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## Qatar Open : Osaka edges Martic; Tsurenko upsets Jabeur

Naomi Osaka scored a second-round 6-3, 7-6(9) win over Croatia's Petra Martic and earned her back-to-back victories at a WTA Tour event for the first time in 23 months. **12**



## NMDC delivers strong Q3 and gM Performance in FY24

Yet again India's largest Iron Ore Producer, NMDC delivered a strong financial and physical performance in Q3 FY24. Surpassing its previous record, the mining major registered 45%... **02**



## Indian banks face a slowdown in growth and profit margins as deposits lag

Indian banks face a slowdown in growth and profit margins as deposits lag despite higher interest rates. In the 2023 October-to-December quarter, most major banks reported income... **07**



## Cong picks Renuka Chowdhury, Anil Kumar Yadav as Rajya Sabha candidates from Telangana

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (NSS): The All India Congress Committee (AICC) on Wednesday officially announced Renuka Chowdhury and Anil Kumar Yadav its Rajya Sabha candidates from Telangana. The biennial Rajya Sabha polls are scheduled for February 27. AICC President Mallikarjun Kharge has approved the names of former union minister Renuka Chowdhury and former MP Anjan

Kumar Yadav's son Anil Kumar Yadav in this regard. However, surprised by everyone, the Congress high command has decided to give two seats from Telangana to leaders from the State. Anil Kumar Yadav's name has come to the fore exceptionally in the case of Rajya Sabha Members. It seems that the Congress leadership has given Anil Kumar an opportunity to impress the youth.

## If KCR is honest, he should participate in debate on Kaleshwaram project : CM Revanth

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (IANS) : The Telangana Assembly on Wednesday witnessed a stormy debate between the ruling Congress and BRS MLAs over former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao's derogatory remarks against

Chief Minister Revanth Reddy during a public meeting held in Nalgonda. When the Assembly session began on discussing the vote-on-account budget, the war of words were exchanged between Congress and BRS MLAs in the House. **Continued on pg 02**



## BRS leaders didn't learn any lesson : Rajagopal

Hyderabad, Feb.14 (NSS): Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy alleged that BRS leaders didn't learn any lesson despite their party being defeated in the recent Assembly elections.

Taking part in the discussion on the vote-on-account budget in the Assembly on Wednesday, Rajagopal Reddy found fault with the misbehaviour of BRS MLA KT Rama Rao towards BC Welfare Minister Ponnab Prabhakar in the Assembly.



## Those comments should be expunged from records : KTR



Hyderabad, Feb 14 (IANS) : BRS party MLA K Tarakarama Rao today demanded that assembly Speaker Gaddam Prasad Kumar delete the objectionable comments made by Congress MLA Komatireddy Rajagopal Reddy against their party MLA Kadiyam Srihari, who is a senior Dalit leader of the party. He asked the Speaker to remove the comments from the assembly records. KTR made it clear that all the 119 members of the House have the same right. "Whenever members of the ruling party ask for a speech, they are getting the mic," he alleged and added that they were not being given the mic. He appealed to the Speaker to treat everyone in the same manner. **Continued on pg 02**

## Kadiyam Srihari slams govt



Hyderabad, Feb 14 (IANS) : Station Ghanpur MLA Kadiyam Srihari has urged the Congress government not to make issue over the Kaleswaram project.

Speaking during the debate in the Assembly on Vote on account Budget, he said many reservoirs came from the ambitious Kaleswaram project and added that they had built many projects in connection with it. He said the storage capacity of water had increased due to the Kaleswaram project. He said the State turned prosperous with the Kaleswaram waters and added that large scale crops were grown in Telangana now with the Kaleswaram waters.



## I will take over as CM if Revanth fails to solve water problems: Harish Rao

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (IANS) : Former minister and BRS party MLA T. Harish Rao today urged the government to take up the restoration work of the Kaleswaram project and provide irrigation water to the farmers so that they do not suffer any loss. He alleged that the government was not taking care of it. He said he was ready to take over as CM of the State if CM Revanth Reddy was not able to solve the problem in Kaleswaram project. "Even though there is a possibility of lifting water,

those steps are not being taken. If they can't, Revanth should resign. I will take oath as CM and solve the problem," Harish Rao said. Speaking to mediapersons at Telangana Bhavan.

## Maheshwar Reddy is BJLP leader in assembly

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (NSS) : The BJP took a decision today and chose Nirmal MLA Maheshwar Reddy as BJLP leader. Adilabad MLA Payal Shankar and Kamareddy MLA Venkataramana Reddy have been appointed as Deputy Floor Leaders. The BJP appointed Palvai Harish as the party's Chief Whip in the assembly. Nizamabad Urban MLA Dhanpal Suryanarayana Gutta was appointed as Whip. **Continued on pg 02**



## Govt not taken steps to implement six guarantees : MLC Kavitha

Hyderabad, Feb.14 (NSS): BRS party MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha criticized the State government for not taking steps to implement six guarantees through this budget and added that there was total self-praise and reproach in the budget. "The CM is not listening to the public voice. Delhi's voice is being heard. The CM, who attended the prajavani on a single day, is going to Delhi twice a week. Why the new government is continuing with the old methods," she asked.

Speaking on a discussion on the interim budget for 2024-25 held in the legislative council on Wednesday, Kavitha demanded that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy should withdraw his remarks that tarnished the prestige and dignity of the council. "It is unfortunate that the government did not respond even though we



had stalled the House. The Chief Minister should explain why he made those remarks. The government has not been able to say what will be done to the people in the first year of the budget, which will lay the foundation stone for the next five years," she said.

## Kishan to lay stone for Komuravelli (H) Railway station today

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (IANS) : G. Kishan Reddy, Union Minister of Culture & Tourism, will lay foundation stone for the construction of Komuravelli (H) Railway station on Thursday. Konda Surekha, Minister of Environment & Forests, Ponnab Prabhakar, Minister of Transport and BC Welfare, V. Roja Radhakrishna Sharma, Chairperson, Zilla Praja Parishad, Siddipet; K. Raghotham Reddy, MLC; T. Jeevan Reddy, MLC, V. Yadava Reddy.



## One-year jail for Tollywood producer Bandla Ganesh in cheque bounce case

Amaravati, Feb 14 (IANS) : A court in Andhra Pradesh has sentenced actor-producer and politician Bandla Ganesh to one-year imprisonment in a cheque bounce case. Second Additional Munsiff Magistrate in Ongole on Wednesday pronounced the orders in the case, awarding one-year jail. Bandla Ganesh had

issued a cheque of Rs 95 lakh to one J. Venkateshwarlu towards loan repayment. When Venkateshwarlu deposited the cheque in the bank, it bounced due to lack of sufficient funds in Bandla Ganesh's account.

If KCR is honest, he should participate in debate on Kaleshwaram project : CM Revanth

Continued From pg 01 Chief Minister Revanth Reddy expressed anger at the language used by BRS chief KCR in Nalgonda and challenged him by saying, "Are you ready to discuss Kaleshwaram project?"

NMDC delivers strong Q3 and 9M Performance in FY24

Hyderabad, Feb 14 (TIM Bureau) : Yet again India's largest Iron Ore Producer, NMDC delivered a strong financial and physical performance in Q3 FY24. Surpassing its previous record, the mining major registered 45% and 64% increase in turnover and PBT (after exceptional expenditure) respectively over CPLY in the third quarter. Setting new benchmarks with its exceptional performance, NMDC recorded its highest ever production and sales volume with 12.22 MT and selling 11.39 MT in the third quarter of FY24, marking a growth of 15% and 19% in production and sales respectively over corresponding period last year. NMDC's turnover and PBT (after exceptional expenditure) for Q3 FY24 is Rs. 5,410 crore and Rs.2,000 crore, with an increase of 45% in turnover and 64% in PBT over CPLY.

While the Profit After Tax (PAT) for Q3 FY24 increased by 68% to Rs.1,492 crores. The 9 months cumulative production stood at 31.78 MT and sales figure reached 31.94 MT. With its exceptional 9 month cumulative production and sales since company inception, NMDC has entered the fourth quarter of FY24 on a strong momentum. Cumulative figures have soared by 19% in production and 24% in sales over CPLY. NMDC has also declared 1st Interim Dividend of Rs 5.75 per share which is 575% of face value of Rs 1 per share.

Commenting on the performance, Shri Amitava Mukherjee CMD (Additional Charge) said, "The steel demand in India is rapidly growing and is expected to continue its upward momentum, directly aligning with the overall GDP growth. To match the increased demand for steel, NMDC has been ramping up its production capacity and is creating a secure supply channel to meet the domestic demands of the industry. The company's financial and physical figures demonstrates



our prudent investments in technology and innovation that are reaping us high returns."

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Additional PRO who met Rajanna Sirisilla

District Collector Anurag Jayanthi

As well as officers of various departments

Rajanna Sirisilla, Feb 14 (TIM Bureau) : Many officials who came to the district as part of recent transfers met Rajanna Sirisilla District Collector Anurag Jayanthi on Wednesday. In the complex of integrated district offices "In the Chamber, the Collector was presented with a bouquet along with District Civil Relations Officer (AD) Dasharatha along with Additional Civil Relations Officer Sharada. Speaking on this occasion, the Collector said that the information department is crucial in providing information about the government schemes to the people and conveying the public response to the

government. Spokesperson for providing official information to the media from the district administration and all government departments, said the information department. They want to be constantly vigilant and coordinate print, electronic and social media to provide information about government schemes to the people and ensure that everyone takes advantage of the fruits of the scheme. Earlier, new ZDP CEO Umarani, DPO Veerabuchchaiah, DRDO Seshadri, Collector Anurag Jayanthi and Additional Collector of local bodies Pujari Gautami gave flowers as a courtesy to the Collector. The employees who joined the duties of the Collector congratulated them and advised them to work according to the aspirations of the people. They wished to provide better services and get better recognition. Collector's Award to Assistant Director of Information Department. Collector Anurag Jayanthi honored I&PR Assistant Director Maminda Dasaratha, who has rendered excellent services as District Public Relations Officer in Rajanna Sirisilla district and is going to Hyderabad as part of transfers, in his chamber in the Collectorate. Appreciated the services rendered as DPRO in Dasharatham district. He said that apart from reaching the government schemes to the people, the public issues coming up in the social media and media have been brought to the attention of the district administration from time to time. APRO Koppula Ravi, Publicity Assistant Vasam Venkatesh and others participated here.

Those comments should be expunged from records : KTR

Continued From pg 01 KTR said Minister Ponnamp Prabhakar had spoken against the facts. "Is it not a fact that Gauravelli and Malakpet reservoirs under

Husnabad constituency have been completed? We don't have the culture to disrespect the minister. They are going to Medigadda and throwing mud at us. Isn't it true that Midmaner.

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Table with 5 columns: Sr. No., Name of Borrower(s) / Guarantor (s), Outstanding Dues, Date of Demand Notice, Date of Possession, Description of Immovable Property (ies) / Secured Asset (s). Contains 5 entries for various properties.



Warning of strict action for sale of Narcotic Drugs without prescription

CCTV cameras and de-addiction center poster should be installed in every medical shop : SP Akhil Mahajan

Rajanna Sirsilla Feb 14 (TIM Bureau) : District SP Akhil Mahajan said that if the managers of medical, shops and agencies sell narcotic drugs without doctor's prescription in Rajanna Sirsilla district, strict action should be taken and everyone should cooperate instead of youth becoming addicted to drugs. A meeting was held with the managers of medical shops and agencies on Wednesday. On this occasion, SP Akhil Mahajan said that youth are affected by drugs Under the circumstances, we are working with the aim of making the district a cannabis-free district by conducting successive raids on cannabis in the district. CCTV cameras should be installed in front of every medical shop and a poster related to the de-addiction center set up in the district should be set up. Shop owners also want to cooperate.

Maheshwar Reddy is BJLP leader in assembly

Continued From pg 01 Armur MLA Rakesh Reddy has been appointed as BJLP Treasurer and Rama Rao Patel as BJLP Secretary. To this extent, the BJP leaders provided the documents to the Assembly officials. Former MLC Ramachander Rao brought the official documents to the Assembly. Despite being a hat-trick MLA, BJP MLA Raja Singh did not get a place in those positions. It is known that Raja Singh has won from Goshamahal assembly constituency many times. It was thought that he would get the post of LP leader of the BJP. It is known that Raja Singh faced suspension from the BJP for a few months before the Telangana assembly elections.

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## For the children, by the children

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The festival is unique, and a first-of-its-kind community arts festival dedicated to making the community experience the power of art firsthand. NalandaWay Foundation through KAF, brings together artworks, theatre, music and dance performances to the community at large. For the festival, children from different schools came together with 15 artists of NalandaWay to create large art installations, and expressive performances over the last year. While the event is the culmination of artful sessions over a short period, NalandaWay Foundation intends to flag off the idea of celebrating community 'arts fest' on a continuum,

thereby celebrating arts with, for and within the community. 'Kalakriti' which is also the name of the 'NalandaWay Arts' and Learning Centre' situated in that area, has been offering arts, music, well-being and other life-skills sessions to children, adolescents and youth in the area over the past few years. The foundation will also offer workshops, training and resources that are planned for children, adolescents, mothers, and others in the community. The vision of the Kalakriti festival and the centre is to use the power of arts to enhance coping skills from anxieties, stress, and building resilience among children and youth. During the two-day festival, audiences and the community can witness children's

artworks, spanning multiple art installations, engage in interactive spaces and art productions and experience arts up close. The festival is accessible to all, open to community members, parents especially- to immerse, appreciate and indulge in arts- and relive the creative freedom that art offers. Sriram Ayer, Founder and CEO of NalandaWay Foundation said: "Kalakriti has been envisioned as a gathering place for children and adolescents to learn the arts, express their fears, joys and dreams through the arts, and build hope and resilience. It is also a safe space for them to share their anxieties with their peers and seek help."



## BJP MLA Siddharth Tiwari challenges Digvijaya to contest LS poll from Rewa

**Bhopal, Feb 14 (IANS) :** BJP MLA Siddharth Tiwari has challenged Congress leader and MP Digvijaya Singh to contest the Lok Sabha elections from Rewa. The debutant MLA said Singh has staunch supporters in Rewa district, and therefore, it should not be a big challenge for him to win the Lok Sabha election from this particular constituency. Tiwari's challenge came after Singh, in a social media post, questioned announcing five

"Bharat Ratna" in the fortnight, and sought elections through ballot paper instead of EVMs. Responding to Singh's post, Tiwari asked, "Are you (Digvijaya) saying that Kamal Nath won Chhindwara by fakery? I challenge you to contest 2024 Lok Sabha election from Rewa Parliamentary constituency. As your bigoted supporters find you uber-acceptable, this should not be a big challenge."

## No one can prevent Modi from becoming PM for third time: Kumaraswamy

**Bengaluru, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Former Karnataka Chief Minister and JD (S) Karnataka President H.D. Kumaraswamy on Wednesday said that no one can prevent Narendra Modi from becoming Prime Minister for the third consecutive term. "I have observed it very closely that no one will be able to prevent Modi from becoming Prime Minister for a third time," Kumaraswamy told media persons. He said that cracks between Central-state relations are also clearly visible. "Chief Minister Siddaramaiah has presented 14 budgets in the state assembly, which is a record. Still he alleges that the Centre does injustice with the state," he said. "Siddaramaiah is now claiming that the 15th Finance Commission has done injustice to Karnataka state. The Finance Commission works as per the provisions of the Constitution," he said.



## Six BJP MLAs suspended from WB Assembly over Sandeshkhali violence issue

**Kolkata, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Six BJP MLAs, including the Leader of Opposition, Suvendu Adhikari were suspended from the Assembly for the entire session by Speaker Biman Bandhopadhyaya following protests by the saffron camp MLAs within the House over the continuing violence and tension in Sandeshkhali. Besides the leader of the opposition, the other five BJP legislators who were suspended on Wednesday were Agnimitra Paul, Bankim Ghosh, Tapasi Mondal, Mihir Goswami and Shankar Ghosh. On Wednesday as the BJP legislative team entered the floor of the House sporting T-shirts with slogans: "We are with you

Sandeshkhali". As the Speaker objected to the use of such T-shirts within the House, the BJP legislative team started protesting and raising slogans. Some of the saffron camp MLAs were also heard blowing whistles as a mark of protest. After staging protests in the House, ultimately the BJP legislator staged a walkout in protest. Soon after that a team of BJP legislators led by the leader of the opposition started for Sandeshkhali. The chief whip of the ruling Trinamool Congress in the Assembly, Nirmal Ghosh moved a motion proposing suspension of the entire legislative team of BJP from the House.

## J&K's prominent NC leader Shahnaz Ganai joins BJP

**Srinagar, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Prominent National Conference (NC) leader and former legislator, Shahnaz Ganai joined the BJP on Wednesday at party headquarters in New Delhi. Shahnaz Ganai belongs to Poonch district of Jammu division and she

represented the NC in the erstwhile legislative council of J&K state. She joined the BJP in New Delhi at the party headquarters in presence of senior BJP leader and Minister of State (PMO), Dr. Jitendra Singh.



## SC stresses on practice to immediately call soft copies of HC, trial court records in criminal appeals

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** To mitigate delays in judicial determination, the Supreme Court has stressed for a practice of immediately calling for the soft copies of the record of High Court and Trial Court as soon as leave is granted in an appeal filed against conviction or acquittal in a criminal matter. "In our opinion, whenever leave is granted in an appeal challenging the order(s) of conviction or order(s) of acquittal, there has to be a practice of immediately calling for

the soft copies of the record of the High Court and the Trial Court; to upload the same on the system; and to provide soft copies thereof to the learned counsel representing the parties," said a Bench of Justice Abhay S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan in a recently passed order. The Bench said that hearing in a large number of appeals gets delayed because record is not called for unless there is an order of the apex court to that effect. "It will be appropriate if the Registrar (Judicial) seeks appropriate administrative directions from



Hon'ble the Chief Justice of India so that the Registry will call for the soft copies of the record of the High Court and the Trial Court immediately after leave is granted," further said the Bench. Last week, the apex court was hearing a criminal appeal challenging the order of conviction but

was forced to adjourn the case as all the depositions were not on record. Ordering the Registry to immediately call for records, it posted the criminal appeal for hearing on April 3. The Supreme Court had granted leave in the matter in August 2023.

## Enter the polling staff details accurately

**Rajanna Sirisilla, Feb 14 (TIM Bureau) :** Rajanna Sirisilla District Collector Anurag Jayanthi ordered that the details of the personnel participating in the election duties should be recorded accurately. On Wednesday, the Collector along with the Additional Collector P. Gautami inspected the online registration of the personnel partici-

pating in the election duties in the control room of the integrated district office complex. Many suggestions were made. He said that all the details should be registered online properly so that the staff can be assigned duties during the election process. The collector advised the staff who are entering the details to clear any doubts at the time of entering the details. He said that along with allotment of duties based on this reg-



istration, postal ballot will also be given. Sample EVM, VV PAT visit. District Collector Anurag Jayanthi along with Additional Collector P. Gautami visited the model EVM and VV PAT set up in the complex of District Integrated Offices.

## Free health camp at Mina Hospital

**Hyderabad, Feb 14 (NSS) :** Mina Super speciality Hospital will be conducting a free mega health camp on February 16.

**CHANGE OF NAME**  
**I, Manapuri Vishala, W/o. Govind Vinaykumar, R/o. 9-5-38/2, Sainagar, Siricilla, T.S have changed my name to GOVIND VEDHA SRI for all purposes and for all future purposes**

## I will be Chief Minister of Telangana for next 10 years: CM Revanth

**Hyderabad, Feb.14 (NSS) :** Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy said that he would be the Chief Minister of the Telangana State for next ten years. The Chief Minister handed over appointment letters to newly selected police constables at a programme held in LB Stadium here Wednesday. Speaking on the occasion, Revanth Reddy ridiculed the statement of former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao who said that the BRS party will come to power again in Telangana.



"I will see how KCR come to power. My direct challenge to KCR. He will not pluck even a string of my hair," the Chief Minister said. He further alleged that former chief minister KCR had never paid attention to the plight of the unemployed youth.

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## OPINIONmail



## P.V. NARASIMHA RAO IS THE REAL ARCHITECT BEHIND BUILDING OF ROBUST INDIAN ECONOMY

Bestowing Bharat Ratna on former prime minister, P.V. Narasimha Rao, is a partial correction of neglect and, often, heaping of indignities on him. Well into his twilight era after his prime ministership, Rao used to lead a forlorn life in a bungalow on Man Singh Road, when hardly anybody would come to see him. And when he died, he was not given even a funeral in Delhi. His dead body was flown to Hyderabad and a funeral of a former prime minister was unattended by any dignitaries. It was not surely a funeral fitting for a prime minister. No memorial could be erected to his memory either. Narasimha Rao was chosen as prime minister in circumstances post the tragic death of Rajiv Gandhi in the midst of political campaigning. He was then all set to go back to his native city, Hyderabad, and retire from the hectic life in the national capital. He was retiring from his long political career.

He was believed to be non-controversial and not a strong man. However, once in the seat, Narasimha Rao turned out to be a sagacious politician who could manage contradictions and pushes and pulls with the ease of magician. He was pulled out from his retirement.

Thereafter he had managed with aplomb and turned a crisis in independent India's history into its crowning glory. The nation's economy was in deep crisis from the policies followed since Independence. The socialist pattern and its economic counterpart, the mixed economy, had many gaps and pitfalls.

Economic policies followed in the early days were tuned to meet shortages of food, foreign exchange and to fight inflation. The policy makers had thought a closed models, based on restrictions on private sector, which resulted in the shortages which fed inflation. These policies in turn had resulted in a severe shortages of foreign exchanges.

It was so bad that India had foreign exchange resources for hardly a few weeks when Rao took over in June 1991. As a correspondent covering the union finance ministry, I had the unique opportunity of having an insider view. A measure of the crisis could be gauged from the fact that a special group was created of select top bureaucrats in the North Block to interact with the Reserve Bank of India. The group would take a review of the exchange resources hand and payables on a day to day basis.

The country was heaped with indignities at the international level when India had to pledge its gold reserves to raise funds for meeting external liabilities. It was so insulting that India was told to physically transfer its gold reserves to London. The usual practice was not to insist on physical transfers of gold but only some accounting transfers.

The real logistics of gold transfer from Reserve Bank's vaults in Bombay to the London repository has been described by some of the top officials in the then finance ministry, including a nerve wrecking break down of the truck carrying the gold horde from RBI headquarters on Mint Road to Bombay airport. It was in the midst of such a collapse that Narasimha Rao was to take charge. He realised the crisis needed best professional help, who had some recognition in the global circles. He had called up former Reserve Bank governor and director of the London School of Economics, Dr I.G. Patel, to assume the position of finance minister.

I.G. Patel by then had gone back to his home town in Gujarat. On hearing from Narasimha Rao, Patel had politely recused himself. He said after a life time of itinerant living, moving from one city to the next, he had just built his own home and would like to enjoy his retired life quietly.

Patel, in turn, suggested the name of Dr Manmohan Singh, as the best candidate to take over the responsibilities. Dr Singh had been one of the most experienced economic managers in government at the highest levels, including a stint at the Reserve Bank.

(By Anjan Roy)

EDITORIAL  
the indian mail



## Being Arundhati Subramaniam: One part goddess, one part wild women

She says it has been exciting to smell the danger in their voice. That it has been an infuriating journey too -- for whenever she thought she had a hold on the content, someone would parachute in. There would then be chaos, albeit a grateful one. There seems to be an initial relief when poet Arundhati Subramaniam says that the book 'Wild Women, Seekers, Protagonists and Goddesses in Sacred Indian Poetry' is finally complete after five years, and will be released soon by Penguin. But then

immediately after that, there is a pause -- as if she is mourning a loss. "It was something that never got over. And this is something I have been wanting to do for really long. I also did a book in between, and I wrote one on Bhakti too. 'Eating God' was an important book in that aspect -- it touched people. But I already believe the seeds of 'Wild Women' were sown. Of course, it is lovely to read about Kabir but where are the women? Have the women's voices been muted? Maybe we have tamed and domesticated them... it did not seem they were women on journeys. I wanted to go back and re-

discover the rawest realms and smells. It has been such an endless process but so satisfying to listen to their feral sensuality, and their searing questions about custodians of gender and faith. It was time to tune into their brazenness, their heartbreaking longing. Not just for their sake but for ours too," she tells IANS.

In the book, the poet brings together haunting voices of, by and for women across the Indian subcontinent poetry of ancient Buddhist nuns, Bhakti and Sufi mystics, tantrikas and Vedantins. There are women here, and men singing as women, and both raising their voices in praise of the sacred feminine. Even as we start talking about gender in spirituality, she feels that given the goddesses part of it, they represent the many different aspects of creation and it is in this space that people are comfortable. with the duality. But as soon as it is time to arrive at a definite truth, the goddesses vanish," smiles this Sahitya Akademi Award and International Piero Bigongiari Prize (Italy) winning poet.



## People lack empathy towards migrants: Author Sam Miller

Author Sam Miller said that people generally lack empathy towards the migrants across the globe and the attitude of the countries they want to settle in also remains hostile.

"The migration phenomenon has shown many shades of who we actually are. There is a lack of empathy towards migrants. We are also unable to understand the feelings of those who are forced to leave their land. The lack of compassion is not just shocking but sad too," author Sam Miller told IANS, on the second day of Appejay Kolkata Literary Festival.

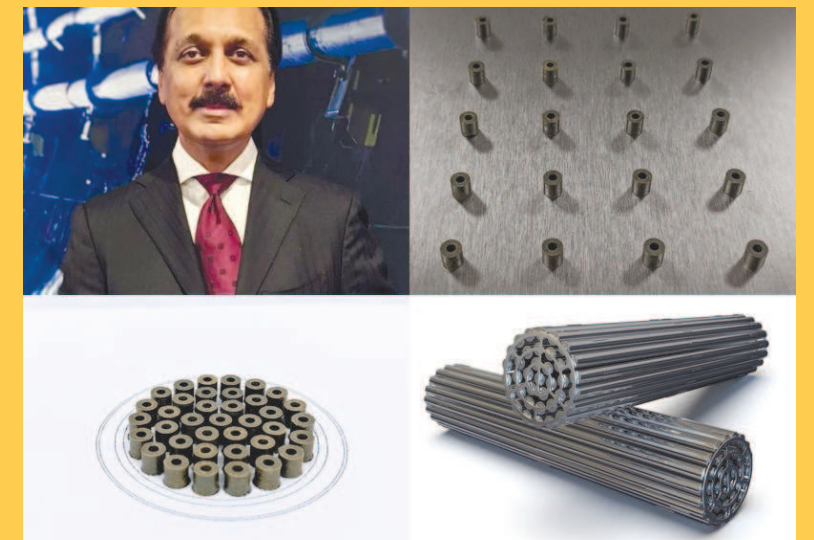
Miller's latest book titled 'Migrants: The Story of Us All' is a thought provoking book which asserts that we are all descended from migrants.

## 'American fuel, Indian reactor can power up Indo-US nuclear deal'

India and the US can fire up their civil nuclear agreement with a twist. The twist is American HALEU fuel powering India sourced small pressurized heavy water reactors (PHWR) for the global markets, said a top official of nuclear fuel company Clean Core Thorium Energy.

Further, India need not wait long for the use of its vast thorium reserves to augment its nuclear power capacity as it can use the same thorium and High Assay Low Enriched Uranium (HALEU) fuel in its PHWRs. The Chicago-based Clean Core Thorium Energy founded by Mehul Shah -- an

Indian settled in the US -- owns the patented thorium HALEU Advanced Nuclear Energy for Enriched Life (ANEEL) fuel expected to be commercialised soon. "We are in discussions in Canada and India for our fuel. We anticipate post 2026 commercialisation of the ANEEL fuel would happen," Shah told IANS. India and the US last year had agreed to work on the development of next generation small modular reactor technologies for domestic and export markets. In the nuclear power field, small modular reactors are the new development. India has already developed 220 MW PHWRs though they cannot strictly be called modular reactors. In 2008, India and the US had inked the Civil Nuclear Deal.



While the US wanted to sell big reactors to India, nothing much has progressed on that front. But what is HALEU? According to the World Nuclear Association, the current fleet of nuclear reactors runs primarily on uranium fuel enriched up to 5 per cent uranium-235 (U-235). "HALEU is defined as uranium enriched to greater than 5 per cent and less than 20

per cent of the U-235 isotope. Applications for HALEU are today limited to research reactors and medical isotope production. However, HALEU will be needed for many advanced power reactor fuels, and more than half of the small modular reactor (SMR) designs in development," World Nuclear Association said.

## U.S. SECRETARY BLINKEN FINDS A HARDENED POLITICAL LANDSCAPE AS HE TOURS MIDDLE EAST

US Secretary of State Antony J. Blinken has found a hardened political landscape as he tours the Middle East for the fifth time since the Gaza war erupted. The war has toughened Israeli and Palestinian positions. At the same time, Saudi Arabia appears eager to finalise a comprehensive package deal that would include recognition of Israel. Even so, the obstacles to securing a ceasefire and the

exchange of the remaining 136 Hamas-held hostages and bodies of captives killed in Gaza for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons remain formidable. So, do the impediments to bridging differences on achieving a package deal.

Raising the stakes, Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu this week left Blinken seemingly empty-handed by rejecting as "crazy" a Hamas proposal for a prolonged ceasefire and a prisoner swap. The proposal was a response to a ceasefire plan drafted by Qatar, Egypt, and the United States.



## IMRAN'S PTI SUPPORTED INDEPENDENTS EMERGE AS THE LARGEST GROUP IN PAKISTAN POLLS SHOCKING ARMY

Pakistan's national elections held on February 8 have resulted in a hung parliament, meaning no party has enough seats to govern alone. A coalition government will need to be formed, and an immediate priority will be seeking financial assistance from the IMF.

Despite strong opposition from Pakistan's military establishment, independent candidates supported by former Prime Minister Imran Khan's party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) have pulled off a surprising win. They've secured the most seats in the National Assembly, becoming the largest political group in the country winning 99 seats. The Election Commission of Pakistan finally released results on Friday, showing that the party, while successful, did not win enough seats to secure a majority. Voter participation was noticeably low, with only 42% of eligible voters casting ballots.



## US Defense Secy hospitalised again, transfers duties to deputy

**Washington, Feb 14 (IANS) :** US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has been hospitalised "for emergent bladder issue," and has transferred his duties to his deputy. According to a statement from department of defense, Austin was rushed by his security detail to Walter Reed National Military Medical Center around 2,20 p.m. (1920 GMT) Wednesday. Austin was diagnosed with prostate cancer in December and hospitalised, Xinhua news agency reported. The defense secretary, 72, was under scrutiny for failing to divulge his health issue (prostate cancer diagnosis) and hospitalisation. He had apologised for it last week.

## UK English test scandal : Indians, other foreign students renew bid to clear their names

**London, Feb 14 (IANS) :** A group of international students, including many Indians, who had their visas revoked almost 10 years ago after accusations of cheating in English language tests in the UK, are making renewed efforts to clear their names. According to a report in The Guardian, fresh evidence has recently been presented in the court that questions the Home Office's cheating allegations against 35,000 international students. The Home Office abruptly terminated the visas of these students, making their stay in the country illegal overnight, following a 2014 BBC documentary reporting allegations of cheating at two of the UK's language testing centres for international students. About 2,500 students were deported after immigration enforcement teams mounted dawn raids on students' accommodation, the news report said. While some 7,200 students left the country after detention threats, thousands stayed protesting "flawed evidence" as they struggled with homelessness, huge legal fees, and stress-induced illnesses. After judges and watchdog reports highlighted flaws in the evidence of cheating, around 3,600 won appeals against the Home Office, while the rest of them couldn't because of the prohibitive cost of taking legal action. Abdul Qadir Mohammad, 36, who left India in 2010 to study business in London, spent more than 20,000 pounds trying to clear his



name in the scandal, pushing him and his family into debt. Abdul told The Guardian that he gets "panic attacks" and feels ashamed to face my family back home who ask him: "Abdul you have lived in the UK for 14 years. What have you achieved?" "...my father is still angry with me. He has spent so much money first on my education and then on trying to clear my name. He had a small grocery shop and saved up to put 15,000 pounds into my college fees. I've got debts on my credit card of £10,000. My mother sold her gold to support me..." he said. The Hyderabad resident said he feels angry about how the whole issue has been handled, destroying his life. "These tests are easy to pass; I had no reason to cheat... I want to clear my name and get on with my studies. I spend my days sitting in the park, desperately waiting for my hearing," he told The Guardian.

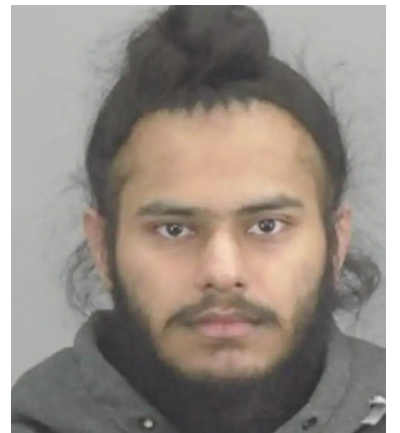
## Japan culls 14,000 birds after avian flu outbreak

**Tokyo, Feb 14 (IANS) :** About 14,000 birds have been culled in the southern Japan after an avian influenza outbreak was confirmed, local authorities said on Wednesday. The bird flu has been confirmed on a poultry farm in the Minamisatsuma City of Kagoshima, according to the prefectural government, adding that the culling operations for it and nearby farms under the same management were completed within a short span, Xinhua news agency reported. Burial of the culled birds and disinfection of the poultry houses are expected to conclude within the next few days, and the national authorities are expected to determine whether the virus is highly pathogenic. To prevent further spread of the



infection, the prefecture has imposed restrictions on the movement of approximately 363,000 chickens and quails being raised at 15 farms within a radius of 3 km to 10 km from the affected

area. Following genetic testing which confirmed the virus, the prefectural authorities initiated the culling process on Sunday. The case marks the ninth avian influenza outbreak in the country this season. The bird flu season in Japan typically begins in October each year. In the last season, Japan saw a record 84 outbreaks of highly pathogenic bird flu at farms in 26 of the country's 47 prefectures, with a record 17.71 million birds culled, leading to an egg shortage and price increases.



## Indian-origin man wanted in connection with father's murder in Canada

**Toronto, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Police are on the lookout for a 22-year-old Indian-origin son, who fled after allegedly murdering his father, at their home in Canada's Ontario province. Sukhaj Cheema-Singh is wanted for first-degree murder after 56-year-old Kuldip Singh was found with 'severe injuries' at his Stoney Creek home in Hamilton on Wednesday night. Releasing an image of Cheema-Singh, the Hamilton Police said in a release on Sunday that officers were called to a home near Trafalgar Drive and Mud Street at around 7:40 p.m. The victim was transported to hospital where he succumbed to his injuries. Witnesses told officers that Cheema-Singh fled the residence in a small, dark-coloured SUV following an altercation with his father. The vehicle was last seen heading north on Trafalgar toward Mud Street, police said, adding that Cheema-Singh was believed to be in the area for about 30 minutes before the incident.



## Mass rallies held across Iran to mark anniversary of 1979 Islamic Revolution

**Tehran, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Mass rallies were held across Iran on Wednesday to celebrate the 45th anniversary of the victory of the country's 1979 Islamic Revolution. The rallies, also attended by the country's officials and military commanders, started concurrently at 9:00 a.m. local time in 1,400 cities and 35,000 villages across Iran, according to the semi-official Tasnim news agency. In the capital Tehran, people marched from 13 locations towards the Azadi Square, where Iranian President Ebrahim Raisi delivered a speech, Xinhua news agency reported. Raisi said the country's "vigilant, insightful and conscious" people had managed to overcome all problems caused by the "enemies," according to a statement published on the website of his office. He added Iran was dependent neither on the East nor the West and made decisions and acted on its own. He also condemned "the Israeli crimes in Gaza perpetrated with the support of the Western states claiming to be human rights advocates". During the rallies in Tehran, people chanted slogans and carried banners featuring similar slogans in support of Iran, its Islamic Revolution, and the Palestinians. They also condemned the US and Israel. Along the routes of the rallies, a number of homegrown missiles and a launch vehicle dubbed Simorgh were put on display. The 1979 Islamic Revolution in Iran toppled the US-backed Shah regime, and brought the country under the leadership of Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, the late founder of the Islamic Republic of Iran.



## Two injured in Texas church shooting, accused gunned down

**Washington, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Two individuals, including a child, were injured in a shooting at a church, after which the female shooter was gunned down by police in the US state of Texas. Houston Police Chief Troy Finner said a woman in a trench coat, armed with a long rifle and accompanied by a young child, shot fire at Joel Osteen's megachurch just before 2 p.m. local time (2000 GMT) on Wednesday and was gunned down by two off-duty police officers who engaged her, resulting in the child being critically injured by gunfire, Xinhua news agency reported.

## US: 'Dysfunctional Week' uncovers fissures, fractures, faultlines in GOP

**Washington, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The GOP has "exposed" itself in a "Dysfunctional Week" in its actions in the Congress laying bare the fissures, fractures and faultlines across the party, sabotaging its own legislators carefully crafted bipartisan legislations in showing allegiance to former president Donald Trump. Self-inflicted failures in both chambers of Congress, a decisive legal defeat for their standard-bearer and hints of an ouster for their embattled chairperson (Mitch McConnell) left Republicans looking rudderless and ineffective this week, media reports said. A new level of political party dysfunction was on full display this week - with historic meltdowns in both chambers, intraparty fractures, a shake-up in the Republican National Committee and the legal defense for Trump, the likely Republican presidential nominee, pulled out from under him, the reports said. "The Republican Party is now a complete mess that doesn't stand for anything except allegiance to Trump, and there's no consistent ideological content, and there's no apparent effort to govern at all,"



says David Barker, political science professor at American University and Director of the Center for Congressional and Presidential Studies. Trump's campaign against Biden reached ridiculous levels of banality as he compared himself to renowned singer Taylor Swift saying he was more popular than her across the US. TIME magazine had voted her as the person of the year in 2023 in popularity ratings. "The Republican Party is not really a conservative party anymore - it's a populist party," Barker says. "That unfortunately comes really close to just burning the house down, and that's what sometimes it appears like they're trying to do."



## 'Will launch struggle to oust Cong govt', says K'taka LoP Ashoka

**Bengaluru, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The leader of the opposition (LoP) in Karnataka Assembly and BJP MLA, R. Ashoka said on Wednesday the party will launch a struggle to oust the Congress government in the state. Speaking to reporters here, Ashoka said, "We will launch a struggle to ensure shunting out of the Congress government from the House as well as the ground. "Karnataka Congress government is stigmatized. The State Contractor's Association President D. Kempanna, who alleged commission charges against previous BJP government and was described as Satya Harischandra

by CM Siddaramaiah, the same person has accused the Congress government of robbing away 40 per cent commission in tenders. "The state government is not releasing funds and committing fraud on the farmers. There is a severe crisis in drinking water, but, to impress upon the friend in Tamil Nadu, the state's water was released to that state. The cities of Bengaluru, Mysuru and Mandya are facing a crisis of shortage of water now. "We will take up this issue in the Assembly session." "After CM Siddaramaiah-led Congress government assumed power in the state, Karnataka is reeling under drought. The trea-

surey is empty, and 40 per cent of money has gone to the pockets of Congress leaders," Ashoka alleged. The BJP MLAs attended the Assembly session draped in saffron shawls. The party sources said the gesture was intended to condemn the alleged "anti-Hindu policy" of the CM Siddaramaiah-led Congress government in the state. After the address by the Governor, BJP legislators raised 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans, following which, the Congress legislators also raised 'Jai Shri Ram' slogans in the House. Some of the Congress MLAs also raised 'Jai Bhim' slogans.

## Bengal governor assures Sandeshkhali women action against guilty

**Kolkata, Feb 14 (IANS) :** West Bengal Governor C. V. Ananda Bose, after reaching the violence-hit Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district, assured local women of strong action against those who had been allegedly harassing people. During the interaction with the Governor, the local women informed him on how they were "oppressed" by the absconding Trinamool Congress leader Sheikh Shahjahan and his associates through forceful grabbing of land, forcing them to give free labourers in the businesses run by them and even molesting and physically harassing the local women.



## SC extends interim bail of Ashish Mishra in Lakhimpur Kheri violence case

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court on Wednesday extended its earlier order granting interim bail to Ashish Mishra, son of Union Minister of State for Home, Ajay Kumar Mishra, in connection with the 2021 Lakhimpur Kheri violence case. A Bench presided over by Justice Surya Kant could not find on record any report relating to the status of trial after September 26, 2023. Adjourning the matter, the

Bench, also comprising Justice K V Viswanathan, asked the apex court registry to obtain a status report from the trial court and in the meantime, ordered the extension of interim bail. In September last year, the top court relaxed the bail condition of Ashish Mishra to stay in the national Capital considering the fact that his mother is admitted in a hospital in Delhi and his daughter also requires medical treatment.

## SC disposes of CBI's plea against interim bail to Chanda Kochhar

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The Supreme Court on Wednesday disposed of the special leave petition filed by the CBI against the January 2023 decision of the Bombay High Court granting interim bail to former ICICI Bank chief Chanda Kochhar in the alleged Videocon loan fraud case. However, a Bench presided over by Justice Bela M Trivedi granted liberty to the central investigative agency to file a fresh appeal against the final decision of the High Court confirming the interim bail granted to the Kochhar couple. Disposing of CBI's appeal,

the Bench, also comprising Justice Pankaj Mithal, clarified that it did not express anything on merits. In a decision pronounced on February 6, a Division Bench of Justices Anuja Prabhudessai and Nitin R. Borkar of the Bombay High Court confirmed the interim bail order passed in January last year. Against the interim decision of the High Court directing release of Kochhar and her husband Deepak Kochhar from judicial custody on the grounds that the arrest made was not in accordance with the law, the CBI had moved the Supreme Court with a special leave petition. In an earlier hearing, the top court had raised eyebrows over continu-



ation of Kochhars' interim bail despite the order of the High Court directing interim release of the duo only for a term of two weeks. "Is interim bail still continuing? Why are you not objecting?" it had asked the CBI. Chanda Kochhar and her businessman husband Deepak Kochhar are alleged to have received kickbacks over her tenure in lieu of loans provided to the Videocon group.



## Diverse themes encapsulate day 2 of AKLF

**Kolkata, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The second day's events at the Apeejay Kolkata Literary Festival (AKLF) began with the session, 'Translating the Icons,' with Lopamudra Maitra discussing Upendra Kishore Ray Chowdhury's whimsical tales alongside Prasun Roy, who took to Bibhutibhushan Bandyopadhyay's horror stories. Together, they shared their experiences of translating two iconic Bengali literary personalities. Jashodhara Chakraborti conducted the session. The following session, 'Blowing in the Wind', had Sam Miller, author of Migrants, discuss the widespread phenomenon of migration and displacement. He was in conversation with Ruchir Joshi. The third session of the day, 'Green Earth,' successfully saw environmental artist Louise Fowler-Smith and Tara Gandhi, environmentalist and ornitholo-

gist, discuss their work and its relation to climate change. The session was supported by the Australian Consulate-General, Kolkata and was conducted by Bittu Sahgal. Keeping up with the theme of translation was the session 'Show and Tell', where translators Aruna Chakravarti, Vishes Kothari, Arshia Sattar, and Urvashi Butalia discussed their most significant challenges as translators. Bijoya Sawian and Manish Gaekwad revisited their family memoirs while walking down memory lane at the 'All in the Family' session alongside Kavita Punjabi. The next session, titled 'Climate Fiction Moves', had Gargi Rawat, Rajat Chaudhuri, Dia Mirza (Virtually), and Bittu Sahgal talk about how books, film and the arts can further the cause of climate. Neela Majumdar conducted this session.



## Five killed as car hits bus on Yamuna e-way in Mathura

**Mathura, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Five persons were charred to death on Wednesday after their car hit a private bus on the Yamuna Expressway in Mathura, Uttar Pradesh. According to the police, the accident took place around 8 am in the Mahavan police station area after a car hit the bus from behind, after which both the vehicles caught fire. One victim has been identified, who is from Shikohabad in Firozabad. A Mathura police spokesperson said, "The details of other deceased are being collected and from where they were coming and how the car caught fire is also being investigated." The police said the bus was coming from Gaya in Bihar and going towards Delhi when the accident took place. "There were around 55 passengers on the bus. None of the bus passenger suffered any serious injuries.

## Delhi HC grants bail to four life convicts in Soumya Vishwanathan murder case

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The Delhi High Court on Wednesday granted bail and suspended the life sentence of four men convicted in the 2008 murder case of TV journalist Soumya Vishwanathan, noting that they have been behind bars for nearly 14 years. The division bench of Justices Suresh Kumar Kait and Girish Kathpalia said that their life sentence will remain in suspension till this court deals with their appeal against conviction and sentencing in the case. The Saket court had, in November, sentenced Ravi Kapoor, Amit Shukla, Baljeet Malik, and Ajay Kumar, convicted to life imprisonment,

while the fifth convict, Ajay Sethi, was sentenced to three years imprisonment. Four of them -- Ravi, Amit, Baljeet and Ajay -- had sought suspension of sentence during the pendency of appeals. On January 23, the high court had sought Delhi Police's reply their appeals challenging a trial court's order holding them guilty and sentencing them to life imprisonment. Earlier in January, Malik and Shukla had filed appeals through advocate Amit Kumar against the trial court's October 18, 2023, judgement convicting them and November 25, 2023 sentencing. On January 23, the court had also asked the authorities to file a reply to the convicts' interim application seeking suspension of their sentence.

Recently, the high court had also rejected the parole plea of Kapoor. Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma had dismissed the plea considering Kapoor's extensive criminal record, the severity of the offences, and his conduct within the jail premises. Kapoor had sought parole for four weeks, citing family ties and a knee surgery. The court, however, said that he failed to provide any supporting documents for the surgery claim and noted his habitual offender status, being involved in about 20 criminal cases from 2002 to 2010. While convicting the accused, the court had said that



the offence does not fall in the category of "rarest of rare" cases, and had refused to grant the request for the death penalty. Kapoor, Shukla, Kumar, and Malik were convicted under the Maharashtra Control of Organised Crime Act (MCOCA) provisions and Sethi for receiving stolen property. The police had attributed the motive for her killing to robbery, and had invoked the stringent MCOCA against the accused. On September 30, 2008, Vishwanathan was shot dead on the Nelson Mandela Marg while returning home from work in her car.

## Assam Budget: Govt to support 10 lakh girls' education to eliminate child marriage

**Guwahati, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Assam's Finance Minister Ajanta Neog, while presenting the state Budget for the 2024-25 fiscal on Wednesday, announced that the government will support the education of 10 lakh girls in the state. Neog said the state government is proposing this in the Budget to eliminate child marriage from Assam. Delivering her fourth Budget speech on Wednesday, Neog presented a Rs 2.9 lakh

crore Budget for the 2024-2025 financial year with a deficit of Rs 774.47 crore. She did not propose any new tax. "The consolidated fund of the state is expected to receive Rs 1,43,605.56 crore, according to the Budget Estimates for 2024-2025. The total receipts amount to Rs 2,90,155.65 crore after deducting the receipt of Rs 1,44,550.08 crore under public accounts and Rs 2,000 crore under contingency fund," she said.



## Mahindra posts 60% jump in Q3 net profit at Rs 2,454 crore

**Mumbai, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Auto major Mahindra & Mahindra (M&M) reported a 60 per cent increase in standalone net profit to Rs 2,454 crore for the October-December quarter of the current financial year. The company had posted a net profit of Rs 1,528.06 crore in the same quarter of the previous year.

The company's revenue for the third quarter grew 16 per cent to Rs 25,642.4 crore led by a 20 per cent surge in auto sales spearheaded by popular SUVs such as Thar. The turnover in the same quarter of the previous year was Rs 21,653.74 crore. The automaker's earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and

amortisation (EBITDA) increased by 9.7 per cent to Rs 3,590.3 crore while its operating margin rose 0.8 per cent to 14 per cent during the quarter. However, the company's tractor sales declined by 4 per cent from the previous year to 1,00,522 units in the quarter as an erratic monsoon hit farm incomes.



## SpiceJet shares dip amidst financial challenges, but airline asserts strong position

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** In the midst of news regarding delays in salary payments, EPFO deposits, and potential job cuts, SpiceJet shares experienced a 4.16 per cent decline on Wednesday. Nonetheless, the budget airline asserted that it is presently in its most robust financial state in recent memory.

"SpiceJet is currently at its strongest financial position in recent history. We've successfully completed the first tranche of capital infusion, amounting to Rs 744 crore, and have received significant additional subscriptions pending regulatory approval," said the airline spokesperson.

"Furthermore, the company has initiated the process to raise an additional Rs 1,500 crore. SpiceJet already has valid and subsisting approval of shareholders for raising up to Rs 2500 crore through QIP and for this process it need not go to shareholders again," he said. "These funds are being utilised in accordance with the shareholders' resolution, prioritising statutory dues, vendor payments, and other outstanding dues. We want to clarify that regular payments are being made to lessors, and any reports suggesting outstanding amounts are baseless and denied," the airline claimed. "The airline has extended many air-

craft leases and has also signed-up for fresh lease agreements starting summer schedule 2024. SpiceJet is actively engaged in discussions for long-term lease contracts with lessors, signalling our commitment to expand our fleet and network," said the spokesperson. "We have secured flight rights for Haj operations from seven Indian cities including Srinagar, Gaya, Guwahati, Bhopal, Indore, Aurangabad, and Vijayawada. Haj has been a significant revenue generator for SpiceJet and in the current fiscal year, SpiceJet garnered revenue of Rs 337 crore from Haj operations," said the spokesperson.

## Indian banks face a slowdown in growth and profit margins as deposits lag

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Indian banks face a slowdown in growth and profit margins as deposits lag despite higher interest rates. In the 2023 October-to-December quarter, most major banks reported income gains, but net interest margins (NIM) declined due to tighter liquidity and rising funding costs. Among large banks, only

Punjab National Bank saw an increase in NIM for the fiscal's third quarter, according to data compiled by S&P Global Market Intelligence. State Bank of India, India's largest bank by assets, posted lower net income after factoring in a 71-billion-rupee expense related to a wage bill increase. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) recently barred banks and non-

bank financial companies from investing in AIFs holding the lenders' customer assets. This move aims to prevent loan evergreening. Lenders must divest AIF holdings within a month or set aside provisions. Industry groups anticipate the directive will affect billions in bank investments and potentially hinder growth, the report said. Indian bank deposit growth continues to lag behind credit growth.

RBI data released in December 2023 shows an 11% deposit growth in fiscal 2022-2023, compared to 15% credit growth. This widening gap has pushed the credit-to-deposit ratio to a 10-year high, a development attributed partly to the RBI's use of macroprudential measures to tighten policy, according to Nomura analysts in a February 8 report.



## Global private equity-backed investments down 17% in Jan

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** In January, the total value of global private equity and venture capital entries decreased 16.8% to \$24.45 billion compared to \$29.37 billion during the same

period a year prior. It was the lowest January total in at least five years. The number of deals also declined to 959 from 1,134 a year prior, according to S&P Global Market Intelligence data & analysis.



## Nxta by Airtel to procure 140,208 MWh renewable energy to push India's 'green' goal

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Nxta by Airtel, one of India's leading data centre companies, on Wednesday announced a power-wheeling agreement with Ampln and Amplus Energy to procure an additional 140,208 MWh of renewable energy. With this, Nxta said it has enhanced its existing commitment of reducing its carbon footprint through renewable energy sources annually by 99,547 tCO<sub>2</sub>e (tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent). "These new partnerships reflect our commitment to lead India's green data centre space and fulfill our commitment to achieve Net Zero emission by 2031," said Ashish Arora, CEO, Nxta by Airtel. "The additional clean energy supply will increase our renewable energy share to approximately 70 per cent in the overall energy mix for our core data centres," he added.

## Instacart to lay off 250 workers in restructuring exercise

**San Francisco, Feb 14 (IANS) :** US-based grocery delivery company Instacart has announced to lay off about 7 per cent of its global workforce, or about 250 employees, as part of a restructuring plan. The announcement came as the company posted fourth-quarter earnings that were approximately in line with analysts' revenue expectations. "The restructuring plan includes a reduction of approximately 250 employees, representing approximately 7 per cent of the company's global workforce as of January 31, 2024, with most of these reductions expected to occur by March 31, 2024,"

Instacart said in a filing with the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC). The company estimates to incur approximately \$19 to \$24 million in non-recurring charges in connection with the restructuring plan, predominantly related to cash expenditures for employee transition and severance payments and employee benefits.



## Adani Green Energy links 551 MW solar capacity plant to national grid

**Mumbai, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Adani Green Energy Limited (AGEL) has successfully operationalised 551 MW solar capacity plant in Gujarat's Khavda renewable energy park which has now started supplying power to the national grid. "AGEL achieved this milestone within 12 months of commencing work on the Khavda RE park, starting with the development of basic infrastructure, including roads and connectivity, and creating a self-sustaining social ecosystem. AGEL also transformed the challenging and barren terrain of the Rann of Kutch into a habitable environment for its 8,000-strong workforce," the company stated in a BSE filing. The energy generated from the Khavda RE park is projected to power approximately 16.1 million homes annually. The park is poised to become the largest renewable energy installation globally, with a planned capacity of 30 GW over the next five years. "Adani Green Energy is creating one of the world's most extensive renewable energy ecosystems for solar and wind," Adani Group chairman Gautam Adani said. "Through bold and innovative projects like the Khavda RE plant, AGEL continues to set higher global benchmarks and rewrite the world's planning and execution standards for giga-scale renewable energy projects. This milestone is a validation of the Adani Group's commitment and leading role in accelerating India's equitable clean energy transition journey towards its ambitious goals of 500 GW of renewable energy capacity by 2030 and carbon neutrality," he added. The AGEL share price increased by nearly 4% to Rs 1,882 in Wednesday's trade on BSE after the stock exchange filing.

## Use Swadeshi products, says V-P Dhankhar

**Jaipur, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar has appealed to people to use Swadeshi (local) products to ensure local trade gets a boost. He said, "Lamps, candles, furniture were coming into our country from outside. This has two side-effects. Our foreign exchange is going out in large quantities and we are simultaneously chopping hands of the traders here."

Deendayal Upadhyay National Memorial in Dhankya, Jaipur on Wednesday, on the 56th death anniversary of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay. The Vice President said, "People should use Swadeshi as much as possible. "There was a time when our economy was among the five fragile countries. With the hard work done in the last decade, we have become the 5th largest economy in the world. Today our foreign exports are more than Rs 600 billion. "I feel great pain in my mind when I come to know

that in 2009 the Indian government gave 5 million US dollars to a foreign university. Why not give it to our university? I would, especially, urge this forum that our industrialists and businessmen should think that this is the time to awaken nationalism. Nationalism is paramount," he said. Addressing the farmers, he said, "For the first time in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has taken such a step, which is a matter of great satisfaction for the farmers.



## PM Modi likely to visit J&K on Feb 20

**Jammu, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit J&K on February 20 to address a public rally in Jammu and inaugurate/lay the foundation stone of many developmental projects.

In addition to addressing a large public rally in Jammu, PM Modi will inaugurate a series of developmental projects, including All India Institute of Medical Sciences (AIIMS) at Vijaypur in Samba, the highest Railway bridge, which will link Kashmir with the rest of the country by this year, in Reasi district, Devika Rejuvenation project at Udhampur, IIM Jammu and Shahpur Kandi. The Prime Minister will lay the foundation stone of various other development works in Jammu and Kashmir.

## SC dismisses plea seeking cancellation of 'DyCM' portfolio

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Dismissing a PIL challenging the appointment of Deputy Chief Ministers (DyCM) in various state governments, the Supreme Court on Wednesday said that a deputy Deputy Chief Minister is "first and foremost a minister in the government" in the state and the portfolio has no real bearing in the constitutional sense.

"It is only a label. Even if you call someone a deputy CM, the constitutional status is of a minister. The affiliation of a particular person being a deputy chief minister has no

real bearing in a constitutional sense. They don't draw higher salaries, they are like any other member of the council of ministers," said a bench presided by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud. The bench, also comprising Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra, said that the plea challenging appointment of Deputy Chief Ministers in the state governments without there being any provision for such appointments under the Constitution of India lacks in substance and is liable to be dismissed.

## Farmers protest: Delhi Police impose section 144, ban processions & demonstrations till March 12

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Delhi Police Commissioner Sanjay Arora has issued orders for invoking section 144 (prohibitory orders) for a period of 30 days, till March 12 in the national capital in view of 'Delhi Chalo March' call given by farmers for Wednesday. "Whereas, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha, the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha and several other Farmers Unions and Associations have announced a 'Delhi Chalo' march, on 14 of February, 2024 to hold protest outside the Parliament House, to press their demands, and whereas there exists a well-founded apprehension/possibility that the participants of the aforementioned march,

may try to enter into the territory of Delhi from various entry points along its borders with adjoining States to reach New Delhi and to hold demonstrations to assert their demands," read the order by Delhi Police Commissioner on Sunday. The order further stated that there was an imminent risk of widespread tension, public nuisance, public annoyance, social unrest and the potential for violence on account of the participants of the march entering into the territory of Delhi/New Delhi. "The participants are likely to use tractors, trolleys/trailers as mode of transport for entering into the territory of Delhi/New Delhi, which will inevitably be a great hazard on Delhi roads and will cause danger to other road users/

residents of Delhi/New Delhi. Plying of tractor is also banned in New Delhi, And whereas the convergence of such a large number of potential agitators presents a serious significant threat to public safety, the security of public and private property and the maintenance of public peace/order and tranquility within the region," it read. The order further stated that there is a likelihood that some anti-social elements/agitator groups may take advantage of the situation and indulge in activities prejudicial to the maintenance of peace, public order as well as law & order in Delhi/New Delhi. "Therefore, to ensure public safety, tranquility and public order in Delhi/New Delhi, it has



become imperative to take all required precautionary steps to keep a check on the activities of the participants of the above-mentioned march for which no permission has been granted. More particularly taking into consideration the past experience of farmer agitation organised in 2020 and valuable inputs of large scale serious law & order problem, received from intelligence agencies, it is necessary to take legal step to avoid any such situation," it said.

The order stated that there shall be a prohibition on blocking of roads, passages, any type of procession agitation, rally, public meeting by the agitators or general public or public representatives by way of assembly/gathering of five or more persons with or without weapons in the entire jurisdiction of Delhi, except for purposes specifically permitted under law. "There shall be an absolute prohibition on the organisation, convening, or participation in any pro-

cessions, demonstrations, rallies, or march on foot, whether for political, social, or any other purpose, within the geographical limits of Delhi/New Delhi. No tractor trolleys, trucks, or any other vehicles transporting individuals or materials, and especially those carrying implements such as sticks/lathis/dandas, swords, spears, bludgeons, firearms or any other thing capable of being used as weapons or tools of violence, shall be permitted entry into the territory of Delhi," the order stated. The order also said that there shall be a ban on the carrying of any fire-arms, explosives, corrosive substance or any lethal weapon or any other article capable of being used as a weapon of offence or defence at any public place within the territory of Delhi/New Delhi, with immediate effect.



## Assam Cong chief to appear before police today in Rahul's yatra route diversion case

**Guwahati, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Assam Congress chief Bhupen Borah will appear before the Jorhat police on Wednesday in a case related to Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra, where it was alleged that due to a diversion from the pre-decided route chaos and a stampede-like situation was created. Police have imposed non-bailable sections in Borah's case, and Congress supporters have claimed that he may be arrested by the police on Monday. However, Bhupen Borah said that he would not apply for anticipatory bail in this case. The Assam Con-

gress president appeared before the police a week ago in the same case, and was asked to appear again on Wednesday. The incident happened on January 18, when Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra was passing through Jorhat town. The march was supposed to head towards Lahoti in Jorhat town, turn at PWD Point, and head towards KB Road. But according to the police, this did not happen, and the crowd of Congress supporters went straight to Gar Aali, the center of the city.

## Trinamool Congress giving priority to northeast: party leader Sushmita Dev

**Guwahati, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Trinamool Congress leader Sushmita Dev, who was nominated for the Rajya Sabha polls for the second time, has said that her party is giving priority to the northeastern region. Dev told IANS, "There are very few instances when a leader from the northeast was sent to the upper house of the parliament twice from other states by any national or regional political party. I have been given this opportunity twice by Mamata Banerjee. This shows her focus and priority towards Assam and other northeastern states." She also said that Trinamool Congress will now have five women MPs out of total 13 in the Rajya Sabha which is close to 40 per cent. Dev switched to Trinamool Congress in 2021

when she was the president of All India Mahila Congress. She was deputed to Tripura and was leading Trinamool Congress' campaign there. Dev was also sent to Rajya Sabha in the same year after Manas Ranjan Bhuiyan vacated his seat post becoming a minister in West Bengal. Dev's term in upper house ended in August last year and the party announced to give her a RS ticket on Wednesday. Following the announcement, Dev wrote on her X handle, "I am indebted to my leader Mamata Banerjee for this opportunity to represent Trinamool Congress in the Rajya



Sabha. I have no words to express my heartfelt gratitude to Abhishek Banerjee for his support." "My party sets yet another milestone in giving Women representation in the legislature. This is path breaking for the North East to get a seat in the upper house from Bengal, again," she added. Meanwhile, the Trinamool Congress has been trying to gain ground in Assam and they are looking to field at least four candidates from the state in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Earlier, Dev was an MP in Lok Sabha from Assam's Silchar which has now become reserved for Scheduled Caste following the delimitation exercise.



## Two gangsters arrested in Rajasthan

**Jaipur, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Rajasthan Police on Wednesday said that its Anti-Gangster Task Force team carried out an operation in Sikar district and arrested two active operatives of Lawrence Bishnoi, Rohit Godara and Vikram Gurjar alias Vikram Bamarda gang, who were planning to murder a history-sheeter. Police said that huge quantity of illegal weapons was also recovered during the operation. Additional Director General of Police Crime and Anti Gangster Task Force (AGTF) Dinesh MN said that police had information about possibility of gang war in Sikar district. "Some anti-social members from Lawrence Bishnoi, Rohit Godara and Vikram Gurjar alias Vikram Bamarda gang were roaming around with illegal weapons with the intention of killing history-sheeter Omprakash Samota alias OP," ADG said.



## BJP reposes faith on seasoned loyalist from Bengal for RS contest

**Kolkata, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Hours after Trinamool Congress announced names of its four candidates for the forthcoming elections in Rajya Sabha in West Bengal, the BJP on Wednesday too announced name of its candidate for one seat in the upper house of the Parliament, choosing seasoned party loyalist Samik Bhattacharya. Currently, he is the principal spokesman of the party in West Bengal. Bhattacharya was also the first BJP legislator in West Bengal though for an extremely short period of time after getting elected

from Basirhat (South) Assembly seat in the 2014 by-elections. He also contested in 2019 Lok Sabha elections from Dun Dum constituency and the 2021 West Bengal Assembly elections from Rajarhat - New Town constituency, both in North 24 Parganas district. Political observers feel that by nominating him for the Rajya Sabha, the BJP's central leadership has recognised his proven loyalty towards the party since the time BJP's organisational and legislative presence in the state was negligible.



## Retd IAF officer accuses army official husband of forging papers, passing benefits to live-in partner

**Kanpur (UP), Feb 14 (IANS) :** A retired woman officer of the Indian Air Force has filed a complaint at Kanpur Cantt police station against her husband, a Lieutenant Colonel, accusing him of staying with another woman and giving her the benefits reserved for an army man's wife. The woman, a resident of Lucknow's Rajajipuram, told police that she married the army officer in 2001, and they have a son and daughter who live with

her. The husband is currently posted as Additional Officer in Kanpur Headquarters of the Army and resides in Kanpur Cantonment. The complainant said that on May 7, 2023, when she reached her husband's official residence, she found a woman, a resident of Dwarka, Delhi, staying with him. It came to light that she had even forged documents to establish her identity as the army officer's wife to avail of all benefits which army wives were entitled to.

The retired IAF officer accused her husband of supporting his female friend to forge certain documents. She said that when she protested, her husband's female friend threatened her with dire consequences. Cantt police station in charge Braj Mohan Singh said that a case had been registered in this regard. "The matter is being investigated and action will be taken on the basis of evidence and other findings," he said.



## BJP chief Nadda in Chennai, to meet OPS, other potential allies

**Chennai, Feb 14 (IANS) :** BJP President J.P. Nadda reached Chennai on Wednesday evening and to hold a series of meetings with potential allies.

The BJP leader was expected to meet expelled AIADMK leader and former Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, O.Pannarselvam (OPS), who is a powerful leader of the Thevar community that dominates southern Tamil Nadu and also wields considerable influence in central and western Tamil Nadu also.

Even though the AIADMK, the principal opposition party of Tamil Nadu, had quit the NDA, the BJP leadership has been trying to bring it back to the fold. Union Home Minister Amit Shah had in a recent interview said that the BJP has not shut its doors to any party. However, AIADMK leader and former Minister D. Jayakumar said that AIADMK will not have any truck with the BJP. The BJP President was to meet leaders of the DMKD and present ally PMK also. Nadda addressed a public gathering in Chennai and was scheduled to return to New Delhi in night.

## Assured Amit Shah of working unitedly for victory of BJP-JD-S candidates in LS polls: Vijayendra

**Bengaluru, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Karnataka unit BJP president B.Y. Vijayendra on Wednesday said that the visit of Union Home Minister Amit Shah to the state was a successful one. "We have given him assurance to work unitedly to ensure the

victory of the BJP and JD-S candidates," he said. He said this while speaking to reporters after attending a series of meetings chaired by Amit Shah in Mysuru. "We discussed in detail the strategy for the upcoming Lok Sabha

elections, and all our leaders have assured the Home Minister that they would work for the victory of the candidates put forth by the BJP-JD-S parties. "The Mysuru tour of Union Home Minister Amit Shah was successful.



## Odisha declares Gupteswar Forest as 4th biodiversity heritage site

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Odisha government has declared Gupteswar Forest -- adjacent to the famous Gupteswar Shiva temple in Dhondrakhol reserve forest -- as the fourth Biodiversity Heritage Site (BHS) of Odisha. The government has also asked the Odisha Biodiversity Board to prepare a long term action plan for the intensive conservation and development of all the four biodiversity-heritage sites including gupteswar forest. The government has provided Rs

35 lakhs for preparation of action plan and awareness building activities in the localities. Along with its sacred grooves traditionally worshiped by the local community, the site, spread over 350 hectares of demarcated area, is bestowed with a wide range of flora and fauna. "Biodiversity inventory and survey conducted by the Odisha Biodiversity Board shows the presence of at least 608 faunal species including 28 species of mammals.

## BJP's allegation against Raghuram Rajan is 'unfounded', 'misleading': Siddaramaiah

**Bengaluru, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Karnataka Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday said BJP's allegation that the committee headed by former RBI Governor Raghuram Rajan has influenced the reduction in Karnataka's tax share is 'unfounded' and 'misleading'. "The narrative suggesting that the committee headed by Raghuram Rajan recommended a reduction in Karnataka's share of tax revenue is not only inaccurate but also a misinterpretation of the committee's role," the Chief Minister said.



## NHRC seeks report from Odisha chief secy over condition of tribals in Koraput

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) has sought an Action Taken Report (ATR) from the Chief Secretary of Odisha and Koraput District Magistrate over the allegations of government apathy towards the plight of residents of three blocks in tribal-dominated Koraput district, who are facing many hardships due to lack of communication facilities. Acting on a petition filed by Supreme Court lawyer and rights

activist Radhakanta Tripathy, the apex rights body asked the Chief Secretary and the District Collector to submit the ATR within four weeks. Tripathy in his petition said that the locals, who are residing in different villages living across Koraput, Lamataput and Nandapur blocks are crossing Kolab reservoir through a dilapidated bridge risking their own life. He further asserted that hundreds of habitations situated near Kolab reservoir remain cut off from the mainland due to submergence af-

ter heavy rainfall. Bodasuku and Lankaput gram panchayats are situated just a few kilometres away from the district headquarters of Koraput.

However, the residents have to travel 60-70 km via Nandapur and Semiliguda to reach Koraput due to the failure of government's intervention.

"Earlier acting on a petition filed by me in 2015 the NHRC asked the district administration to file an enquiry report after it found the ATR was unsatisfactory.

## UP CM to hold 'social media conclave' for 'global branding' of Maha Kumbh 2025

**Prayagraj, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The Yogi Adityanath-led Uttar Pradesh government is planning to organise a social media conclave for the promotion of the upcoming Maha Kumbh 2025 in Prayagraj. This initiative involves collaborating with both governmental and non-governmental agencies to reach a wide audience. Until now, only government agencies have been involved in organising the Maha Kumbh.

However, the state government is now taking proactive steps to involve non-governmental agencies in the process. Aparajita Singh, the Regional Tourism Officer of Prayagraj, said that the Tourism Department wants to connect with as many people as possible through the Maha Kumbh. "Everyone may possess valuable insights, and it is possible that some individuals may not have had the opportunity to communicate their ideas to the government until now.



## 5 arrested in K'taka after gang intervenes between quarrelling couple, wife raped

**Bengaluru, Feb 14 (IANS) :** A married woman was raped by a six-member gang on the pretext of helping her in Gangavathy town in Koppal district of Karnataka.

The police said that five accused have been arrested while the hunt for the main accused is underway. The five accused have been identified as Moula Hussain, Shivakumar, Prashanth, Mahesh and Madesh.

The main accused has been identified as Lingaraj. Police said that victim (21), a native of Bengaluru, had come to meet her husband in Gangavathy town.





## Still open to discuss demands of farmers: Union Minister Munda

**Chandigarh, Feb 14 (IANS) :** After the second round of talks with farmer union leaders remained "inconclusive" on late Wednesday, Union Agriculture Minister Arjun Munda said the government is still open to discuss their demands. Besides Munda, Union Food and Consumer Affairs Minister Piyush Goyal was also present in the second round of discussions with farmer leaders in Chandigarh. "There was a serious discussion with farmers on every topic. The government wants to bring every solution through talks. We reached an agreement on some issues. But there were some issues for which we said that a committee should be made for a permanent solution," Munda told the media after the meeting.

## Chief of Army Staff departs for US to discuss various security issues

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Chief of Army Staff (COAS) General Manoj Pande on Wednesday morning departed on a significant official tour to the U.S. The Ministry of Defence said that the COAS will be in the US from February 14 to 16. The ministry said that during his visit, the COAS will exchange ideas on crucial topics such as the 'Transformation in the Indian Army,' 'Global Threat Perception,' 'Transformation to Army-2030/2040,' 'Human Resource Challenges,' 'Future Force Development and Modernisation,' and 'Co-Production and Co-Development Initiatives.' "These discussions are aimed at sharing insights, ideas, and best practices between the two armies," the ministry said. It said that the visit underscores the deepening military cooperation and strategic partnership between India and the U.S, aiming to further strengthen defence cooperation and foster stronger bonds between the armies of both nations. The ministry said that the COAS will engage in high-level discussions and interactions with General Randy George, United States Chief of Staff of the Army (CSA) and other senior military leaders. It said that General Randy George, US CSA, had recently visited India for the Indo-Pacific Army Chiefs Conference (IPACC) that was jointly hosted by the Indian Army and the US Army. The conference was attended by 18 Chiefs of Armies and 12 countries represented by Heads of Delegations. "Highlights of the tour include a prestigious US Army Honour Guard ceremony, a solemn laying of the wreath at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Arlington National Cemetery, and a comprehensive tour of the Pentagon," the ministry said. The ministry said that these engagements symbolise the respect and mutual commitment towards global peace and security shared between the two countries. The ministry said that the visit includes the 'Army Geospatial Centre' at Fort Belvoir, the 'National Defence University' at Fort McNair, and interactions with leadership at Headquarters 1 Corps. "The COAS will also engage with units at the forefront of military innovation and strategy, including the Stryker Unit, 1st Multi-Domain Task Force, the 1st Special Forces Group at Seattle and the Defence Innovation Unit in San Francisco," the ministry said.



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## Gehlot-Pilot factionalism forcing Congress to offer Raj RS seat to Sonia Gandhi?

**Jaipur, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Congress Parliamentary Party Chairperson Sonia Gandhi has been invited by the party's Rajasthan unit to contest the Rajya Sabha elections from the state. A proposal has been sent by both state President Govind Singh Dotasra and Leader of Opposition Tika Ram Jolly, amid reported differences between the Ashok Gehlot and Sachin Pilot camps on the candidate. Former Prime Minister Manmohan Singh is a Rajya Sabha member from Rajasthan and his tenure is now coming to an end. In such a situation, demand has been made to send Sonia Gandhi to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan in his place. Before sending the proposal on Wednesday, Dotasra and Jolly discussed the matter with all the senior leaders and MLAs. State Congress leaders have argued that Sonia Gandhi going to Rajya Sabha from Rajasthan will boost the morale of the leaders and workers here. However, she is yet to respond to the proposal. Elections for three Rajya Sabha seats in Rajasthan are on February 27 and the last date for filing nomination is February 15, and thus, the Congress needs now decide on

Rajya Sabha candidates in a day or two. Leader of Opposition Jolly said: "We have requested the national President to make Sonia Gandhi a Rajya Sabha candidate from Rajasthan. If Sonia Gandhi is made the candidate, it will infuse new enthusiasm among the Congress workers." With the BJP having 115 seats and the Congress 70, the BJP will get two seats and Congress will win one. While the tenures of Union Minister Bhupendra Yadav, and Manmohan Singh are getting completed, Kirodail Meena resigned as MP after winning the Assembly polls. Meanwhile, party sources



said that veteran leader Jitendra Bhanwar Singh is also leading the charts as RS candidate from Rajasthan. He has been a favourite of Gandhi family since years and hence former Chief Minister Gehlot also favours his candidature. Singh had been successful in bringing Jolly as leader of opposition, said sources. The Pilot camp has reportedly backed the name of Ajay Maken. However, Gehlot camp doesn't want Maken to be the candidate for he had openly supported Pilot during the September 25 episode when Gehlot loyalists had called a parallel meeting to the meeting called by Congress high com-



## MBBS student accuses seniors of ragging at Odisha medical college

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14 (IANS) :** A first year MBBS student has levelled allegations of ragging against his seniors at the MKCG Medical College and Hospital in Berhampur in Odisha's Ganjam district. The police have launched a probe into the matter by registering a case. "On Wednesday, a first year MBBS student of MKCG Medical College -- Rudra Rout from Balasore district who stays in Hostel-2 on the campus -- approached the Baidyanathpur police station alleging that on February 9 at around 11 p.m. when he was returning to his room, two fourth-year students assaulted him without any reason," said Saravana Vivek M, Superintendent of Police, Berhampur.

## BJP, AAP both failed to keep their promises to farmers: Bajwa

**Chandigarh, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Slamming the BJP-led Union government for its failure to fulfill its promise to provide a minimum support price (MSP) guarantee to the farmers, Punjab's Leader of the Opposition Partap Singh Bajwa on Wednesday said Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann had also reneged from his promises made to farmers at several occasions. "Punjab CM is now attempting to intermediate in the meetings between the representatives of the BJP-led Union government and farmers' unions. However, he himself let down the farmers of Punjab on numerous occasions. The flood-affected farmers have not yet been compensated by the Aam Aadmi Party government in Punjab, even though the CM used to say that he would provide compensation for hens also," he said in a statement. Bajwa said when the CM was attempting to resolve the issues between farmers and the Centre, the police resorted to a baton charge



at the activists of the Berozgar Sanjha Morcha at Sangrur, "which showed CM's insensitivity towards the struggling people". Congress leader Bajwa said AAP failed terribly to ensure the MSP on moong crops in the state. Farmers didn't even get the cash incentives to manage paddy stubble and compensation for adopting the DSR technique to sow paddy.



## Odisha to provide interest-free loans to rural unemployed youth

**Bhubaneswar, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The Odisha Cabinet on Wednesday approved a slew of proposals, including the launch of the new scheme 'SWAYAM' for interest-free loans up to Rs 1 lakh to rural unemployed youth and entrepreneurs intending to expand their existing business. The state Cabinet has approved 26 proposals during the meeting presided over by Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik at the Lok Seva Bhawan here on Wednesday. The eligible youth in the 18-35 age group residing in rural areas can avail loan of up to Rs 1 lakh under SWAYAM or Swatantra Yuva Udyami to start a new business or expand the existing ones. "All rural unemployed youth or those with no outstanding loan for the same purpose from any Central/state government supported schemes in the age group of 18-35 years (18-40 years for special category) desirous of starting a new business or to expand their existing business will be provided interest-free bank loan as project cost up to Rs 1 lakh," said official sources. The applicants belonging to the families covered under KALIA /BSKY scheme or having income of less than rs 2 lakh per annum where "family" implies self and spouse can avail the loan.



## Electric cables to be laid like railway tracks on Delhi-Jaipur road : Gadkari

**Udaipur, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Tram-like services will soon run between Jaipur and Delhi, which will have the best of facilities and the fare will also be less as three buses will be connected like train coaches, Union Minister for Road Transport and Highways, Nitin Gadkari, said here on Wednesday while laying the foundation for 17 road projects. Gadkari said he had gone to Prague, the capital of Czechoslovakia, some time ago where there was a cable above the road on which electric bus was running. "Electric cables will be laid on the road like a railway track. After this, an electric bus will be run by connecting three buses like a coach.



## Tripura govt to allow tribal students to write answers in Roman script for Kokborak language exam

**Agartala, Feb 14 (IANS) :** In wake of the agitation by tribal students' bodies, the Tripura government on Wednesday announced to allow tribal students appearing for Kokborak language examinations to write answers in Roman script, along with Bengali script. Government spokesman and Food and Transport Minister Sushanta Chowdhury said.

## Rs 3K cr spent on free meds, tests to 25 lakh TB patients annually: Mandaviya

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The government spends approximately Rs 3,000 crore annually on free medicines, testing, and nutrition for 25 lakh tuberculosis (TB) patients in India, Union Health Minister Dr Mansukh Mandaviya said.



## US military confirms airstrikes on Houthi targets in Yemen's Hodeidah



**Sanaa, Feb 14 (IANS) :** US military on Wednesday confirmed that it struck Houthi targets near the Yemeni Red Sea port city of Hodeidah a day earlier, claiming to have hit the group's two unmanned surface vessels (USVs) and three anti-ship cruise missiles. In an online statement, the US Central Command (CENTCOM) said its forces successfully conducted self-defence strikes against these targets north of Hodeidah "that were prepared to launch against ships in the Red Sea" on Saturday afternoon. "CENTCOM identified these USVs and missiles in Houthi-controlled areas of Yemen and determined they presented an imminent threat to US Navy ships and merchant vessels in the region," it added as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. On Wednesday evening, Houthi-run al-Masirah

TV reported that US and British aircraft carried out a fresh round of airstrikes on Houthi targets, hitting the Al-Salif port northwest of Hodeidah city, without providing more details. Houthi group has launched dozens of missile attacks against Israel-linked merchant vessels in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since mid-November last year, in what the group said were done out of solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza. Washington has warned Houthis to re-list them as a "global terrorist organisation" if the group doesn't stop attacking shipping. Houthi group has been controlling the strategic Red Sea port city of Hodeidah since the 2018 UN-brokered Stockholm Agreement, which was backed by the US and Britain, forcing the Yemeni internationally recognised government out.



## Israel's heavy strikes on Gaza's Rafah: Death toll exceeds 100

**Gaza, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The death toll in the Israeli army's heavy strikes on the southern city of Rafah and surrounding areas of the Gaza Strip exceeded 100 on Wednesday, Palestinian news agency Wafa said. About 40 airstrikes on the Rafah area in the early hours of Monday were conducted by the Israeli army, with intensive ground shelling, it said. The Israeli army said in a statement that it conducted "a series of strikes on terror targets" in southern Gaza on Wednesday, but did not provide other details. The death toll of Palestinians from Israeli attacks in the Gaza

Strip has risen to 28,176 since October 7, 2023, with 67,784 others being injured, the Gaza-based Health Ministry said in a statement. Since the start of the Israel-Hamas conflict in Gaza, about half of the residents there have fled to Rafah, adjacent to Egypt, in search of safety, Xinhua news agency reported. The border city, which receives food and medicine aid from foreign countries and UN agencies through the Rafah crossing, is crowded with tents on empty agricultural lands, in schools and along roadsides.

## Trump putting troops at risk by threatening to undermine int'l alliance, warns NATO

**Washington, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Donald Trump has drawn the ire of the NATO countries with its Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg alleging that the former US President is undermining the future of the organisation with his recent campaign rally statement to a member country -- "you don't pay, we don't protect you".

Stoltenberg issued a warning to the leaders around the world after Trump stirred fears about the future of NATO at a campaign stop on Wednesday. Trump was criticising the future of the organisation with his recent campaign rally statement to a member country -- "you don't pay, we don't protect you".



## Split mandate in Pak polls: PML(N) moots idea of 'participatory coalition govt'

**Islamabad, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Amid spilt mandate in the general polls, Pakistan Muslim League(Nawaz) (PML-N) has suggested for a participatory coalition government, local media reported. Talking to media persons after holding deliberations

with the party's top leaders on the political scenario in the country and future course of action, PML(N) leader and former law minister Azam Nazeer Tarar said: "We are consulting with former allies to form the government at Centre, Dawn reported. In the larger

interest of the country, all should join hands to form the federal government, the former minister said. Amid allegations of rigging in the polls, Tarar said not a single political party had won a majority in the National Assembly, which shows that "elections were fair".

## Cambodia reports 3 more cases of mpox

**Phnom Penh, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Cambodia recorded three more cases of mpox, also known as monkeypox, raising the total number of infections in the kingdom to nine since last December, the Ministry of Health said in a statement. "Laboratory results from the National Institute of Public Health showed on Wednesday that three more persons tested positive for mpox, so the total confirmed cases of the disease in Cambodia have increased to nine," the Ministry added on Wednesday. The patients, who live in three different districts in the capital Phnom Penh, have been undergoing proper treatment at a hospital, Xinhua news agency reported.



## Philippine landslide death toll rises to 54

**Manila, Feb 14 (IANS) :** The death toll from a landslide in the southern Philippines has risen to 54, the government said, as rescue workers comb mud and rubble in search for 63 missing people. The landslide hit the mountain town of Maco in Davao de Oro province on the evening of February 6, burying several homes, vehicles, and dozens of people, Xinhua news agency reported. The Maco town disaster prevention office said at least 32 people were injured but

survived the tragedy. Local authorities said that the landslide has affected 1,347 families, or 5,431 people, in four villages in the municipality of Maco. The World Risk Index 2022 put the Philippines at the number one spot for the most disaster-prone countries in the world. Located in the Pacific Ring of Fire, the archipelago is frequently battered by powerful typhoons, triggering flash floods and landslides, and rocked by earthquakes and volcanic eruptions.



## 20 Hamas men arrested from Gaza hospital: IDF

**Tel Aviv, Feb 14 (IANS) :** At least 20 Hamas men were arrested from Al Amal Hospital in Gaza Strip by Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The Israel army in a statement said Hamas men hiding in the hospital were arrested without disrupting the functioning of the hospital. The Israel army said: "This again proves how Hamas' terror operatives were using hospitals as their base to carry out attacks against the IDF." Search in the hospital was conducted after prior coordination with the hospital staff, the army said, adding that the forces searched the hospital carefully without opening fire and without harming patients or staff. The IDF said that soldiers were briefed in advance on acting without harming patients, medical teams, civilians, and medical equipment, in accordance with international law.



## Egypt accuses Israeli Finance Minister of 'sabotaging' Gaza ceasefire talks

**Cairo, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Egypt has said that Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich is "sabotaging" Gaza ceasefire talks in Cairo. In a statement released on Wednesday, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said Smotrich "continues to make irresponsible and inflammatory statements, which only reveal a hunger for killing and destruction."



## Charities under strain as foreign students 'struggle' in Canada : Report

**Toronto, Feb 14 (IANS) :** With international students struggling amidst worsening housing and affordability issues in Canada, charities and support groups say they are under strain and have urged the government to step up support. With nearly 500,000 international students living in the Greater Toronto Area, Khalsa Aid's national director Jindi Singh says charities are tak-

ing on more than their fair share of the load, Ottawa-based CBC news channel reported. "We truly feel it's not really our role," Singh told the news outlet. The Canadian branch of Khalsa Aid, helping over 8000 students struggling to access food, clothes, and shelter in cities across the country, says the government and post-secondary institutions should be doing more to support international students in need. Jindi said that the organisation has

been presently receiving five calls a day from international students needing food, clothing, and shelter, especially from Brampton in Ontario province where he said that the situation is "acute". Since last June, Khalsa Aid has delivered over 5,000 grocery bags full of non-perishable food to students in this city, which attracts tens of thousands of international students annually. The president of the College Student Alliance, Azi Afousi, told

CBC that student unions across Ontario have reported fielding more calls about housing struggles, adding that one of her colleagues shares a house with 15 other people. International students contribute about CA\$22 billion (\$16.4 billion) annually to the Canadian economy and pay four times more tuition than domestic students. According to a September 2023 report by consulting firm Higher Education Strategy Associates, students from India alone contributed \$2 billion to Ontario's post-secondary institutions' operating income last year, compared to roughly \$1.8 billion the provincial government contributed. "For colleges and governments to not provide wrap-around services like housing, food, and job referrals, is a "pure money grab," Singh told CBC.

This comes even as the government has set out to cap new study permits for international students and cancelling work permits for their spouses. However, Deepa Mattoo of Sukhmani Haven says that the cap doesn't do anything to help the students who are already in Canada and are struggling.

## Yuvraj Singh joins New York Strikers as captain for Legends Cricket Trophy season 2

**New Delhi, February 14 (IANS) :** Former India star all-rounder Yuvraj Singh joined New York as the captain and icon player for the upcoming Legends Cricket Trophy Season 2.

Yuvraj's addition enriches the squad with a depth of expertise, skill, and leadership, fortifying New York Superstar Strikers' readiness to lead in the upcoming edition of the tournament.

The announcement of Yuvraj's leadership role has elevated the excitement surrounding New York Superstar Strikers' participation in the Legends Cricket Trophy Season 2, ig-

ning enthusiasm among fans and cricket enthusiasts worldwide. With a skilled roster comprising Babar Azam, Rashid Khan, Keiron Pollard, Imam U1 Haq, Naseem Shah, Matheesha Pathirana, Rahmanullah Gurbaz, Asif Ali, and Mohammad Amir, New York Strikers not only emerge as formidable contenders but also demonstrate the team's dedication to ongoing improvement and triumph. Tam owner Sagar Khanna expressing his enthusiasm about Yuvraj joining the team, shares, "We are thrilled to have Yuvraj Singh on board as our captain and icon player. His unparalleled talent and proven leadership will undoubtedly elevate the performance of the team." He further emphasising on the team's mission, shared: "Our mission with New York Superstar Strikers is to become the most formidable team ever, both in gameplay and skill. With Yuvraj Singh leading the charge and the talented lineup we've assembled, we are prepared to make this vision a reality"



## We were very confident that we would get the visa for Rehan before the game started: Ben Stokes

**Rajkot, Feb 14 (IANS) :** England captain Ben Stokes on Wednesday expressed relief after young leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed's visa issue was sorted in quick time.

Ahmed, a spinner of Pakistani descent, arrived in Rajkot with a single-entry visa, but he was able to complete his paperwork a day before the third Test against India.

Stokes hailed the Indian government and the BCCI for sorting out the issue "quickly". "For any individual having to wait for that is always an anxious period, but thankfully, we got it through this morning,

and great job from the guys at the airport for giving him his visa to get through initially, and everyone at the BCCI and the government to get the visa quickly," he said ahead of the third Test.

"We do not have to worry anymore about those issues, we were very confident that we would get the visa for Rehan before the game started," he added.

Earlier, before the start of the India-England Test series, off-spinner Shoaib Bashir faced visa issues and arrived in Hyderabad on the third day of the first Test.



## Equestrian: Young champ Jai Sabharwal wins 2 golds at National Championship

**Mumbai, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Mumbai based 14 years old Jai Singh Sabharwal from Amateur Riders' Club (ARC) clinched the two gold medals at the National Equestrian Championship (NEC) at the show jumping competition.

Sabharwal clinched gold in the Grade III Jumping Individual Category and another Gold in the Six bar Nationals (Seniors).

Jai Sabharwal secured Gold in the Grade III Individual Show Jumping with Zero penalties, Time in jump off of 30.48 seconds with the Height 120cm. He clinched the top spot in the Six bar Nationals (Seniors) with height of 170 cm while riding on 'Carna De La Bryere'.

"I spent a lot of time training on learning the right way of riding with my coaches. Took part in many competitions with smaller height fences, made sure to get them right first and then took part in the shows with seniors. "It has given me a lot of confidence to keep competing. and have the opportunity to represent my country in the future. Encouraged me to believe more in myself and know that I can achieve my goals if I continue working hard," said Sabharwal.



## Sports Minister Anurag Thakur hands over Chess Olympiad Torch to Budapest

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Anurag Singh Thakur on Wednesday handed over the Chess Olympiad Torch to Budapest, Hungary, the official host of the 45th edition of the Chess Olympiad.

The 1st Chess Olympiad Torch Relay was kicked off in a ceremony by the Prime Minister Narendra Modi here at Indira Gandhi Stadium on June 19, 2022.

The handoff ceremony took place at Major Dhyanchand National Stadium in the national capital, where the Sports Minister, along with Indian Grand Master Vishwanathan Anand played also a friendly game of Chess against FIDE President, Arkady Dvorkovich and Hungarian Grand Master Judit Polgar before handing over the Olympiad torch to the FIDE President and Budapest. During the event, the Sports Minister said: "I am delighted that what we decided a few years back (to have Chess Olympiad Torch Relay) actually happened and that I am here at the handoff ceremony of the Torch for the Chess Olympiad." "Chess is an intellectual legacy that India prob-

ably offers to the world, and it is not merely a sport, but a reflection of strategic depth and philosophical wisdom. The elegant sport not only sharpens the mind but also teaches invaluable lessons of patience and resilience and takes one onto the path of intellectual pursuit of strategic mastery," he added. The 44th edition of the Chess Olympiad was held in Chennai in the year 2022. More than 2500 players and 7000 had taken part in the global event at that time. The next edition of the FIDE Chess Olympiad will now take place in Budapest, Hungary this year with the official announcement for the same being made earlier this year.



## Qatar Open : Osaka edges Martic; Tsurenko upsets Jabeur

**Doha, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Naomi Osaka scored a second-round 6-3, 7-6(9) win over Croatia's Petra Martic and earned her back-to-back victories at a WTA Tour event for the first time in 23 months. Osaka last won two matches at a WTA tournament at the

2022 Miami Open, where she eventually finished runner-up to Iga Swiatek. But after defeating No.15 seed Caroline Garcia in the first round this week the former World No.1 took another step forward by beating World No.67 Martic in 1 hour and 45 minutes.



## Khelo India Winter Games 2024 : Talent, hope aplenty but what's next for ice skaters?

**New Delhi, Feb 14 (IANS) :** India's top skaters believe the start of the Khelo India Winter Games in Ladakh could be a gamechanger for ice-sports although a lot remains to be done. Shruti Kotwal, India's

first professional long track skater based in the United States, and Akash Aradhya, a veteran in short-track sprinting, feel the recently concluded KIWG at Leh held out significant promises for skaters with long-term aspiration. In ice-

skating, Kotwal and Aradhya, have been there, done that and are seeing the transformation of winter sports in India. With plenty of international experience behind them, Shruti Kotwal and Akash Aradhya, who won a pair of long track and short track Khelo India Winter Games 2024 gold medals each in Leh, think the Nawang Dorjay Stobdan (NDS) ice rink, in the heart of Leh, could become the headquarters of ice sports if it can become an all-weather centre. Shruti Kotwal was back in India for the first time in 10 years. She competed at Guphuks Pond, a natural water body alongside the Indus River and surrounded by the Zaskar Range that freezes in winter and becomes a skating and ice hockey rink for local Ladhakis.

## BATC: Indian women upset China; men beat Hong Kong to enter quarterfinals

**Shah Alam (Malaysia), Feb 14 (IANS) :** Indian women's badminton team upset the mighty Chinese while the men got the better of Hong Kong to march into the quarterfinals of the Badminton Asia Team Champion-

ships here on Wednesday. The women, led by two-time Olympic medallists PV Sindhu, defeated China for the first time in a team event with teenage debutante Anmol Kharab coming up with an inspired performance to ensure a 3-2 score line in the Indian's favour in the Group W clash.



## Mohammad Nabi replaces Shakib Al Hasan as No.1 ODI all-rounder in ICC rankings

**Dubai, Feb 14 (IANS) :** Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi on Wednesday jumped a place to supersede Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan as the No.1 ranked all-rounder in the latest ICC rankings. Bangladesh's cricketing maestro Shakib Al

Hasan held the position of No.1 all-rounder for five years. He hasn't played for Bangladesh since the 2023 World Cup due to an eye condition, also not able to participate in Bangladesh's white-ball series against Sri Lanka.

