendent, IPHB, requesting Suchana's medical examination report. Suchana is in judicial custody. Calangute police said they would file a chargesheet once the investigation had been completed.

Suchana is accused of murdering her son at a Candolim service apartment on January 7. After allegedly killing her son, Suchana hired a taxi and checked out of Hotel Sol Banyan Grande at Candolim, leaving for Bengaluru with the boy's body stuffed in a bag. She had checked in with her son on January 6. Subsequently, the housekeeping staff found bloodstains in the room and alerted police. The discovery of the child's murder would have been delayed had Suchana not been stuck in a four-hour traffic jam at Chorla Ghat on her way to Bengaluru.

## Supreme Court refuses to stay law on appointment of CEC, ECs

**NEW DELHI:** Supreme Court on Tuesday agreed to hear another petition challenging the validity of Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act as per which appointments to the poll panel are to be decided by a committee comprising PM, a Union cabinet minis-



ter and the leader of opposition, but refused to stay operation of the law. A bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna issued notice to Centre on a petition filed by Association for Democratic

Reforms and tagged it with other petitions challenging the law and listed the matter for April. Earlier, SC had issued notice on a petition filed by Congress activist Jaya Thakur who claimed that

Sections 7 and 8 were violative of the principle of free and fair elections as they did not provide an "independent mechanism" for appointment of members of Election Commission. It contended that the law was enacted to override SC's March 2022 verdict which had entrusted the task to a panel of PM, LoP and CJI, taking away Centre's power.

## Sharad Pawar moves Supreme Court on EC recognition to NCP-Ajit

**NEW DELHI:** A week after Election Commission (EC) ruled against Sharad Pawar and recognised Ajit Pawar's faction as the real Nationalist Congress Party (NCP), the NCP founder moved SC challenging the decision. EC had on Feb 6 decided the NCP symbol dispute



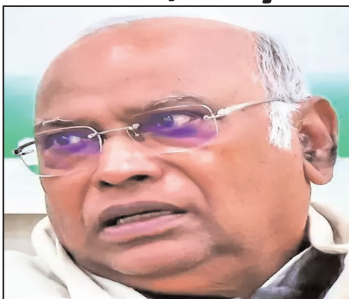
in favour of Ajit Pawar, almost eight months after he broke away from the Sharad Pawar camp to join Shiv Sena-BJP govt with eight NCP

MLAs. EC had passed the order after evaluating the applicability of three tests- 'Test of Aims and Objectives of the Party Constitution', 'Test of Party Constitution' and 'Test of Majority'-to decide the dispute between the uncle and nephew. It ruled in favour of the Ajit Pawar fac-

tion as 57 affidavits were filed by NCP MPs, MLAs and MLCs in favour of his faction and only 28 were filed in support of Sharad Pawar. Sharad Pawar in his petition has arraigned Ajit Pawar and EC. He alleged that the panel erred in passing order in favour of Ajit Pawar.

## Will give MSP guarantee if we form government, says Kharge

**RAIPUR:** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge announced at Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra that his party will bring MSP under purview of legal guarantee if it forms govt at Centre. "I am announcing this for first time from the soil of Chhattisgarh. It is guarantee of Congress party," Kharge said in Ambikapur. Kharge accused BJP-led govt at



Centre of "committing inhu-

man acts" by using concrete walls and nails to prevent farmers from reaching Delhi. "The way farmers are being suppressed shows state of democracy in country," he said. Kharge lashed out at Modi, accusing him of copying 'Congress's guarantee' and turning it into 'Modi Guarantee'.

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

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

## Prayagraj MP Unveils Meja Urja Nigam's CSR Projects worth over 1 cr and praises 100% Placement Milestone

**Prayagraj .** Prayagraj MP Prof. (Dr.) Rita Bahuguna Joshi inaugurated several CSR initiatives of Meja Urja Nigam valued at over Rs. One crore. During the event, Prayagraj MP laid the foundation for various CSR projects, including of Kohdar & Mai Kala road, Mai Khurd & Kohdar Gaushala, Rooftop Solar at Smt. Dhanraji Devi Mahila Degree College, Koraon. Moreover, distribution of desks and benches to Government Primary Schools in Salaiya Kala & Salaiya Khurd was also done during the event. The inauguration ceremony coin-



cided with the celebration of a significant milestone: 100% placement of 25 students who completed a training program sponsored by Meja Urja Nigam in collaboration with CIPET. The occasion witnessed the distribution of training certificates by Prayagraj MP to all the students who successfully completed the 3-month training and were placed. The total costing of the program was around Rs. 17 lakhs.



## That 2020 feeling: Massive farm mobilisation in Punjab



**BATHINDA/PATIALA/AMBALA:**

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

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

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

## Mumbai IT firm boss files Rs 15cr cheating case against MD of another company

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

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

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



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

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

## Cognizant healthcare revenue beats BFSI's

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

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



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

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

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

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



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

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

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

## Bengaluru court fines 6 parents for letting minors ride bikes

**BENGALURU:** A 27-year-old private firm employee astride a two-wheeler suffered injuries after a minor boy rammed his sports bike into him in Sunkadakatte, west Bengaluru, in April 2023. Passersby shifted him to a private hospital where the boy pleaded with the injured man to not press charges against him. However, the injured man filed a complaint against the boy. Probe revealed that the sports bike was registered in his mother's name and the boy had taken the bike on a fun ride on that day. This was among the six cases involving minor riders that were adjudicated by a Bengaluru court recent-



ly, after they were investigated and chargesheeted by Kamakshipalya police. Three of the cases pertained to the riders performing wheelies and the rest were related to accidents. The court fined parents/guardians of all the six boys Rs 25,000 each for letting minors ride the two-wheelers. More worrying is some minors are repeatedly indulging in

stunt riding. Joint commissioner of police (traffic) MN Anuchet said they are profiling such minors and other members of 'wheelie gangs'. "There are minors repeatedly getting caught for performing wheelies. Now, these youngsters are doing it not only for fun or adventure, but also to gain popularity on social media. Uploading videos of the bike stunts on

social media is one of the factors contributing to minors performing wheelies and other stunts. We have identified many minors, whose parents were fined in the past, but continue to indulge in stunt riding. These are common in Kamakshipalya, Banasawadi and Rajajinagar station limits," he said. Additional DGP Alok Kumar said parents/guardians of such minors could be imprisoned to three years for allowing them to ride. "Many times, when parents refuse to give two-wheelers, these kids borrow bikes from friends. This should be avoided as minors.

## Bomb threat to Chennai-Mumbai flight

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

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

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

CAPSULES

## Shocked, but what can we do? We're still waiting for justice, says Soumya's mother

**NEW DELHI:** Madhavi, the mother of TV journalist Soumya Viswanathan, expressed shock at the bail given to her daughter's murderers. She told that she had learned about the court's decision through family members. She was utterly disappointed and said, "I don't even know what to say. The men shouldn't have been given bail." Madhavi and her husband, MK Viswanathan, fought for 15 years before a Delhi court convicted the four men last Dec.



Madhavi said that her husband died that month after having gone through so much with regard to their daughter's murder case.

"It was a long battle for us. I was shocked by the decision, but what can I do?" she fretted. In a social media post, Madhavi said, "Today, there has been a setback. The Saket court had convicted Ravi Kapoor and his gang for her murder. The high court had also, less than a month ago, denied bail to Ravi Kapoor, stating that his overall conduct in the jail had been unsatisfactory and that 41 major punishments have been awarded to him." Addressing her daughter, Madhavi said in the post, "Fifteen years have gone by and we are still waiting for justice. In the process we also lost your father on Dec 9, 2023." The post further read, "It was stress that killed him. So indirectly, it is Ravi Kapoor and his gang who are responsible for the death of your father."



## 'Starting new journey': Day after quitting Congress, Chavan says he is joining BJP

**NEW DELHI:** A day after quitting Congress, former Maharashtra chief minister Ashok Chavan on Tuesday joined BJP in the presence of Devendra Fadnavis.

"Today around 12-12:30, I am going to start a new journey of my political career, I am going to join BJP," Chavan told reporters.

Chavan is the third big name to desert the Congress ship in Maharashtra following the exit of former South Mumbai MP Milind Deora and former MLA Baba Siddique. "I have quit the Congress Party, as MLA and from all other party posts today... I have broken all my involvement with the party. I have no complaints and till yesterday I worked honestly for the party," Chavan said on Monday after leaving the grand old party.

There were strong speculations that Ashok Chavan was headed for BJP. After



leaving Congress, Chavan had said that he will decide his political path in 48 hours. Who is Ashok Chavan? Son of late Congress CM Shankarao Chavan, Ashok Chavan is a political heavyweight in Maharashtra and seen as a leader with mass base in Nanded region. He began his political career from Congress, holding the position of General Secretary of the Maharashtra Pradesh Congress Committee from 1995 to 1999. He later ascended to the role of president of the state Congress unit, a position he held from 2014 to 2019.

During 1987 to 1989, Chavan represented the Nanded Lok Sabha constituency as a Member of Parliament. His political trajectory continued in 1992 when he secured a seat in the Maharashtra Legislative Council, assuming responsibilities as the minister of state for public works, urban development, and home in March 1993. In 2003, he took on the role of Minister for Transport, Ports, Cultural Affairs, and Protocol in the Congress-NCP government under the leadership of the late Vilasrao Deshmukh.

## US envoy Eric Garcetti celebrates Tibetan New Year in Uttarakhand

**DEHRADUN:** US Ambassador to India, Eric Garcetti shared the joy of being in Uttarakhand during the Tibetan New Year. In some regions, Tibetan people celebrate Losar for 15 days. It is a festival for all Tibetans world over where they come together, offer prayers, perform group dance and perform rituals. "Thrilled to be in Uttarakhand this Losar--the Tibetan New Year," US envoy shared a post on X. He further visited the Hanifl Centre at Woodstock School, where he witnessed the impressive efforts by the centre in shaping the next



generation by conserving and restoring the beautiful landscape and biodiversity of the Himalayas. "I visited the Hanifl Centre at Woodstock school where I'm excited to see the impressive efforts by the center in shaping the next generation in conserving and restoring the beautiful landscape and biodiversity of the Himalayas.

"#IncredibleIndia," the post added. Hundreds of Tibetans in exile gathered to participate in a circle dance in the North Indian hill town of Dharamshala on the second day of Losar, the Tibetan New Year. It's like a festival for all Tibetans across the world, where they come together, offer prayers, perform group dances, and do their rituals. Many Tibetans, mostly in traditional dresses, participated in a group dance in McLeodganj to celebrate the second day of their Tibetan new year-2151, 'Dragon Wood' year according to the Tibetan lunar calendar.

## Defamation complaint against Tejashwi Yadav quashed by Supreme Court

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday quashed the defamation complaint against RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav over his alleged "only Gujaratis can be thugs" remark. A bench of Justices A S Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan granted the relief to Yadav after

noting that he has withdrawn his statement. "We have quashed the complaint," the bench said. The top court on January 29 had directed Yadav to file a "proper statement" withdrawing his alleged remark that "only Gujaratis can be thugs". Yadav on January

19 filed an affidavit in the apex court withdrawing his alleged "Gujarati thugs" remark. The top court, while hearing the RJD leader's plea, had earlier stayed the proceedings in the criminal defamation complaint and issued notice to the Gujarat resident.

## Hyderabad man finds live worm in Dairy Milk Chocolate, Cadbury

**NEW DELHI:** A Hyderabad man, Robin Zaccheus found a live worm crawling in a bar of Cadbury Dairy Milk Chocolate that he purchased from a store at Ameerpet metro station on Friday.

In a post on X, formerly known as Twitter, Robin shared a video of the worm infested chocolate bar and included the receipt for the Rs 45 Cadbury that he bought at the Ratnadeep Retail store at the metro station. "Found a worm crawling in Cadbury chocolate purchased at



Ratnadeep Metro Ameerpet today. Is there a quality check for these near to expiry products? Who is responsible for public health hazards?" Robin wrote on X. The images prompted varied reactions from

social media users. In response to the viral post, Cadbury Dairy Milk wrote, "Hi, Mondelez India Foods Private Limited (formerly Cadbury India Ltd) endeavours to maintain the highest quality standards, and we regret to note that you have had an unpleasant experience. To enable us to address your concern, please write to us at Suggestions@mdlzindia.com providing us with your full name, address, phone number and purchase details. To enable us to

action your complaint we request all these details. Thank you, Consumer Conversation, Mondelez India Foods Private Limited (formerly Cadbury India Ltd)." In a separate response, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation said, "The Concerned Food Safety team @AFCGHMC have been alerted on this issue and the same will be resolved at the earliest." Netizens swarmed the comment section and expressed disappointment.

## Supreme Court refuses to interfere with HCs' orders in Indiabulls case

**NEW DELHI:** Supreme Court on Monday turned down Enforcement Directorate's plea challenging Delhi and Bombay HC orders quashing police and ED investigation against Indiabulls Housing Finance Ltd (IHFL) and asked the agency to resort to alternative remedies, including seeking review of the orders. Bombay HC had in May last year allowed a plea by IHFL seeking to quash an FIR, filed in Wada in Palghar district, for cheating, criminal breach of trust, and other charges levelled by a shareholder. As ED had also initiated a probe against the company and its officials on the basis of predicate offence after registration of



FIR, IHFL had moved Delhi HC for quashing of ED proceedings and HC had allowed its plea in Sept last year. Challenging both orders, ED moved SC and additional solicitor general S V Raju submitted that it should be allowed to go ahead with the probe. But senior advocates Mukul Rohatgi and Siddharth Luthra, appearing for the

company, argued ED had no locus standi to challenge the order to quash the FIR filed by police which resulted in quashing of ED probe. SC, after hearing both sides, noted that Bombay HC had quashed the FIR after questioning the conduct of the complainant who lodged the FIR and the court passed the order without hearing ED.

## Ram temple not of stone, but of devotion, conscious sacrifice: Sadhguru

**AYODHYA:** Calling the inauguration of Ram temple in Ayodhya a 'civilisation moment' achieved after a relentless struggle of over 500 years, Isha Foundation founder Sadhguru on Monday said it is not a temple of stone, but of devotion and conscious sacrifice.

After paying obeisance to Ram Lalla, Sadhguru posted on 'X': "Profound gratitude for generations of people who strived to bring this to fruition. This is not a temple of stone, but of devotion and conscious sacrifice." This was Sadhguru's first visit to Ayodhya since the 'Pran Pratishtha' ceremony. Earlier in the day, He said: "Today, I am going to Ayodhya to honour a great being of the past and to honour all the people who have kept up a relentless struggle to manifest the inspiration that this being has been for this civilization. After over



500 years of struggle, the devotees have manifested this. Lord Ram is definitely an inspiration from the past but very relevant for the future. Your personal likes and dislikes, longings, and loves are important, but when it comes to larger well-being, when it comes to the larger good, you learn to keep your own most important things aside and do what is right for the maximum number of people. Rama has been an embodiment of this." "And above all, no matter what

life throws at you--to maintain equanimity, to maintain freedom from the invasion that life can make into your mind and your heart--not be invaded by what's around you, embodied with the divine possibility. This is Rama," Sadhguru added. "This should be the future of the world in many ways. Do not think in terms of just worshipping someone. The most important thing is emulating that possibility--emulating those values, emulating that nature of a

human being that can choose to be the way it wants to be, no matter what life does," he underlined. Sadhguru had called on Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath on Sunday and lauded his leadership. "Shri Yogi Adityanath ji's vision and leadership are steering Uttar Pradesh towards becoming an epitome of development and culture. His dynamism and dedication to people's wellbeing is truly commendable," he had posted on X.

## SC extends stay on proceedings against Arvind Kejriwal in UP over election law violation

**NEW DELHI:** The Supreme Court on Tuesday extended its interim stay on proceedings against Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in a case lodged against him for allegedly making objectionable remarks against the BJP and the Congress in Uttar Pradesh during the 2014 Lok Sabha poll campaign. Kejriwal has moved the apex court against an order of the Lucknow bench of the Allahabad High Court which had declined to discharge him in the criminal case pending before a trial court at Sultanpur.

A bench of Justices M M Sundresh and S V N Bhatti agreed to hear the appeal filed by Kejriwal. "Let the interim order continue. What is all this? These are all irrelevant matters. It is not a matter for us to go into," the bench observed. Kejriwal has been accused of promoting enmity between classes in connection with elections under section 125 of the Representation of the People (RP) Act, 1951.

He had allegedly said on May 2, 2014 during the campaign trail, "Jo Congress ko vote dega, mera manana hoga, desh ke saath gaddari hogi.... Joh Bhajapa (BJP) ko vote dega use khuda bhi maaf nahin karega (Those who will vote for the Congress will be betraying the nation, and god will not forgive those who will vote for the BJP)." The plea said Kejriwal had not referred to any religion or caste but only a political party, and a political party cannot be considered as a class of citizens for the purposes of Section 125 of the RP Act.

## Supreme Court: Won't interfere in EC work on voter lists

**NEW DELHI:** Supreme Court on Monday expressed full satisfaction with the work being done by Election Commission in preparing the final voter list for the coming general elections and said there was no room to accuse the poll supervisory body of not taking enough steps to weed out duplicate and ghost voters. Appearing for EC, advocate Amit Sharma told a bench of CJI D Y Chandrachud, and Justices J B Pardiwala and Manoj Misra that generally people, especially the first time voters, are



enthusiastic about registering their names in the voters list, but there is a discernible lack of effort on the part of electorate to help Election Commission in deleting duplicate entries and the names of the dead from voters list. For this reason, Election Commission and a large

contingent of booth level officers conduct house to house verification, he said. "An IT-enabled system generates lists of probable Demographic Similar Entries (DSEs) & Photo Similar Entries (PSEs). House-to-house verification acts as an assistive tool for Electoral

Registration officers (EROs)/AEROs, who must complete the process as defined in concerned Act & Rules," he added. As per the finally published electoral roll, a total of over 96.9 crore voters are registered across the country, EC said. More than two crore young electors, spanning the 18-19 and 20-29 age groups, have been added to the electoral roll. After hearing Sharma, the bench disposed of a PIL, which had alleged that large-scale duplicate entries and ghost voters.

## Supreme Court Bar Association urges CJI to initiate suo motu action against erring farmers

**NEW DELHI:** Supreme Court Bar Association (SCBA) President Adish Aggarwala on Tuesday wrote a letter to Chief Justice of India (CJI), D Y Chandrachud to take suo motu action against erring farmers for forcibly trying to enter Delhi in a bid to create nuisance and disturb the daily life of citizens. He also requested CJI Chandrachud to issue directions to courts to not pass any adverse order due to the non-presence of lawyers before the courts. "I am compelled to write this letter to bring to your kind notice that despite the best efforts of the Government of India to protect the interest of the farmers, some farmers are enroute to Delhi from Uttar Pradesh, Haryana, and Punjab and are gearing up for a large-scale protest in the national capital on February 13," Adish Aggarwala stated in the letter.



## Editorial

### Stuck in conflict: Pathways to end Gaza war and ensure sustainable peace

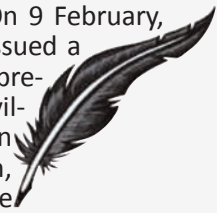
It has been four months of war in Gaza, which was triggered by a terror attack by Hamas on Israel on 7 October 2023, but it shows no signs of slowing down or ending. Gaza has been punished and pulverized with non-stop bombardment, aerial strikes and massive ground offensive by Israel, which has led to an unprecedented humanitarian crisis. Over 28,000 people have already been killed and over 67,000 severely injured. Almost the entire population of around 2.3 million in Gaza has been displaced and the 41-kilometre-long Gaza strip has been reduced to rubble, making it virtually uninhabitable, perhaps for a long time. The international aid agencies and the UN have repeatedly called for ceasefire and permission to move in food and critical medical aid but Israel has been unrelenting in its pledge to flatten Gaza and eliminate Hamas from the face of the Earth.

#### Ceasefire proposal

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

#### Israel continues to flatten Gaza

As regional countries especially Egypt and Qatar get down to explore more options to end this war, Israel has upped the ante in its offensive. In the latest inputs coming from the war zone, the Israeli military is flattening all buildings and construction along the border of Israel and Gaza, to create a clear and well-defined 'buffer zone' in the future. There are reports of intensification of operations in Khan Younis city in Southern Gaza where even refugee camps and hospitals are not being spared. Rafah crossing near the Egypt border which has come under immense pressure due to the influx of Palestinian refugees from Northern Gaza, too is being struck by Israel. Despite warnings by Egypt that Rafah is a 'red line' and should not be violated by Israel, the attacks from Israel are unrelenting in their timing and scope. On 9 February, Prime Minister Netanyahu issued a directive to his military to prepare a plan to evacuate civilians from Rafah ahead of an expected invasion in Rafah, bordering Egypt. It may be recalled that Israel had forcefully got Northern Gaza evacuated overnight.



# Seven unthinkableables: How Modi makes Qatar rescue and other feats 'mumkin'

Within 18 months of their arrest for alleged espionage and barely two months since they got the death sentence in an Islamic country, Bharat brought its Navy men back to the homeland. Modi's opponents did not waste even this very short time to relentlessly mock him, almost celebratory about the incarceration of fellow Indians. Only to eat an unpalatable member of the aves species in the end and have its eggs smeared all over their face. Let us look at seven such unthinkable feats that the Modi government has pulled off in the last 10 years. Not the most impactful or high-profile — that would run into several dozens — but the ones we would not perceive to be possible before 2014. These are the ones that have inspired the slogan: 'Modi hai toh mumkin hai' (if Modi is around, anything is possible).

#### Qatar and other rescues

The Qatar rescue turns on its head several accepted myths about Modi and international diplomacy. While his enemies have stubbornly called him anti-Muslim, his influence in the Islamic world keeps stupefying them into silence. No other PM has had this kind of influence. The way his government has rescued stranded Indians from ISIS-



held Syria or Covid-wrecked Iran or war-torn Yemen, or Bharat's troops fighting from South Sudan to Djibouti, is lore now. Pakistan had to return captured Indian fighter pilot Abhinandan Varthaman within days in fear of a full-scale invasion.

#### Articles 370 and 35A

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

#### Ayodhya and other mandirs

"Mandir whine banayenge,

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

And on 14 February, Prime

Minister Modi will inaugurate Abu Dhabi's first Hindu temple, the BAPS mandir. All this was beyond the reach of popular imagination till now.

#### Demonetisation and digital payments

DeMo in itself was politically unthinkable. But Modi took the risk which no politician in his or her right mind would. Then came the narrative that it will wreck the poor. In reality, it became the inflection point for the poor and the underdog to start trusting the BJP, which till then was known as the party of Brahmins and Banias.

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

#### Surgical strikes, staring down the Dragon

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

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

#### Vaccinating Bharat and the

#### world in Covid

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

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

#### Indian economy closing in on third spot

When Narendra Modi took over from Manmohan Singh 10 years ago, India was the 10th largest economy in the world with a GDP of \$1.9 trillion at current market prices. Today, it is at \$4.1 trillion at the fifth place. It is galloping towards being the third largest economy behind the US and China by 2027. These seven achievements stand out because each of them were inconceivable. They would sound like unrealistic bombast in the past. Turning them into reality is why Narendra Modi has already booked a shining place in history. What is staggering is that there may be many more on the way.

## Unsolved mystery of 28 snow leopard skins from Imperial Cadet Corps

The story of the high number of snow leopard skins traced during British rule in Dehradun will surprise wildlife experts and lovers, as the population of this endangered species was never very high. Snow leopards are rightly termed 'ghosts of the mountains', as their sighting is extremely rare. The terrain in which the snow leopards move and dwell is challenging for humans to access easily. After killing deer and tigers, a 'Shikari' used to head for the high Himalayas to shoot down a snow leopard to achieve the first-rate game hunter status. A strange case took place during British rule at an institute in Dehradun. The

incident was peculiar! The Imperial Cadet Corps (ICC), providing military education and training to youths of princely families, found it impossible to trace the source of the 28 snow leopard skins present in their collection. The skins were sent from Dehradun to Peshawar for storage and got sold there as it was difficult for the ICC to look after them. The story of the high number of snow leopard skins traced during British rule in Dehradun will surprise wildlife experts and lovers, as the population of this endangered species was never very high. A new study by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

(Government of India) shows the presence of just 718 snow leopards in India. The estimated populations in different states are: Ladakh (477), Uttarakhand (124), Himachal Pradesh (51), Arunachal Pradesh (36), Sikkim (21) and Jammu and Kashmir (9). Twenty-eight is not a small number. The mystery of the 28 snow leopard skins never got solved. How did the Imperial Cadet Corps get them? Were they purchased or received as a gift from someone? Were they hunting trophies of the ICC? The issue came to light in 1916, when the ICC (Dehradun) found it hard to store the big collection of snow leopard skins.

## PM Modi UAE visit: How BAPS Hindu temple is a masterwork of two embracing civilisations

In the vast tapestry of geopolitical relations, the alliance between India and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) stands as a beacon, weaving a story that spans millennia. From ancient maritime routes connecting the Arabian Sea to the Mediterranean, laden with spices, jewels, perfumes, and cloth, to the contemporary stage where trade, diplomacy, and camaraderie intertwine, the India-UAE partnership emerges as a defining alliance of the 21st century. The narrative took a hiatus of 34 years before being reignited in 2015, when Prime Minister Narendra Modi embarked on a historic visit to the UAE, marking the genesis of a new era in diplomatic relations. What ensued was a symphony of visits, agreements, and accolades, solidifying the bond between the two nations. In a diplomatic ballet, UAE President Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al Nahyan graced the Republic Day celebrations in 2017, and the warmth of the relationship reached its pinnacle when PM Modi was bestowed with the prestigious Order of Zayed in 2019. Once upon a trade era, where dates, pearls,



and fishes held the ancient secrets, a seismic shift occurred. In 1962, the UAE discovered oil, rewriting the narrative. Fast forward to the 1990s, cue the drumroll for India's economic liberation and Dubai's rise as a trading maestro—a symphony played, transforming bilateral trade from a humble \$180 million in the 1970s to a jaw-dropping \$73 billion in 2021–22. Enter the showstopper, the maestro's magnum opus—the Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) of 2022, unveiled in a virtual summit that echoed through the economic cosmos. It vows to elevate bilateral trade to an astronomical \$100 billion in goods and \$15 billion in services within a tantalising five years. But the spotlight refuses to dim.

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

## How election results in Pakistan's Punjab serve impending threat to Sharif family

Almost all foreign observers of the February 8 Pakistani polls are focusing their attention almost exclusively on the results of the National Assembly election. At the same time, projections of what lies ahead in the country's political life require that close attention be given to the election results for the Punjab Assembly. It is not necessary that a party that rules Pakistan federally also has Punjab, which is Pakistan's most important province, under its control. Indeed, in the past, Punjab

has been in control of the party that sits on the opposition benches in the National Assembly. However, on such occasions, Punjab has been a thorn in the side of the Pakistani government. In the present political circumstances in Pakistan, it is certain that the coalition Pakistan Muslim League (Nawaz) (PML (N)) and Pakistan People's Party (PPP) are most likely to form at the federal level. Pakistan cannot remain stable unless the PML (N) and the army chief succeed in ensuring that the

Imran Khan-led Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) is kept out of power in Lahore.

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

Why is it so important that Imran Khan be kept out of power in Punjab? The answer lies in the province's significance in Pakistan's national life, especially its politics. Punjab is Pakistan's most populous province.

It has more seats in the National Assembly than the combined seats of the three others—Sindh, Khyber- and

Baluchistan—as well as the Islamabad Capital Territory (ICT). The total number of National Assembly general seats for which direct elections are held is 266. Out of these, Punjab has 141. Of the 60 women seats, which are decided on a proportional basis and allotted to parties that secure more than 5 per cent of the vote share in the national elections, Punjab has been allotted 32 seats. Indeed, it is the constant complaint of the other provinces that Punjab overshadows them all.



## MSCI raises Indian stocks' weightage to record high in key index

MSCI raises Indian stocks' weightage to record high in key index India's weightage in the index has nearly doubled since November 2020. It is currently at 17.9%.

MSCI announced an increase in India's representation in its Global Standard index to a record 18.2% on Tuesday, anticipated to bring about \$1.2 billion in inflows, as per analysts' estimates.

Following MSCI's February evaluation, this adjustment is set to take effect post the market's closure on February 29, a Reuters report said. Since November 2020, India's position in the index has seen a significant rise, currently standing at 17.9%.

Tata Motors and Macrotech Developers have been introduced to the MSCI Domestic Indexes as large-caps, with Punjab National Bank, Canara Bank, and Embassy Office Park REIT joining the mid-cap segment. Bharat Heavy Electricals, Persistent Systems, MRF, Suzlon Energy, and Cummins India were transitioned to the mid-cap index from



the small-cap category, and approximately 27 small-cap stocks were newly added to the MSCI Domestic Index, with six others being reclassified or removed. This elevation is largely credited to the continuous surge in India's stock market and the comparative lag in performance of other emerging markets, notably China, as stated by Nuvama Alternative & Quantitative Research. India now holds the second-largest weight in the MSCI Global Standard index, following China. Nuvama predicts that with ongoing investments from domestic institutions and active participation by foreign portfolio investors, India's share in the index could exceed 20% by the early months of 2024. In its recent update, MSCI included five new Indian compa-

nies in its Global Standard index, while choosing not to remove any. Conversely, it excluded 66 Chinese companies but added five. Punjab National Bank and Union Bank of India were included in the large-cap segment, while Bharat Heavy Electricals and NMDC were added in the mid-cap category. GMR Airports Infrastructure was reclassified to the mid-cap segment from the small-cap category. Nuvama projects that the February assessment could result in up to \$1.2 billion in passive foreign investments flowing into India. The MSCI Global Standard Index is a prominent stock index created by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) that represents large and mid-cap equity performance across 23 developed market countries.

## World stocks at two-year high, US inflation data in focus

LONDON: European stocks opened higher on Monday and world stocks were steady at their highest in more than two years, as investors waited for US inflation data due this week to give clues about when the US Federal Reserve might cut rates. The S&P 500 rose above 5,000 points for the first time ever last week, boosted by tech stocks, and world equities have risen for three weeks straight, even though US Treasury yields have edged higher recently as investors lower their expectations for how soon the Fed could cut rates.

With most major Asian markets closed for holidays, analysts said they expected a quiet day in markets as traders wait for US inflation data on Tuesday, as well as British inflation data and euro zone GDP on Wednesday. "We are seeing markets dialling back expectations for rate cuts," said UBS multi-asset strategist Kiran Ganesh, adding that markets were pricing fewer than five cuts in the US this year, down from six or seven at the start of the year. "The equity market has remained relatively immune to that because the reason

why we've seen less interest rate cuts expectations has been down to stronger economic growth which of course is good for equities as well." Strong US jobs data earlier in February meant investors reduced expectations for a Fed rate cut at its next meeting, with markets pricing an 84.5% chance of rates remaining unchanged in March. At 0857 GMT, the MSCI world equity index, which tracks shares in 47 countries, was flat on the day, having touched its highest since January 2022 earlier in the session.

## Oil prices near flat as demand worries offset Middle East risk

Oil prices were little changed on Tuesday for a second straight day as uncertainty about the pace of potential US interest rate cuts and the impact on fuel demand offset worries about Middle East tensions that could disrupt supply. Brent futures edged 1 cent lower

\$81.99 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude rose 1 cent to \$76.93 a barrel. On Monday, Israel freed two Israeli-Argentine hostages held by Hamas in Rafah in a ferocious rescue operation that killed 74 Palestinians in the southern Gaza city where about one million

civilians have sought refuge from months of bombardments. The New York Fed said its January Survey of Consumer Expectations showed the outlook for inflation a year and five years from now were unchanged, with both remaining above the Fed's 2% target rate.



## Mukesh Ambani-led Reliance Industries is now the first Indian stock to cross Rs 20 lakh crore market cap

In the past two weeks alone, the market value of RIL has increased by Rs 1 lakh crore. (AI image) RIL share price today: Reliance Industries (RIL), led by Mukesh Ambani, has become the first Indian listed company to surpass a market capitalization of Rs 20 lakh crore. The stock of RIL rose by 1.89% to reach a fresh 52-week high of Rs 2957.80 on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE). This Mumbai-based conglomerate, which operates in the oil-to-telecom sector, has been a significant creator of wealth in the Indian stock market. RIL achieved a market capitalization of Rs 1 lakh crore in August 2005, and it reached Rs 10 lakh crore in November 2019. With a market capitalization of Rs 20 lakh crore, RIL remains the most valued company in India, far ahead of other companies like TCS (Rs 15 lakh crore), HDFC Bank (Rs 10.5 lakh crore), ICICI Bank (Rs 7 lakh crore), and Infosys (Rs 7 lakh crore). Also Read | Top wealth creating stocks in India: Reliance tops biggest wealth creator list; Adani Enterprises bags first spot as all-round stock RIL's financial results for the December quarter were in line with market expectations. The company's O2C EBITDA dropped by 14% QoQ to Rs 140.6 billion due to maintenance activities and lower cracks & deltas. However, Jio's EBITDA increased by 1.4% QoQ to Rs 142.6 billion, and Retail EBITDA rose by 8% QoQ to Rs 62.7 billion. In Q3FY24, RIL's profit after tax stood at Rs 19,641 crore, a decrease of 1.2% QoQ but an increase of 10.3% YoY. This exceeded market expectations of Rs 18,080 crore. The PAT margin was 8.7% compared to 8.6% in the previous quarter. Morgan Stanley sees this earnings report as a positive turning point for RIL's investment cycle and energy profitability.

## Auto retail sales up 15% in January but high inventory remains a concern

NEW DELHI: Retail vehicle sales across India saw strong growth across all vehicle categories this January, with the overall market expanding by 15 per cent. Two-wheelers (2W) sales grew 15 per cent, followed by three-wheelers (3W) at 37 per cent, passenger vehicles (PV) at 13 per cent, tractors at 21 per cent and commercial vehicles (CV) at a modest 0.1 per cent. The Federation of Automobile Dealers Association, in a release Tuesday, said demand for two-wheelers stayed strong, fuelled by the rural



market. The two-wheeler segment is likely to benefit from the government's good crop production estimates and continued support for the rural economy, the Association said. The passenger vehicle segment achieved a

new all-time high in January, retailing 393,250 vehicles and surpassing the previous record set in November 2023. However, a persistent concern lies in high inventory levels, which still hover in the 50-55-day range, posing a challenge for auto

dealers. Sales in the tractor segment also saw a positive uptick after a slowdown in previous months, likely driven by anticipation of a good rabi crop output and favourable weather conditions for wheat cultivation. The Association asserted that the commercial vehicle segment might experience a slight demand taper in the fourth quarter due to a high base effect and upcoming elections. However, long-term fundamentals, it said, remain positive, with expectations of a post-election rebound.

## Vedanta Aluminium launches e-commerce platform

NEW DELHI: Vedanta Aluminium said it has launched an e-commerce platform for facilitating the sale of primary aluminium products. The e-commerce platform will provide buyers with just-in-time delivery, real-time AI-based price discovery, and end-to-end visibility of their purchase, from order placement to delivery. The company has listed over 750 aluminium products on the e-superstore, 'Vedanta Metal Bazaar'. The platform has integrated several global-first features, including

product availability, online price discovery, long-term contracts, on-the-spot orders, live shipment tracking, financial reconciliation, and all critical documentation like test certificates, bank guarantees, and letters of credit. Customers have the option to choose from a selection of channel finance and logistics providers to facilitate their procurement journey. "For small and medium-sized companies, this is going to be a real game changer," Vedanta Aluminium CEO John Slaven told

PTI. Further, Slaven termed the e-commerce platform as a breakthrough for the industry in India as it would help the company in serving its customers a full range of products. "Over 750 products are available and all aspects of the buying process from really identifying which products they want, understanding pricing, which is a very complex and dynamic process, and then everything from negotiating the contract, documenting, and then managing the logistics... and then delivery to

the to their site. And then for financial reconciliation, all of that can be done on this platform," he added. Products on offer include ingots, billets, primary foundry alloy, wire rods, rolled products, flip coils, hot metal, and Restora -- low-carbon aluminium. In addition, the superstore also offers customised solutions tailored to the needs of the company's customer base. Vedanta Aluminium, a business of Vedanta Ltd, manufactured 2.29 million tonne of aluminium in FY23.

## Retail traders are losing billions in India's booming options market

In India, retail investors account for 35% of options trading, while institutions, aiming to mitigate risk or generate profits for their companies, manage the remainder. This trend has regulators concerned as ordinary individuals are steering away from traditional wealth-building methods like long-term investments in stocks and mutual funds, opting instead for speculative trading. Like a movie star at a premiere, Mohammad Nasiruddin Ansari steps out of the back seat of a white Mercedes. Flanked by a phalanx of black-clad bodyguards, he strides into the lobby of a luxury hotel and takes center stage in a ballroom as indoor fireworks machines spew fountains of sparks. "If you don't make money in three months, I will give you 2 million rupees [\$24,000]," he declares



to cheers from the adoring crowd in a scene that's still playing on YouTube. Ansari is meeting his fans in Pune, about 90 miles south of Mumbai. He's selling the dream of stock market riches to India's fast-growing cadre of small investors. With half a million social media followers, he's pushing an especially risky strategy: trading stock options, often as all-or-nothing bets on future share prices. In 2023, Indian investors traded 85 billion options -contracts, more than anywhere else in the world.

The country has topped the charts since

2019, when it first overtook the US in the volume of annual trades. (The US still buys and sells the most by dollar value.)

At conferences like Ansari's, promoters, or influencers, encourage the rank and file to get their piece of one of the world's best-performing economies and stock markets. Video courses flood the internet with catchy titles: "Become a PRICE ACTION Beast." "Easy Options." "Options Trading Tricks." "Best Scalping Strategy Ever." "Become a Supply & Demand 'SNIPER'."

In India retail investors make up 35% of options trades. Institutions, seeking to hedge their risk or profit for their companies' accounts, handle the rest. Regulators are alarmed that regular folk are bypassing the tried-and-true way to build wealth: buying and holding stocks and mutual funds.

## Real-time payment service between India and US banks soon?

Real-time payment service between India and US banks soon? NPCI in talks for linking NPCI is working with Indian and foreign banks to explore potential partnerships. The National Payments Corporation of India (NPCI) and banks in the US and India are in advanced discussions to establish a real-time payment link between the two countries, according to sources familiar with the matter. The initiative aims to leverage NPCI's expertise in cross-border payment systems. NPCI is collaborating with Indian banks experienced in the unified payments interface (UPI) system and foreign banks to develop models and conduct pilot tests, sources told. NPCI is working with Indian and foreign banks to explore potential partnerships. They are engaging with



FedNow or its UPI equivalent and seeking involvement from major US banks to facilitate testing and use-case development. The process is well underway, one source stated. NPCI - US and India tie-up NPCI - US and India tie-up FedNow, launched by the US Federal Reserve in July 2023, is a real-time payment service. NPCI has not responded to queries as of press time. The current focus is on establishing connectivity to ensure the feasibility of any future

collaboration, another source added. The proposed payment model between the US and India would initially focus on small consumer transactions due to the absence of a nationwide system in the US akin to India's UPI, sources revealed. It's real-time, so the transactions would be limited in scale and value. They plan to start with modest payments. Currently, the US lacks a UPI equivalent but has alternatives like Paytm-style wallet and FedNow, stated one source.

Also Read | Paytm Payments Bank crisis: RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das makes big statement on scope to review action US banks aim to collaborate with the proposed NPCI model and American authorities to capitalize on existing capabilities, especially concerning consumer wallets used for payments. Additionally, significant local banks in both countries would play a crucial role in facilitating consumer payments flows between the US and India. "If you want to send or receive money from a relative under the model, you can't do it through a foreign bank which is not a consumer bank in India. It would need to be done through a large Indian bank. In the US, a person can use an American bank to send or receive money from here.

## The \$10 billion mistake that will revive Canadian oil

For the last decade, the Canadian oil industry has experienced firsthand the meaning of "with friends like these, you need enemies." To its south is an obvious export route and a huge client: the US. But American courts and politicians blocked new oil pipelines, strangling the industry to the north. The bottleneck has cost Canadian oil companies billions of dollars in forgone revenue, delaying the industry's growth. With existing pipelines full, any extra barrels have had to move via costly railway, depressing their value. At the worst point in late 2018, Canadian crude sold at a discount of \$50 a barrel less than American petroleum. After years in the wilderness, the Canadian oil sector has now solution. It's an expensive one, however. At a cost of C\$35 billion (\$26 billion), the government, rather than the private sector, has built a pipeline linking the oil fields in Alberta with a port near Vancouver on the Pacific coast.



## Prince William 'furious' over Prince Harry's 'PR stunt': Royal Expert

Prince William is reportedly fuming over his brother Prince Harry's whirlwind trip across the Atlantic to visit their cancer-stricken father, King Charles. According to royal expert Ingrid Seward, the Duke of Sussex's lightning-fast 24-hour visit to London, with less than an hour spent with their ailing father, has left William irked. Seward spilled the royal tea, claiming that Prince Charles sees Harry's trip as nothing more than a "PR opportunity" and has "absolutely no interest" in reconciliation. The royal expert told to The Sun, "William would be upset that Harry yet again has chosen to make this visit to see his father a PR opportunity." Discover the thrill of cricket like never before, exclusively on HT. Explore now! "As far as William is concerned, he has absolutely no interest in speaking to Harry until Harry behaves



like a gentleman and apologizes for the years of rudeness and slurs he has aimed at William and the Princess of Wales," Seward added. The royal author, known for the 2003 biography "William & Harry," suggested that Prince William must be "privately furious" that Harry used the visit as "an opportunity to announce his arrival and expect to see William." Seward criticized Harry's seemingly impulsive nature and argued that he "should have waited for a week or two" before making the visit. Prince Harry didn't meet ailing Kate

Middleton The plot thickens as it's revealed that Harry did not meet with his estranged brother or sister-in-law Kate Middleton during his brief stint in England. The tensions seem to be escalating in the royal family drama. The Post reached out to Kensington Palace for comment, awaiting a response to this royal bombshell. The controversial visit comes amidst reports that Prince Harry stayed at a luxury London hotel rather than one of the royal residences, prompting speculation about financial independence.

## Hamas-Gaza war to pause? US President Joe announces new strategic move

The U.S. President has indicated a potential resolution to the ongoing Hamas-Israel war by indicating that he is actively working to broker a deal between the two conflicting factions. Biden, after a meeting with Jordanian King Abdullah II, has expressed the possibility of a six-week pause in fighting to facilitate the release of additional hostages held by Hamas.

"The key elements of the deal are on the table," Biden said alongside the king, though "there are gaps that remain." He said the US would do "everything possible" to make an agreement happen: a pause to fighting for at least six weeks and the release of the remaining hostages held by Hamas. **The proposed Gaza war peace deal** The proposed deal aims to address the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, with about 100 hostages still held by Hamas out of the 240 were taken during the October 7 attack. About 100 of them were released during a previ-



ous ceasefire in November, and militants are believed to be holding the remains of more than 30 others, most of whom died in the Oct. 7 attacks. Biden said he has spoken to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, as well as leaders of Qatar and Egypt, "to push this forward." The President, facing criticism for his support of Israel, also highlighted the tragic loss of innocent lives in both Gaza and Israel. He repeated his warning that Israel must not launch a full-scale attack on Rafah, the last major holdout of Hamas where more than 1.3 million people. "Too many of the over 27,000 Palestinians killed in this conflict have been innocent civilians including thousands of

children," Biden said. "And hundreds of thousands have no access to food, water and other basic services. Many families have lost not just one, but many relatives, and cannot mourn for them, even bury them, because it's not safe to do so." "We cannot afford an Israeli attack on Rafah" During the meeting, King Abdullah II emphasized the need for a lasting ceasefire, stating that the war must end. He praised Biden's leadership in addressing the conflict and called for immediate action to prevent another humanitarian catastrophe. The U.S. administration has been engaged in diplomatic efforts, and a framework for the deal is reportedly in place. The focus is on achieving a temporary pause in the conflict, delivering humanitarian aid, and securing the release of hostages. Biden's stance represents a shift, as he had previously opposed a permanent ceasefire and insisted on preventing Hamas from retaining control over Gaza.

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

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

## China's doom loop: a dramatically smaller population could create a devastating global slowdown

There are two trends that underline such a demographic shift. First is the ageing population with the percentage of those aged 60 and older currently above 20% of the total population. Second, birth rates have dropped significantly, from 17.86 million births in 2016 to 9.02 million in 2023. Several interrelated economic consequences of such shifts could emerge which ultimately can affect China's economic wellbeing in the mid-to-long term and resonate

globally. More than one-quarter of China's population will be over 60 by 2040 and so less economically active (retirement age for men is 60 and for women it's 50-55). This will put pressure on China's pension and elderly care systems with some predictions indicating that the pension system could be bankrupted by 2035. To avoid pension-related issues straining public resources, possible scenarios include raising the retirement age to get people to work for

longer, increasing taxes to cover additional pension requirements and shrinking current benefits. Changes in the healthcare system to cope with population changes could leave the many people feeling less well off or unhappy with services being reduced. This in turn could result in some degree of political instability. In addition, as the dependency of the elderly on their children increases, household consumption, savings and investment levels are likely to

decline, which in turns negatively affects the overall health of the economy.

**Labour force reductions** As older workers retire, there will be fewer people of working age in the total population, and therefore available to work.

Taking measures to help older people continue to work for longer, for example, could become fundamental to long-term economic growth and to sustain the levels of GDP per capita.

## Most watched event ever! Super Bowl 2024 smashes all records, all thanks to Taylor, Travis & touchdowns

Kansas City Chiefs fan Porschae Oglesby reacts after a play during a Super Bowl 58 watch party at the Power and Light District, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo. (AP Photo/Peter Aiken)(AP) Kansas City Chiefs fan Porschae Oglesby reacts after a play during a Super Bowl 58 watch party at the Power and Light District, Sunday, Feb. 11, 2024, in Kansas City, Mo. (AP Photo/Peter Aiken)(AP) Preliminary ratings reveal an astounding



123.4 million fans tuned in on CBS to witness quarterback Patrick Mahomes' epic game-winning touchdown pass to Mecole Hardman, clinching Kansas City's second consecutive Lombardi Trophy and

their third in the last five years. Tuesday's awaited final Nielsen data is expected to confirm the record-breaking viewership, which skyrocketed, especially during the fourth quarter when the Chiefs rallied for a game-

tying field goal, forcing the thrilling game into overtime. Last year's viewership record, set at over 115 million during the Chiefs vs. Eagles showdown, has been left in the dust by this year's colossal Super Bowl LVIII. CBS and the NFL are proudly flaunting the incredible ratings, boasting that the Chiefs vs. 49ers clash has triumphed over last year's game, with a staggering 123.4 MILLION fans glued to their screens for football, Taylor Swift, or both!

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

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



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

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

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

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

Gosal is leading a protest outside the Indian consulate in Toronto on February 17, to mark the eighth month since Nijjar was



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

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

## Whereabouts of Venezuelan human rights attorney

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



## Sarfraz or Devdutt ? Kuldeep or Axar? India's selection headaches for 3rd Test

India's concern over the batting lineup for the third Test against England deepened after senior batter KL Rahul was ruled out on Monday as he failed to recover from the quadriceps pain he incurred during the Hyderabad game. With Rahul missing out and questions unanswered on Ravindra Jadeja's fitness and subsequent availability for the Rajkot game, India's team management will have a hard time figuring out their XI for the match where they will aim to take lead against England for the first time in this five-match series. **Will Ravindra Jadeja start?** BCCI's press release on Rahul being ruled out of the third Test had no update on Jadeja, whose participation has been subject to clearance from the board's medical team, although it has been reported that he linked up with the team in Rajkot on Monday. BCCI's medical team questioned



after India star's 3rd Test rule out. If Jadeja is fit, he straightaway walks into the playing XI, implying that one between all-rounder Axar Patel and left-arm leg-spinner Kuldeep Yadav will sit out. Given their performance in the second Test in Visakhapatnam, Kuldeep, who was the more economical among the spinners, and picked up a crucial three-fer in the first innings, is likely to maintain his spot in the XI. If Jadeja misses out, there will be no changes in the spin department, with Kuldeep, Axar and

Ravichandran Ashwin keeping their spots. **Will Sarfraz Khan make his debut?** When Shreyas Iyer was removed from the India squad for the last three Tests against England, following his poor run of form in format, Rahul was expected to take over the role in the XI. But with the veteran batter getting ruled out, Sarfraz is the likely candidate for the role, which implies that the youngster is all set to earn his maiden Test cap in Rajkot, having waited a long time for this opportunity with consistent scores in the Ranji Trophy over the last few seasons.

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

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



for the final three Tests against England. Shreyas Iyer was dropped from the team, following a string of poor returns with the bat, but Jadeja and Rahul were added to the list, although their participation was subject to fitness clearance from BCCI's medical team. Jadeja had incurred a hamstring injury during the first Test in Hyderabad, and Rahul complained of quadriceps

pain after the match, subsequently leading to both the senior players getting ruled out of the second game in Visakhapatnam. Rahul, however, failed to recover in time for the Rajkot Test as the batter will continue his rehabilitation at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru before returning for the final two Tests. "Rahul has reached 90 per cent of match fitness and is progressing well under the supervision of the BCCI Medical Team. He will continue his recovery process at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru to be completely match-fit for the fourth and fifth Test," read the BCCI statement.

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

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

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

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

## Stokes and Co's historic chartered flight landing hits immigration roadblock in Rajkot

The Ben Stokes-led England side returned to India on Monday after spending 10 days in Abu Dhabi. Their arrival in Rajkot ahead of the third Test match against India, however, was full of events. Leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed was stopped by immigration officers at the Hirasar Airport for carrying the wrong visa. He was the only member of the 31-man England contingent



to have visa issues in Rajkot. He arrived with a single-entry visa which does not allow a person to leave India and re-enter. The youngster was allowed after a

temporary visa was issued and the BCCI and ECB officials were confident that the issue would be resolved in the next 24 hours. This won't have any

bearing on Rehan practising with the England squad. This is the second visa-related issue of an England player during this tour. A couple of weeks ago, off-spinner Shoaib Bashir had to go back to London to complete the formalities before entering India. He missed the series opener in Hyderabad but made his debut in the second Test in Visakhapatnam.

## 'Auraton ke bodies ke baare mein...': Sanjana shuts down troll calling her 'moti'

Renowned sports broadcaster Sanjana Ganesan's no-nonsense attitude towards troll hit a new peak when she mercilessly shut down a troll who was fat-shaming her. On a promotional Valentine's Day video posted on her Instagram handle, Ganesan, wife of Indian cricketer Jasprit Bumrah, did not take kindly at all when a user called her fat as she took him down with a brutal reply. Ganesan follows a huge fanbase on



Instagram, her popularity soaring to greater heights since becoming a TV sports anchor during India's cricket series at both home and abroad, but

everytime it comes to online shaming or trolling, Ganesan does not care, and has time and again dished out booming replies. So two days ago, when a

user commented on her Valentine's Day post, co-shared by Bumrah, "Bhabhi moti lag rahi hain" (She looks a little fat), Ganesan did not hold back "School ki science textbook toh yaad hoti nahi hai tumse, bada auraton ke bodies ke baare mein comment kar raho ho. Bhaago yaha se. This loosely translates into "You can't even remember school science textbooks; how dare you comment on women's bodies. Run away."

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

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



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

built an impressive resume in red-ball cricket. In the 31 first class matches that he has played thus far, Padikkal has scored 2227 runs at an average of 44.54 with six centuries and 12 half-centuries. He has been in particularly good form this season, scoring 556 runs at an average of 92.66 in four matches. He has also scored three centuries in the six innings he has played, getting a three-figure score every time he crossed 50. In Karnataka's fifth round fixture against Tamil Nadu in Chennai that finished in a draw on Monday.

## Gilchrist reacts to MS Dhoni's new bat sticker

The IPL 2024 is still more than a month away but the tournament has already picked up steam thanks to the one and only MS Dhoni. The Chennai Super Kings captain, for whom the 16th edition of the Indian Premier League promises to be his last, has started training in the nets in his vintage long locks, and as is the case with Dhoni, it's enough to send the internet community into a complete meltdown. Dhoni, in yellow, with bat and pads, in full flow. For people of the 'Yellow' army, this is what dreams are made of. However, for the first time, Dhoni's bat made more news than the man himself. Last week, a picture of Dhoni training with a new 'Prime Sports' sticker was all the rage. It was a tribute from Dhoni to his childhood friend Paramjit Singh, who owns a sports company of that name, a fact very well and beautifully documented in the legendary India cricketer's biopic 'MS Dhoni, the Untold story'. As Dhoni approaches the end of his cricket career, the former India captain used the sticker as a heart-warming gesture to Paramjit, who played a key role in his journey, including getting MSD his first bat sponsor.



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

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

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

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



## After Ram temple consecration, Prime Minister visiting Kashi for the first time should receive an unprecedented welcome: CM Yogi

**Varanasi**  
Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath commenced his two-day visit to Varanasi on Tuesday, where he diligently inspected the development projects slated for inauguration and foundation laying by Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Arriving in Varanasi around 4 pm, the Chief Minister wasted no time and headed straight to Banas Kashi Sankul in Karkhianv via road from Lal Bahadur Shastri International Airport. Here, he meticulously assessed the Amul plant built at a cost of about Rs 475 crore on thirty acres of land. After this, the



Chief Minister directly reached the Circuit House, where the Chief Minister held a review meeting of the ongoing development projects in Varanasi. Yogi Adityanath visited Banas Kashi Sankul amidst adverse weather conditions to inspect the plant. It's significant as Prime Minister Narendra

Modi is set to inaugurate several development projects, including the Amul plant, during his upcoming visit to Varanasi in February, promising increased employment opportunities in the region.

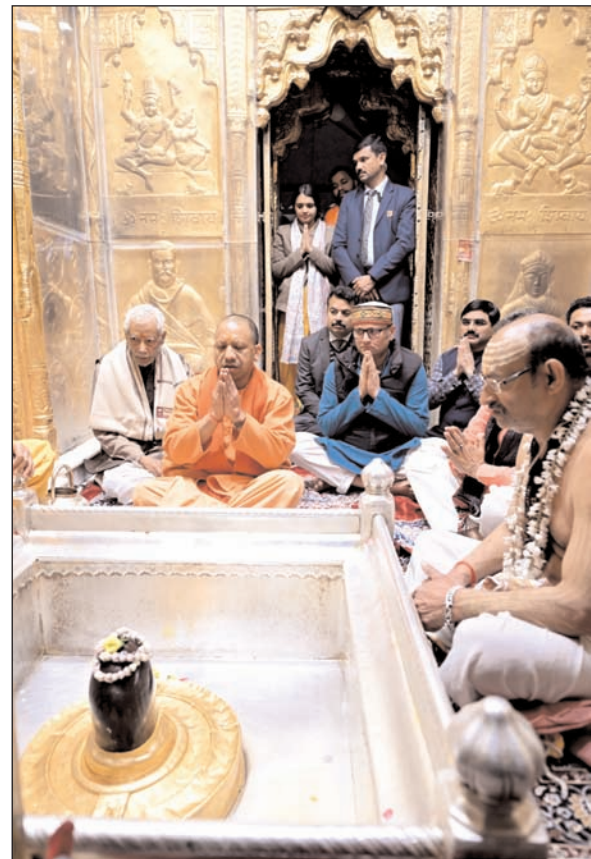
Ahead of the Prime Minister's upcoming visit, Chief Minister Adityanath issued clear instructions to ensure

the thorough cleanliness and beautification of both the city and its roads. He emphasized the imperative of maintaining pristine roads, devoid of filth and stray animals, with pothole-free surfaces and adequate lighting. Additionally, he stressed the importance of upholding safety, security, and efficient traffic management during the event. Highlighting the significance of the Prime Minister's visit, particularly following the Pran Pratishtha ceremony in Ayodhya, Chief Minister Adityanath underscored the need for a grand and meticulous-

ly organized program, assigning responsibilities to all relevant departments. During the meeting, Commissioner Kaushal Raj Sharma provided Chief Minister Adityanath with an overview of the preparations for the inauguration and foundation stone laying ceremony. Police Commissioner Ashok Mutha Jain briefed the Chief Minister on road diversions, security arrangements, and traffic management plans for the Prime Minister's visit. Chief Minister Adityanath urged for the timely and responsible execution of these arrangements.

## CM Yogi worships at Kashi Vishwanath Temple

**Varanasi/Lucknow**  
Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath visited Kaal Bhairav temple in Varanasi to offer prayers on Tuesday. He also performed rituals at the Kashi Vishwanath temple, praying for the well-being of Uttar Pradesh. Furthermore, he visited the Sankat Mochan temple, where he met with Mahant Vishambhar Nath Mishra and expressed his condolences for the death of Mahant Ji's mother recently. CM Yogi also took stock of the preparations for the proposed visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. It is noteworthy that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will visit his parliamentary constituency Varanasi. During this visit, the Prime Minister will lay the foundation stones of and inaugurate sever-



al projects. CM meets Bhairav and the Shri family members of Kashi Vishwanath Mahant of Sankat Dham. Upon reaching the temple, he performed rituals and wished for the 'properous Uttar Pradesh'.

## Yogi govt to collaborate with IIT Roorkee for enhanced disaster management

**Lucknow**  
In a strategic move aimed at bolstering disaster preparedness and mitigation efforts, the Yogi government is set to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with IIT Roorkee for enhanced disaster management. The MoU will be signed between the Relief Commissioner's office and IIT Roorkee on the instructions of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath with the aim to minimize casualties and shift people to safe places before the disaster strikes. Under the proposed col-

laboration, IIT Roorkee's seasoned professionals will impart specialized training to personnel at the Relief Commissioner's office, equipping them with advanced skills and techniques in disaster management. Additionally, the institute will conduct comprehensive research to identify the root causes of prevalent disasters, enabling proactive measures to be implemented. Chief Secretary Sudhir Garg emphasized Uttar Pradesh's vulnerability to various disasters, compared to other

states, and highlighted Chief Minister Yogi's proactive stance on addressing this pressing issue. The impending MoU signifies a significant step towards fortifying the state's resilience against natural calamities over the next five years, during which IIT Roorkee's experts will spearhead critical research initiatives and capacity-building exercises. Moreover, IIT Roorkee's involvement extends beyond disaster management to include assistance in land consolidation matters.

## Yogi govt set to organize 4-day International Arogya-24 meet from February 22

**Lucknow**  
The Yogi government is set to host the prestigious four-day International Arogya 2024 conference, themed 'AYUSH for One Health', aimed at spotlighting the transformative shifts within the AYUSH sector and fortifying public health. Scheduled to commence on February 22 at Awadh Shilpgram, the event will encompass international exhibitions and conferences showcasing advancements in the AYUSH domain, with participation from representatives hailing from over 60 nations.

Leena Johari, Secretary of the Department of AYUSH, expressed that the International Arogya 2024 conference seeks to bolster public health endeavors, advocate AYUSH practices, and foster awareness among citizens. The event is jointly organized by the Ministry of AYUSH, Government of India, and the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI). Under the overarching theme 'AYUSH

for One Health,' the conference aims to spotlight the efficacy and scientific validation of traditional Indian medical systems, including Ayurveda, Yoga, Naturopathy, Unani, Siddha, Sowa-Rigpa, and Homeopathy (AYUSH). This platform endeavors to propel the global promotion, development, and acceptance of AYUSH medicine through comprehensive discussions across various sessions. Notably, the Ministry of AYUSH is actively spearheading initiatives for the advancement of the health and wellness sector. In collaboration with the World Health Organization, the Ministry has achieved a significant milestone with the release of ICD 11, Chapter 26, Module 2. Prime Minister Narendra Modi acknowledged this global achievement in his 'Mann Ki Baat' address on January 28. The International Arogya 2024 conference aims to provide a global platform for collaboration and innovation in the realm of overall health and wellness.

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

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

## GBC@IV: Uttar Pradesh set to emerge as a renewable energy powerhouse

**Eight** renewable energy production projects will be launched in Uttar Pradesh to become a 'power surplus state' through GBC@IV. Lucknow, February 13. Uttar Pradesh is set to emerge as a renewable energy powerhouse in future with Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led government gearing up to launch eight projects at

the cost of Rs 67,000 crore during the upcoming Groundbreaking Ceremony@4 (GBC@4). The electricity will be generated through Pumped Storage Projects (PSP), which promises to usher in a green energy revolution, solidifying Uttar Pradesh's position as a trailblazer in renewable energy

innovation. The move also seeks to make Uttar Pradesh self-reliant in the field of power generation and a power surplus state. It is worth mentioning here that the GBC@4 will be inaugurated by Prime Minister Narendra Modi on February 19 and see implementation of projects worth Rs 10 lakh crore in diverse sectors.

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

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

24, driven by resilient domestic demand despite risks and uncertainties in the global economic landscape, according to a review of the economy unveiled on Monday. It also said India can aspire to become a \$7 trillion economy in the next six-seven years (by 2030) asserting that this would be a significant milestone in the journey to delivering quality of life and standard of living that match and exceed the aspirations of the Indian people.

"If the prognosis for FY25 turns out to be right, that will mark the fourth year post-pandemic that the Indian economy will have grown.

## GBC@IV is a medium to accelerate industrial development across the nation: Yogi

**Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath** held an important meeting on Tuesday to assess the arrangements for the upcoming 'Groundbreaking Ceremony@IV' (GBC@IV) scheduled for February 19-21. In this pivotal meeting convened with Additional Chief Secretaries of various departments, Principal Secretaries, and CEOs of development authorities, the Chief Minister diligently scrutinized department-wise and district-wise investment proposals and gave necessary guidelines for the successful organization of GBC@IV. UP Global Investors Summit was successfully organized



from February 10-12, 2023, under the guidance of respected Prime Minister Narendra Modi. The summit saw enthusiastic participation of 10 country partners, more than 1000 foreign representatives from 40 countries, 4 ministers of partner countries, 17 Union ministers, ambassadors/high commission-

ers, and more than 25000 delegates, including national and international investors and other dignitaries. This event is going to prove to be an important milestone towards fulfilling the aspirations and expectations of the youth as well as elevating Uttar Pradesh to a \$1 trillion economy. Industrial investment

proposals of Rs 39.52 lakh crore were received through the three-day Global Investors Summit, which was preceded by holding of Investors Conference in all 75 districts of the state and road shows in 21 cities of 16 countries across the world and 10 cities within the country. Uttar Pradesh is fully prepared to execute these proposals, which are anticipated to generate 1.10 crore jobs/employment opportunities for the youth of the state. A three-day groundbreaking ceremony is going to be organized at Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Lucknow, from February 19-21.



## JK Cement extends support to Yogi govt's commitment to create jobs through GBC@4.0. GBC@4.0 aims to generate 33.50 lakh jobs in UP

**CM Yogi's** visionary approach of GBC@4.0 garners attention of industrialists nationwide. Lucknow, February 13. As Uttar Pradesh, under the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, sets its sights on creating 33.50 lakh employment opportunities through the ambitious launch of projects worth Rs 10 lakh crore during the upcoming Ground Breaking Ceremony@4.0 (GBC), the support and commitment from industry stalwarts like JK Cement Limited herald a promising era of economic growth and prosperity. Scheduled to unfold at the Indira Gandhi Pratishthan, Lucknow, from February 19 to 21, the GBC@4.0 marks a pivotal milestone in the state's journey towards realizing its developmental aspirations. It is noteworthy that Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's industry-friendly steps have garnered him widespread backing from prominent industrialists nationwide. Among them, JK Cement Limited, a leading name in India's cement manufacturing landscape, has emerged as a steadfast partner in the state's transformative agenda. Madhavkrishna Singhania, Deputy Managing Director and CEO of JK Cement Limited, is set to actively participate in GBC@IV, underscoring the company's steadfast commitment to fostering long-term developmental initiatives in Uttar Pradesh, with a special emphasis on amplifying employment opportunities within the state. Fostering employment and empowerment. Madhavkrishna Singhania expressed, "As a socially responsible organization, we recognize the pivotal role businesses play in driving economic growth and advancing social welfare. Guided by this ethos, JK Cement has initiated numerous endeavors aimed at fostering sustainable employment opportunities and empowering the local workforce." He highlighted that the company's commitment extends beyond mere business operations to encompass active engagement in areas such as education, healthcare, and environmental sustainability. Singhania emphasized Uttar Pradesh's dynamic industrial landscape, abundant resources, and skilled workforce, positioning it as a prime destination for JK Cement's future endeavors. "As we tread this path of empowerment, our unwavering commitment to effecting tangible improvements in the lives of the people of Uttar Pradesh remains steadfast. Together, we can forge a brighter future brimming with boundless opportunities for all," added Singhania. Driving multifaceted progress. Singhania reiterated JK Cement's firm belief in multidimensional progress. "As India embarks on accelerated infrastructure development to sustain robust economic growth, JK Cement remains at the vanguard, expanding its capacity to meet the burgeoning demands arising from the infrastructure, housing, and construction sectors".