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Nifty hits fresh record high, up for sixth straight session

Nifty extended its gains for the sixth consecutive session on Tuesday, once again touching a fresh record high in the last hour of trade, said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail...

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Slap those who spread rumours of BJP-BRS alliance with slippers: Bandi

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : BJP general secretary and MP Bandi Sanjay Kumar today made sensational remarks. He has appealed the party workers to slap those, who say that the BJP will have an alliance with the BRS party with slippers. He said even politicians should be beaten up with slippers. "There is a flawed deal going on between the Congress and the BRS party. As part of this, the CAG, vigilance and Central reports have concluded that the KCR government was involved in corruption, but the BRS leaders, including KCR, are not being arrested. In return, the BRS leaders also did not raise the issue in the Assembly as to why the promises

made by the Congress party in the last elections were not being implemented," he said.

He said he would quit politics the day he could not talk about Hindutva. He urged the people to gift 370 MP seats to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is working towards the abrogation of Article 370 and making the country No 1 and building a New India.

Union Minister B L Varma, MLC AVN Reddy, MLA Katepalli Venkataramana Reddy and others visited Tandur as part of the Vijaya Sankalpa Yatra. On the occasion, B.L. Varma and Bandi Sanjay launched the Vijaya Sankalpa Yatra.



Medaram Jatara to begin today

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : All arrangements are in place for the biennial Sammakka-Saralamma fair, popularly known as Medaram Jatara, scheduled to begin at Medaram village of Tadwai mandal in Mulugu district on Wednesday. On the first day, the local deities Saralamma from Kannepalli, Pagiddaraju from Poonugundla village of Kothaguda mandal and Govindaraju from Kondai village

of Tadwai mandal will be brought to the temple. On the second day, Goddess Sammakka will be brought from Chilukalagutta and installed according to the adivasi rituals. On the third day, the devotees will offer prayers to the deities and on the next day, the God's will return to the forest on the following day according to the adivasi rituals.



IERPs should be regularised : Vinod Kumar

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : Boyinapalli Vinod Kumar today demanded that the State government regularise the Inclusive Education Resource Persons (IERP).

Congress demands unconditional apology from BJP for remarks against Deepadas Munshi

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : Congress leaders demanded that BJP former MLA NVSS Prabhakar tender an unconditional apology for making derogatory remarks against AICC Telangana in-charge Deepadas Munshi.

In a news channel debate, the BJP leader alleged that Deepadas Munshi had received a Benz car as a gift and that he had evidence. Condemning the remarks, Congress spokesperson

Addanki Dayakar criticised NVSS Prabhakar's comments against Deepadas Munshi as proof of bankruptcy.

Stating that the BJP is a party that survives on corruption, irregularities and lies, TPCC campaign Committee Chairman Madhu Yashki Goud said NVSS Prabhakar is making sensational comments for gaining the publicity in a bid to contest in the upcoming Lok Sabha elec-



tions. "If he doesn't apologise, there will be serious consequences," Madhu Yashki Goud said. Meanwhile, MLC Mahesh Kumar Goud, TPCC vice-president Chamala Kiran Kumar Reddy, AICC Spokesperson Sujata Paul and other Congress leaders also condemned the remarks of BJP leader



Kavitha meets family of Imampet SC hostel student, who committed suicide

Suryapet, Feb 20 (IANS) : BRS party MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha today expressed shock over the series of suicides of students in gurukul schools of Telangana. She de-

mandated that Chief Minister Revanth Reddy immediately take note of this and review the functioning of gurukul schools appealed the CM to save the lives of the girl children. She suggested

that the government increase the number of counsellors to reduce the mental stress of the students as it is exam time.

MLC Kavitha met the family members of Asmita, a student of Imampet SC Gurukul School, who committed suicide recently. Kavitha, along with BRS party MP Badugula Lingaiah Yadav and former MLA Bollam Mallaiah Yadav, consoled Asmita's mother and family members at Burkacherla village in Mothe mandal of Suryapet district on Tuesday. Financial assistance was provided by Kavitha to the victims' family members on the occasion.

Speaking to media persons on the occasion, Kavitha said, "It is sad that Asmita, a student of SC Gurukul school, committed suicide.



Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Hon'ble Union Minister Lays Foundation Stone for Komuravelli (H) Railway Station

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (TIM Bureau) : Shri G. Kishan Reddy, Hon'ble Union Minister of Culture and Tourism, Development of North East Region laid the foundation stone for the construction of Komuravelli (H) Railway station on 15th February, 2024 in the august presence of Shri Mohan Yadav, Hon'ble Chief

Minister, Madhya Pradesh; Shri V. Roja Radhakrishna Sharma, Hon'ble Chairperson, Zilla Praja Parishad, Siddipet; Dr. Laxman, Hon'ble Member of Parliament; Shri Boora Narsaiah, Ex-Member of Parliament and Shri Raghunandan Rao, Ex-Member of Legislative Assembly.

Minister assures all help to farmers

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : Minister for Agriculture Tummala Nageswara Rao has informed that the State government will extend all the help to farmers from the day they begin the crop cultivation to the marketing of the produce.

In a release here on Tuesday, the Minister alleged that the previous BRS government had neglected the agricultural sector and used to buy only one or two crops, ignoring to provide a remunerative price for other crops.



Two Congress, one BRS Rajya Sabha nominees elected unanimously

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : Three Rajya Sabha nominees, Renuka Chowdhury, M Anil Kumar Yadav from Congress, and Vaddiraju Ravichandra from BRS, were elected unanimously on Tuesday. The deadline for filling nominations ended on February 15 and

there was no other candidates to file nominations. As a result, the election was unanimous with only three nominations for the three seats. Meanwhile, Returning Officer Upendar Reddy has announced the unanimous of Rajya Sabha elections.

MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy back in YSRCP

Vijayawada, Feb 20 (IANS) : Mangalagiri MLA Alla Ramakrishna Reddy has returned to his old party YSRCP today. He met Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy at the camp office in Tadepalli on Tuesday afternoon. CM Jagan welcomed

him back to the party by wrapping the YSRCP scarf around him. Alla was accompanied by his brother Ayodhya Rami Reddy and Mangalagiri YSRCP in-charge Ganji Chiranjeevi. There is a lot of interest as to what responsibilities will be given to RK in the YSRCP. It is known that CM

Jagan has appointed Ganji Chiranjeevi, who belongs to the BC community, as in-charge of Mangalagiri assembly constituency YSRCP.

It is known that RK had recently resigned from the YSRCP.





IPE organised workshop on Financial Inclusion and Rural Women Empowerment through PMJDY

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (TIM Bureau) : Institute of Public Enterprise (IPE), Hyderabad organised a workshop on 20th February 2024, as a part of ICSSR sponsored Short Term Empirical Research Project 2023-2024 titled "Role of Financial Inclusion in Rural Women Empowerment: An Impact Analysis of PMJDY in Select Areas of Maharashtra, Rajasthan, West Bengal and J&K". Prof. S Sreenivasa Murthy, Director, IPE has chaired the workshop. Ms. Swati Tiwari, DGM, NABARD and Shri A L Nageswar

Rao, former CGM, Andhra Bank had graced the workshop as the Guest of Honour. Prof. V Srikanth, Dean (Academics) and Prof. Ch Lakshmi Kumari, Dean (Research) participated in the workshop. Several rural women beneficiaries of PMJDY scheme and women SHGs, participated in the workshop and shared their views and thoughts. The workshop was organised by Dr. Syed Azher Ali (Coordinator), Dr. Mousumi Singha Mahapatra, Dr. Anuradha Nayak and Dr. Muzamil Ahmad Baba.



Inauguration of Somaji Guda Federal Branch (Federal Bank)

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (TIM Bureau) : With immense joy and excitement, the Somajiguda branch was officially inaugurated. A total of 50 enthusiastic participants graced the event, making it

truly memorable. The occasion was a resounding success! Special gratitude goes to our esteemed guests Shri Ajay Mishra Ji(IAS Retd) (Chairman IRCS Telangana State) who inaugurated the branch ,Shri Surender Paul

singh ji(Chairman Premier Energies Ltd) who inaugurated the Branch ATM,Shri EVPS Satya Krishna ji(Chairman, Citadel Management consulting pvt ltd) who inaugurated the Strong room and safe deposit lockers, Shri Nalli Durga Rao ji(Chairman NDR Holdings) . The guests spoke about the developments in banking industry and also mentioned about the progress of federal bank over the years. Shri Shir Dileep B (Senior vice president and Zonal head) and Shri Jose Thomas (Vice President and Regional Head) presided over

the function mentioning about the banks CSR activities and expansion of branches in Telangana. And how the bank is progressing with their unique products. Team members of somajiguda showed the spirit in making the event a grand success. M Shiva Kumar (Manager& Branch Head) of somajiguda branch has given vote of thanks to guests, customers and urged the people of somajiguda to utilize the services of the bank and also mentioned about banks products .



Defense Minister launches a new integrated waste management project in Lucknow

Lucknow, Feb 20 (TIM Bureau) : Honorable Defense Minister, Shri Rajnath Singh launched an integrated project by LSA & Lucknow Municipal Corporation to revolutionize the waste management landscape of Lucknow.

(LSA), a wholly owned subsidiary of Re Sustainability Limited, has recently finalized a significant agreement with the Lucknow Municipal Corporation that encompasses a dedicated effort to transform waste management practices within the city of Lucknow. This revolutionary

commitment marks a crucial step towards advancing sustainable and innovative waste solutions in Lucknow.

The agreement encompasses a comprehensive array of waste management services, showcasing Lucknow Swachhata Abhiyan (LSA)'s unwavering commitment to implementing cutting-edge waste management solutions that prioritize sustainability and cleanliness. Key provisions include the efficient door-to-door collection of segregated waste using smart EV (Electronic Vehicles) fleet, the establishment and operation of Material Recovery Facility (MRF), Transfer Stations, and the meticulous handling of both wet and dry waste transportation to designated processing sites. All operations will undergo 24/7 monitoring utilizing a cutting-edge command and control center in real-time. These activities will be progressively and systematically implemented over the next six months. Within the domain of drainage

management, Lucknow Swachhata Abhiyan (LSA) is prepared to execute a systematic cleaning regimen. This proactive approach includes the weekly maintenance of drains measuring up to 45 cm, ensuring consistent upkeep. Furthermore, drains exceeding 45 cm up to 1 meter will undergo thorough cleaning at intervals of once every 15 days.

The company will actively participate in Information, Education, and Communication (IEC) endeavors, striving to enhance public awareness of efficient waste management practices. Commenting on this pioneering collaboration, Mr. Masood Mallick, CEO of Re Sustainability Limited, said, "Entering into this partnership underscores our nation's steadfast dedication to advancing towards a cleaner and greener environment."

NACS invites applications for cyber security courses

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (NSS): The National Academy of Cyber Security called for online applications for admission into the Govt. of India Certified Cyber Security Courses Online Training. Interested Inter, Degree, Diploma, Engineering, and PG candidates can apply online from all over Telangana State for the respective courses for admission. Courses offered are: Cyber Security Officer, PG Diploma in Cyber Security & Ethical Hacking, Master Program in Cyber Security & Ethical Hacking. Duration of the Courses is four months to 10 months. National Academy of Cyber Security offers a 50% fee subsidy in the form of concession in the course fee to SC, ST, BC, EBC, OBC, Minority, PH, Women candidates, Ex-Serviceman and their children under Swarna

Bharat National Level Skill Development Program. After completion of the course, a Govt. of India Certificate will be issued. After successfully completing courses in Cyber Security, the Candidates will get opportunities in the job profiles like Cyber Security Officer, Information Officer, Information Analyst, Security Architect, IT Security Engineer, Systems Security Administrator, Information Risk Auditor, Security Analyst, Intrusion Detection Specialist, Computer Security Incident Responders, Cryptologists, Vulnerability Assessors, Trainer/Teacher in Educational Institutions. Job opportunities are good for these candidates in India as well as abroad. Online Application website: www.nacsindia.org. Last date for Online Application is February 29, 2024.



Tamilisai joins 37th Foundation Day fete of Arunachal & Mizoram States

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (NSS): Governor of Telangana Tamilisai Soundararajan, participated as the chief guest in

the State celebration of the 37th Foundation Day of Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram at the Raj Bhavan of Telangana on February

20. The event commenced with the Governor extending warm wishes to the people of both States on their foundation day. She expressed her gratitude to Prime Minister Narendra Modi for initiating such a meaningful event, which really paves the way for national integration. Speaking on the occasion, Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan highlighted the strong cultural and emotional ties between Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram with Telangana. She drew an insightful connection between Arunachal Pradesh and South India, referencing the revered Lord Arunachalesvara temple in the Tiruvannamalai district of Tamil Nadu.

The program featured video messages from the Governors of both Arunachal Pradesh and Mizoram.

The celebration came alive with vibrant cultural performances, including a fascinating bamboo dance by talented participants from both States. R. Lalhriatpuii, a Ph.D. scholar at Hyderabad University, anchored the event. Distinguished speakers, including Dr Christina Z. Chongthu, IAS, Secretary of Health Department of Telangana; Dr C. Vanlalhruii, Assistant Professor at Hyderabad University; and Ejum Riba, a Master's student at Hyderabad University, addressed the gathering and shared their perspectives on the occasion. Professors Viresh Rawal and Akhila Kumar Sahoo awarded Prof. Goverdhan Mehta Chair Professorships in School of Chemistry, UoH.

Tirupati ranks high in swachhata in Swachh Survekshan 2023

Tirupati, Feb 20 (IANS) : Tirupati houses the largest Urban Local Body (ULB) in Andhra Pradesh's Chittoor district. Tirupati Municipal Corporation has demonstrated its commitment to cleanliness after securing the 8th spot among cleanest cities with a population of over one lakh in the Swachh Survekshan 2023 rankings. It also achieved a 5-star Garbage Free City (GFC) and Water plus rating, establishing itself as the cleanest State capital in the nation. Tirupati, a city generating approximately 115 TPD of Wet Waste, 15 TPD of Food Waste, 61 TPD of Dry Waste & Recyclables, 1 TPD of Domes-

tic Hazardous Waste, and 2 TPD of Plastic Waste, along with an additional 25 Tons per day of Construction and Demolition waste, has prioritized robust waste management. All waste collected gets scientifically processed at the respective waste processing and management facilities. The Tirupati MC team has employed nearly 1000 sanitation workers dedicated to ensuring sanitation services. Achieving 100% door-to-door waste collection, the city covers every gate by providing essential infrastructure, including Ghanta Gaddis or auto tippers equipped with blue, green, and red compartments for segregating Plastic and Non-Plastic waste.

CHANGE OF NAME
I, D. Gowri Pratyusha, W/o. Late D Chandra Shekhar Reddy, Flat No.404, Srinivasa Village Apartment, Yousefguda, Hyderabad. Have changed my name as **B. Shri Nitya.**

CHANGE OF NAME
I, SHAIK LATHEEF (Old name) S/o. SHAIK IMAM H-no:5-1-40/1,Kaviraj Nagar Khanpuram Haveli Khammam (Urban) Khammam District, State Telangana.I have changed my name as SHAIK LATHEEF. Here offer my name known as SHAIK LATHEEF S/o SHAIK IMAM.

Bhishma Ekadashi celebrated with fishermen

Hyderabad, Feb.20 (IANS) : Chilkur Balaji Temple had in the past performed many socially relevant activities to stitch the torn fragments of Sanatana Dharma. Munivahana Utsavam, Kanyavandanam, Jatayu Sena and so on were all part of it. As part of grand celebrations of Bhishma Ekadashi with Sanatana

Sampradaya, Gangaputras or fishermen community on a large scale, Vishnu Sahasranama recital was done at Tilak Nagar, here. Ganga Gowrishvar Bhajana Mandali, Tilak Nagar Gangaputra Sangham had organised the event.

TSRTC asks people not to rush towards bus stands

Hyderabad, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Telangana RTC is asking people not to rush towards the bus stands in a hurry. Since more buses will go to Medaram for the next four days, Buses are less on regular routes. Some will also be cancelled, the RTC MD VC Sajjanar issued a statement in this regard. He stated "The TSRTC is running 6,000 special buses for the convenience of the devotees

flocking to Medaram Sri Sammakka Saralamma Maha Jatara, popularly known as Telangana Kumbh Mela. Buses from all districts of the State have already gone to Medaram. As many as 51 camps have been set up in Warangal, Khammam, Karimnagar and Adilabad districts. From there, the special buses are being operated to Medaram," he added. Sajjanar stated that in the wake of

the implementation of Mahalakshmi scheme for jatara, the TSRTC management is taking steps to ensure that devotees are not inconvenienced as per the instructions of the State government and Transport minister Ponnampalapati Prabhakar. Since such a large number of buses are being diverted to Medaram Jatara to ferry the devotees to their destinations safely, regular services have been curtailed.

Global education leaders gather at Gujarat's Vidya Samiksha Kendra

Gandhinagar, Feb 20 (IANS) : An international delegation led by Luis Benveniste, World Bank's Global Director of Education, visited the Vidya Samiksha Kendra here on Tuesday. Praful Pansheriya, Gujarat's Minister of Education, highlighted the significance of the visit, stating that representatives from over 20 countries were present to learn about the center's operations. The delegation comprised around 65 members, including education ministers and dignitaries from the Central African Republic, Guinea, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ghana, Nigeria, Cameroon, and Lyon. Pansheriya also emphasised Gujarat's commitment to education and the effective implementation of the nation's New Educa-

tion Policy, with support from the World Bank, to extend educational reforms to other African countries. Vidya Samiksha Kendra, known as the nation's first comprehensive online real-time monitoring center for school education, has attracted attention from Prime Ministers, international dignitaries, and experts worldwide for its pivotal role in transforming the education sector. The World Bank has recognised the centre as a global best practice, recommending its approach to other developing nations. Notably, Janet Yellen, the US Secretary of the Treasury, and Ajay Banga, President of the World Bank, also visited last August, affirming the international interest in this innovative educational initiative.



I&B Minister Anurag Thakur condemns 'attack on media freedom' in Bengal

New Delhi/Kolkata, Feb 20 (IANS) : A reporter working with Republic Bangla, who was filing ground reports from the trouble-ridden Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district since the time tension broke out there last week, was arrested by the police late on Tuesday evening. Basirhat DSP Hossain Mehdi Rehman told mediaperson that Santu Pan, the arrested reporter, was held while reporting from Sandeshkhali on Tuesday evening following a complaint of trespassing lodged against him and his cameraman by a local woman. Pan will be presented before a

lower court in Basirhat on Tuesday. Reacting to the development, Union Information & Broadcasting Minister Anurag Singh Thakur termed it as an attack on media freedom in West Bengal. "Nothing can be worse than the fact that people who are committing atrocities against women are being patronised and the media is being silenced under a woman Chief Minister," Thakur said, in apparent reference to Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee. The minister also said that it's unfortunate that journalists are being prevented from reporting on the atrocities committed against women in a state where the Chief Minister is a woman. However, coercive action against scribes is not new in West Bengal, Thakur added. The minister also said that the stifling of freedom of expression in West Bengal is unfortunate, as it amounts to murder of democracy, as he accused the Trinamool Congress government of flouting constitutional norms.

Illegal arms supplier held in Delhi; 12 semi-automatic pistols recovered

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : A notorious illegal weapons manufacturer and supplier based in Madhya Pradesh, who had supplied over 200 illicit arms to criminals and gangsters in Delhi and its peripherals, was nabbed here in the Sagarpur area, an official said on Tuesday. An official said that they have also recovered 12 semi-automatic pistols of .32 bore along with 12 loaded magazines from the possession of the arrested individual, identified as Malkhan Singh -- a resident of Dhar in Madhya Pradesh.

Deputy Commissioner of Police (southwest) Rohit Meena said that on February 16, specific information was received that Malkhan Singh would come to deliver a huge cache of illicit arms near Nala Road, Sagarpur. "A trap was laid and Singh was apprehended with a blue coloured bag, while he was waiting for a consignee at the expected place of delivery. During the search of the backpack bag carried by Singh, a total of 12 illicit semi-automatic pistols of .32 bore with 12 magazines were recovered," said the DCP. The DCP further said that Singh



developed an interest in making illegal weapons, and he had been manufacturing illegal weapons at his hideouts -- not only to satiate his technical interest but also to fulfill his desire for wealth. "Initially, he used to supply ille-

gal firearms to the local criminals. Through local criminals, he soon came in contact with inter-state illegal firearms traffickers. He has been manufacturing pistols of various bores and sizes. His supply of illegal firearms mainly is to the criminals of NCR, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh," said the DCP.



TN budget filled with empty announcements : Annamalai

Chennai, Feb 20 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu BJP State President K. Annamalai on Tuesday criticised the state budget, saying that it is full of empty announcements. "Tamil Nadu government has been making these empty announcements since the last three years," he said. He said that the state government has been making the same hollow promises like river restoration, purchase of new buses in the past three budgets as well. He said that the DMK government has been renaming Central government schemes after the late Chief Minister Kalaichandran. He said that the state government has been making the same hollow promises like river restoration, purchase of new buses in the past three budgets as well. He said that the DMK government has been renaming Central government schemes after the late Chief Minister Kalaichandran.



Farm protests 2.0 and MSP conundrum: Noted economist suggests 'workable solutions'

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Amidst the Farmers protest 2.0 over demands of Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops, Ashwini Mahajan, nation's leading economist has suggested 'workable solutions' for putting an end to the impasse, without hurting the interests of either farmers or government. Ashwini Mahajan,

Economics professor in Delhi University and Swadeshi Jagran Manch co-convenor opines that, "If Centre provides guarantee cover on all crops, it would prove detrimental to the overall economy." Mahajan said that MSP has been operational in the country since 1966 and crops like Paddy have been procured at 'highest MSP' for long. He said that MSP prices for other

crops have also increased over the years, some of them have seen 100 per cent hike in past decade. "Guarantee for MSP or legal protection for it could impose financial burden on state government as well as Centre. This will impair the existing fund allocation for various government developmental programs including education, health, infrastructure and others," he explained. Contending against MSP guarantee for crops, he said that government's fund generation is limited.

SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032 Administrative office: 6th Floor(level 2), Building No.02, Aurum Q parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Gansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710

DEMAND NOTICE

Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHIRAM FINANCE LTD, (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers /guarantors /mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) :
1. DAVID YESUDAS AERARAGU S/o. A.K.David, Aged About 54 Years, Occ: M/s. Nissi Foundries Pvt Ltd., at Sy.No. 289 part , Plot No. 79, Phase-V, IDA, Jeedimetla, Outhullapur, R.R.Dist. R/o. H.No. 1-61, Subash Nagar, Kalwakurthy, Mahaboobnagar District-509324. IIND Add: D.No. 198, Flat No.202, Adithi Sadan, H.A.L. Colony, Old Bowenpally, Hyderabad-500010. 2. Smt.Janemary Jayanthi W/o. A.D.Yesudas, Aged About 48 Years, R/o. H.No. 1-61, Subash Nagar, Kalwakurthy, Mahaboobnagar District-509324. 3. A.D.Naveen Kumar S/o. A.K.David, Aged About 56 Years, Occ: M/s. Nissi Foundries Pvt Ltd., at Sy.No. 289 part , Plot No. 79, Phase-V, IDA, Jeedimetla, Outhullapur, R.R.Dist. R/o. H.No. 1-61, Subash Nagar, Kalwakurthy, Mahaboobnagar District-509324. 4. P.Vishal S/o. P.Samuel, Aged About 40 Years, R/o. H.No. 10-6/1, Vinayak Nagar, Balanagar, Hyderabad-500037. 5. Mrs.Brinda Rose W/o. Dayasagar, Aged About 47 Years, Occ: Staff Nurse, Area Hospital, Medical Health Dept., Vanasthalipuram, R/o. H.No. Qtr.No. C-40, Govt. Qtrs, Malakpet, Hyderabad.9

.....Borrowers/Co-borrower /Guarantors/Legal heirs

NPA Date: 13-06-2013. Date of Demand Notice:30-01-2024.
Outstanding Amount:Rs. 65,19,337/- Loan Amount Rs. 25,00,000/-
Property Address of Secured Assets : SECUSTF2280001 DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY : All that the house bearing No. 1-62 and 1-63 and 1-65 sq.ft.RCC constructed land admeasuring 511 sq.yards Situated at Kalwakurthy Village and Mandal, Mahaboobnagar District, and bounded on: North by : Electricity Employees Union Building, South by : House of Jangareddy East by : Vacant site of Y.Ramachandra Reddy and Ram Reddy and West by : Road from Kalwakurthy to Nagar Kurmol.

In the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/ or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules there under. Please note that under Section 13 (13) of the said Act, no Borrower shall, transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of his secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.

Date:19-02-2024 Place: Kalwakurthy Sd/- Authorised Officer, Shiram Finance Limited

SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032 Administrative office: 6th Floor(level 2), Building No.02, Aurum Q parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Gansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710

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Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHIRAM FINANCE LTD, (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers /guarantors /mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) :
1. Kalluri Venu Gopal S/o. K.Somanjaiah, Aged About 46 Years, R/o. H.No. 6-4-151, Sai Baba Nagar, Katedan, Secunderabad-500077 IIND Add: H.No. 8-4-548/E/2/B, S Shankar Lal Nagar, Erragadda, Hyderabad-500018 IIND Add: H.No. 5-3-74, Bhavani Colony, Rajender Nagar, Hyderabad 2. Kalluri Somanjaiah S/o. Viswanandham, Aged About 78 Years, R/o. H.No. 6-4-151, Sai Baba Nagar, Katedan, Secunderabad-500077 IIND Add: H.No. 8-4-548/E/2/B, S Shankar Lal Nagar, Erragadda, Hyderabad-500018 IIND Add: H.No. 5-3-74, Bhavani Colony, Rajender Nagar, Hyderabad. 3. Bathoju Sreenivas S/o. Sadanandam, Aged About 51 Years, R/o. H.No. 5-4-11/1, Bhavani Colony, Rajendra Nagar (M), R.R.Dist. -500030

.....Borrowers/Co-borrower /Guarantors/Legal heirs

NPA Date: 13-06-2013. Date of Demand Notice:12-02-2024
Outstanding Amount : Rs. 75,11,267/- Loan Amount Rs. 20,00,000/-
Property Address of Secured Assets : NRTFSB410E00064 DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY : All that the House bearing no.6-4-151, Plot bearing No. 49, admeasuring 200 sq.yards or 167.2 sq.mts., in Survey No. 48/12, Situated at Katedhan Village, Presently Rajendra Nagar Sub-District, Rajendra Nagar Municipality, Ranga Reddy District, and bounded by: North: 20'0" wide road, South : Plot No.40, East : 25'0" wide road , West : Plot No.48.

In the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/ or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules there under.

Date:19-02-2024 Place: Erragadda Sd/- Authorised Officer, Shiram Finance Limited

SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032 Administrative office: 6th Floor(level 2), Building No.02, Aurum Q parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Gansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710

DEMAND NOTICE

Whereas the borrowers/co-borrowers/guarantors mentioned hereunder had availed the financial assistance from SHIRAM FINANCE LTD, (Formerly known as Shiram City Union Finance Limited, amalgamated with Shiram Transport Finance Company Limited, subsequently Shiram Transport Company Limited name Changed as Shiram Finance Limited) We state that despite having availed the financial assistance, the borrowers/guarantors have committed various defaults in repayment of interest and principal amounts as per due dates. The account has been classified as Non-Performing Asset in accordance with the directives/guidelines issued by Reserve Bank of India, consequent to the Authorized Officer of SHIRAM FINANCE LTD. under Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 & in exercise of powers conferred under Section 13(2) read with Rule 3 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued Demand Notices on respective dates mentioned herein below under Section 13(2) of SARFAESI Act, 2002 calling upon the following borrowers /guarantors /mortgagors to repay the amount mentioned in the notices together with further interest at the contractual rate on the amount mentioned in the notices and incidental expenses, cost, charges etc. until the date of payment within 60 days from the date of receipt of notices. The notices issued to them on their last known addresses have returned un-served and as such they are hereby informed by way of public notice about the same. The borrower's attention is invited to provisions of sub-section (8) of section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.

Name of the Borrower(s) / Co-Borrower(s) / Guarantor(s) :
1. Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy, S/o. Achi Reddy, Aged About 58 Years, Occ: Business, O/o. Sr Trading Company R/O. H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad -500060. 2. (Borrower No.1 by name Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy was died intestate, so far his following surviving legal heirs i.e., Son and Daughters i.e (a) (b), (c) and (d) are impleaded as parties to the Notice) a) Samidi Santhosh Reddy S/o. Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy, Aged Major, R/O: H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad-500060. (LEGAL HEIRS OF BORROWER No.1) b) S.Sangeetha Reddy D/o. Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy, Aged Major, R/O: H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad -500060. (LEGAL HEIRS OF BORROWER No.1) c) Samatha Reddy D/o. Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy, Aged Major, R/O: H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad -500060. (LEGAL HEIRS OF BORROWER No.1) d) S.Archna D/o. Samidi Sanjeeva Reddy, Aged Major, R/O: H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad -500060. (LEGAL HEIRS OF BORROWER No.1) 3. Samidi Anusuya W/o. Late Sanjeeva Reddy, Aged About 51 Years, Occ: House Wife, R/O: H.No. 16-11-687/1, Reddy's Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad -500060.Co-borrower/Guarantor No.1(LEGAL HEIRS OF BORROWER No.1) 4. Upputuri Naga Bhushanam S/o. Dadaiah Aged About 55 Years, Occ: Private Employee, R/o. H.No: 16-2-752/88, S B H Colony, Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad-500060

.....Borrowers/Co-borrower /Guarantors/Legal heirs

NPA Date: 14-07-2013. Date of Demand Notice:12-02-2024.
Outstanding Amount :Rs.2,16,97,901/- Loan Amount Rs. 35,00,000/-
Property Address of Secured Assets : SECUSTF01280007 DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY : All that the Bearing Municipal No. 16-11-687/1 admeasuring 218 sq.yards or 182.26 Sq.mts., Situated at Gaddiannaram, Dilukhnagar, Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh, within the limits of Azampura Sub-District, bounded on : East: Lane West: Neighbour's House North: Road Neighbours South : Neighbour's House

In the circumstances as aforesaid, the notice is hereby given to the above borrowers, co-borrowers and/ or their guarantors (where ever applicable) to pay the outstanding dues as mentioned above along with future interest and applicable charges within 60 days from the date of the publication of this notice failing which further steps will be taken after the expiry of 60 days of the date of this notice against the secured assets including taking possession of the secured assets of the borrowers and the mortgagors under Section 13(4) of Securitization and Re-construction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and the applicable rules there under. Please note that under Section 13 (13) of the said Act, no Borrower shall, transfer by way of sale, lease or otherwise any of his secured assets referred to in the notice, without prior written consent of the secured creditor.

Date:19-02-2024 Place: Gaddiannaram Sd/- Authorised Officer, Shiram Finance Limited

OPINIONmail

The bizarre debate over farmer leader Jagjit Dallewala's comment on Modi's Rising Graph

Amidst the standoff at the many border crossings that open up the doors to Delhi, Punjab farmer leader Jagjit Dallewala spoke of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "rising graph" and the Congress defended him his right to air his political views and not be labelled "anti-national" for that. The Bharatiya Janata Party couldn't be happier, so long as it related to Modi's popularity. The 'Modi graph' remained in circulation for the better part of the day and night on February 15. The BJP fielded former Union Law Minister Ravi Shankar Prasad, who took advantage of this sudden and unexpected "breakthrough" to link Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "rising graph" to the central government's "development work", sparing journalists talk of "Modi works non-stop 18 hours, 24/7", which has been flogged to death too-often in recent times. The Congress had no comments on Modi's "rising graph", which would be admitting to Modi's rising popularity, but if a farmer leader says it, it wouldn't be good politics to deny, refute, or flay the claim. So, Congress Chief Spokesman Pawan Khera chose to defend Dallewala's right to air his political views, now what's wrong in that? Dallewala had attributed Modi's rising popularity to "Ram", which isn't a state secret. Prasad on his part, spoke of minimum support price and what the government was doing for the agitating farmers. But Dallewala had been more bothered about what to do with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "rising graph" in the little time left to bring it down, literally begging his audience when he pointed out the paucity of time. Surely, there are farmers who also have a political commitment. RJD leader Tejashvi Prasad Yadav and Congress leader Rahul Gandhi should be speaking of the "little time left", rather than Dallewala. The mascots of the RJD and the Congress had spent "quality time" together on February 15 and the RJD and the Congress appear to be the only two parties left in the INDI-Alliance fighting Modi's "rising graph" apart from the Shiv Sena of the Uddhav Balasaheb Thackeray faction. So, should the media concede INDI-Alliance's slow demise to Modi's "rising graph"? Did the Congress decision to not give an inch to "Ram" contribute to Modi's "rising graph"? First the Ayodhya Ram Mandir, then the Abu Dhabi BAPS Temple, with Modi doing the "Pran Prathistha" – "here in the Muslim country UAE", too. The Abu Dhabi temple also houses 'Lord Swami Ayyappa', the bachelor deity of Kerala, 'God's Own Country', which sends the most number of Indian expats to the UAE and the region. For all we know, Dallewala must also have been referring to Modi's "rising graph" in the GCC. And Dallewala shouldn't be called "anti-national" for pointing it out. The fact of the matter is, ever since millions of farmers rose up to protest the Modi government's "Non-MSP" agriculture policy, "antinational" has become the most dropped term in political discourse. Everybody, every entity, against the government's agricultural policies is "against the country", an antinational. So, if Dallewala is "anti-national" for asking that Modi's "rising graph" should be brought down ASAP, anybody who is supporting Dallewala's call is also "anti-national", which leaves the entire Opposition in the ranks of the "anti-national". Dallewala mentioning that there's very little time to take on Modi and cut his rising graph to size could even be construed as a compliment. In which case, what does that make of Jagjit Singh Dallewala? Ever since this edition of farmers' protests began, "anti-national" has been the most used charge leveled against farmers and their well-wishers from all walks of life. Among political parties, the Congress and the Aam Aadmi Party were the first to be branded "anti-national". Also, Punjab's farmers are "anti-national", but Haryana's farmers are not. Punjab's farmers are also "Khalistani", which is more reason why they should be branded "anti-national", and denied MSP and their right to march to national capital Delhi. So, what is the government doing, holding talks with "anti-national" farmers? Do the "anti-national" farmers have a game-plan against the "anti-farmer" government? Does the "anti-national" opposition have a strategy to use the "anti-national" farmers' agitation to beat the BJP in the upcoming general elections and clear the decks for an opposition victory in the general elections? Otherwise, what's the purpose of the farmers' protests at this time; particularly at this time, when elections are on top of the head and defeating "rising graph" Modi has become top of the graph, especially when there are farmer leaders like Jagjit Singh Dallewala who call a spade a spade?

(By Sushil Kutty)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail



POST RLD EXIT, NEW EQUATIONS TAKE SHAPE IN UP TO CONFRONT RULING BJP

After RLD snapped ties with the SP, Pallavi Patel, Swami Prasad Maurya are beyond any attempts to be pacified over their annoyance with Akhilesh Yadav. Whispers in the corridors of power that a new equation taking shape in Uttar Pradesh, with the Congress, BSP, Apna Dal (Kamerwadi) and Swami Prasad Maurya expected to come forward in an alliance to fight against the BJP in Uttar Pradesh. According to sources, Congress leaders are in touch with

Mayawati, Pallavi and Maurya, even though Mayawati had announced that her party would go it alone in the upcoming LS polls. The Congress believes that aligning with the BSP would help to consolidate the Dalit vote behind them, as well as ensure that the Muslim vote is not divided multiple ways. Political analysts believe that any possible coming together of BSP, Apna Dal (Kamerwadi) Maurya and Congress is expected to throw up new political arrangements ahead of the 2024 parliamentary elections. CONGRESS, AAP DELHI SEAT-

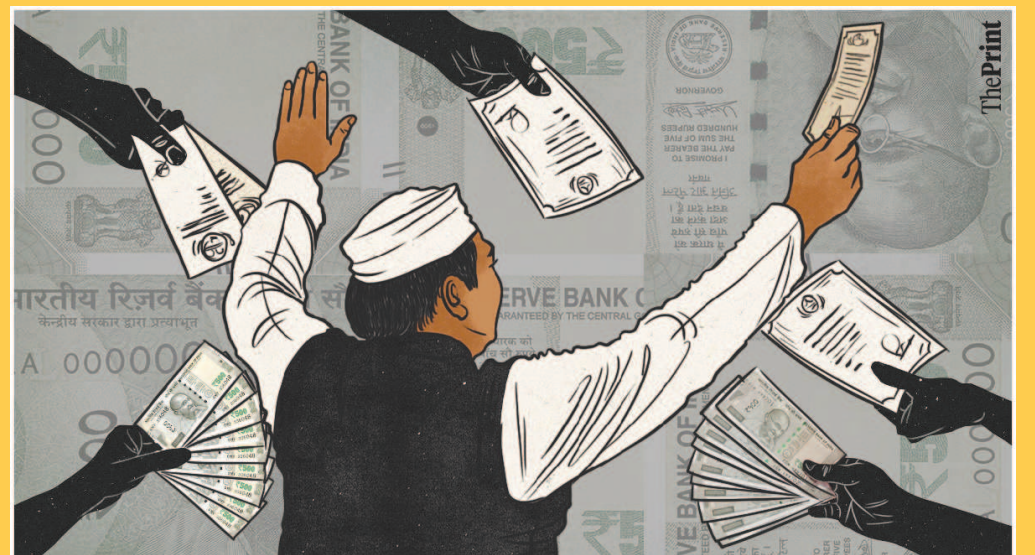
SHARING GOES AWRY
The Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) has given indication that it is not looking forward to any alliance with the Congress either in Delhi or Punjab. While both the parties agreed to fight separately in Punjab, a four-three deal was on the cards in Delhi. But the AAP countered it by saying the Congress didn't have any strength in Delhi and one seat should be good enough. The Congress is not going to settle for one seat and the division of anti-BJP votes now appears unavoidable.

BREAKTHROUGH ELUDES KERALA'S TALKS WITH CENTRE ON FINANCIAL ISSUES

A protracted legal battle is in the offing between the Kerala Government and the Centre with Kerala's talks with talks over the issues of fiscal federalism having failed to achieve a breakthrough. A four-member Kerala delegation led by State finance minister K N Balagopal held a meeting with the Union Government officials including the Union Finance Secretary. Besides Balagopal, other members of the team were Chief Principal Secretary to the Chief Minister K M Abraham, Finance Principal Secretary Rabintra Kumar Aggarwal and Advocate General K. Gopalakrishna Kurup. The meeting followed the Supreme Court's directive that the State hold talks with the Union Government officials to resolve the deadlock over the Centre's decision to impose a ceiling on Kerala's net borrowing. It may be mentioned that Kerala had moved the apex court accusing the Union Government of interfering in the exercise of its "exclusive, autonomous and plenary powers" to regulate the State's finances by imposing a ceiling on net borrowing.

COLOMBIA'S RIGHT IS TRYING TO "SOFT COUP" PRESIDENT GUSTAVO PETRO

It was expected that Colombia's elites, who had enjoyed a monopoly over the state for two hundred consecutive years up until twenty months ago, would attempt to obstruct the left-wing President Gustavo Petro's administration. This effort to undermine the process of change mandated by the majority of Colombians has involved everything from misinformation campaigns to the blocking of policies in Congress — but there have also been more direct and sophisticated strategies to overthrow the progressive project. After Brazil's legal apparatus was successfully wielded against LuizInácio Lula da Silva and Dilma Rousseff, and Argentina's against Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, Colombian elites are attempting to do the same to Petro, with his administration warning about a plot last summer. If successful, it would mean not only the defeat of Colombia's first left government, but also a major victory for the US and Latin American capitalist classes. Disregarding the political nonpartisanship expected from his office, Colombia's most recent attorney general, Francisco Barbosa, has openly declared his contempt for Petro's government since the president was sworn in nineteen months ago.



ELECTIONS MANIPULATED SINCE 2018 USING UNCONSTITUTIONALLY COLLECTED MONEY

The latest Supreme Court judgement declaring 'Electoral Bond Scheme' unconstitutional, has established beyond doubt that every election held since implementation of this scheme in 2018 was subject to manipulation by use of unconstitutionally collected money to distort level playing field for political parties and candidates and to influence electorate so as to election did not remain free and fair, and PM Narendra Modi was the chief beneficiary. This is the latest swing in political narrative on the eve of Lok Sabha election 2024, and which seems to be most significant of all the narratives since Karnataka election in May 2023, since the Supreme Court judge-

ment would not only stop the chief beneficiary from getting further undue advantage from the unconstitutional funding of election campaigns, but also would open a Pandora's box of electoral evils resorted to by the ruling pay when the list of beneficiaries and the donors would be published by the Election Commission of India on March 13, 2024. (IPA Service)

RSS-BACKED CAPITALIST CLASS INTERESTS THREATENED BY FARMERS

The "Dilli Chalo" march by the farmers is not merely a long-walk to urge the Narendra Modi government to meet their demands, primary being law on minimum support price for crops and loan waivers. Instead, it personifies the biggest class conflict between the corporate sector embodying the capitalist economy burgeoning under Narendra Modi's right-wing government and the land-owning peasant class. Outwardly, the fight may not look like a classic Marxist class war, but the fact is that the rightist forces represent-

ing the class interests of the capitalists have already unleashed vitriolic assault on the farmers. What happened during last three days on the Shambhu border, Singhu protest site, is small-scale warfare. The class hatred got nakedly manifest as BJP's Haryana government dropped tear gas shells through drone strikes and resorted to pellet firing in the dead of the night when the farmers were asleep. The movement is farmers' struggle against their pauperization and the wholesale corporatization of agriculture. It already cost more than seven hundred lives in 2020 because of massive state repression, including arrests, physical violence, and fre-

quent internet shutdowns. Though after eleven rounds of unsuccessful negotiations with the government, the movement forced Modi to retreat in 2021, during these past two years, Modi did not make a positive move to find out a solution to the issue. On the contrary, the RSS ecosystem fully assisted by Modi government is out to malign and disparage the farmers, the annadatas. It is really shocking to see RSS and BJP stooping low and violating all the norms of public decency to humiliate and disgrace the farmers. It is indeed a matter of shame for RSS chief Mohan Bhagwat and his protégé Modi to target Sikh farmers and muster

their resources to demean them and present them as criminals before the people of the country. Noted economist Madhura Swaminathan, daughter of the agricultural scientist M.S. Swaminathan, the architect of India's Green Revolution who was awarded the Bharat Ratna just a fortnight back by Narendra Modi, cautioned the Modi government not to treat farmers as criminals, and not to use coercive actions against the farmers marching to Delhi. She said: "The farmers of Punjab are marching to Delhi. I believe, according to the newspaper reports.



UK university slammed for confusing Sikhs with Muslims in social media post

London, Feb 20 (IANS) : Members of the Sikh community in the UK have slammed the University of Birmingham for confusing them with Muslims in a social media post, saying that "these mistakes should not happen in 2024". The University deleted and apologised for the post incorrectly claiming that a recent 'langar (community meal)' event hosted by its Sikh students was part of an Islamic awareness week, The Bir-

mingham Mail newspaper reported on Tuesday. Students within the university's Sikh Society hosted the event earlier this month, serving free vegetarian meals on the campus. But they were left disappointed when a staff member tagged their event in a post with the text 'Discover Islam Week', which is an annual awareness campaign run by the university's Islamic Society. "It is disappointing... There is clearly an issue with the training

and education given to the staff," Jasveer Singh, a member of Sikh Press Association, told the newspaper.

Singh said that aspects of Sikhism are taught at the University, which has lecturers from the community and regularly hosts Sikh events. Social media users described the mistake as "embarrassing" that left them "utterly gobsmacked".

"The university sincerely apologises for any offence or upset this has been caused. We recognise this post was incorrect. It was identified shortly after being posted and immediately deleted," a University of Birmingham spokesperson said.

"The university respects and celebrates the diversity of our community and continually works to provide a welcoming and inclusive environment. We have made contact with relevant individuals and groups to apologise directly and listen to their views."

Singh said that the University owes a wider apology to two groups for the mistake.



Singapore records over 46,000 scam cases in 2023

Singapore, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Singaporean police received 46,563 scam cases in 2023, up about 46.8 percent from 2022, according to statistics from the police on Tuesday.

The police noted that scam victims lost 651.8 million Singapore dollars (484 million U.S. dollars) last year, a slight dip from the 660.7 million Singapore dollars lost in 2022, Xinhua news agency reported.

Data showed that the top five scams were job scams, e-commerce scams, fake friend call scams, phishing scams and investment scams.



Palestinian death toll in Gaza exceeds 29,000: Ministry

Gaza, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Palestinian death toll resulting from the ongoing Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip has surpassed 29,000, the Gaza-based Health Ministry announced.

According to a press statement from the Ministry on Tuesday, the Israeli army has killed 107 Palestinians and wounded 145 more within the past 24 hours, Xinhua news agency reported. This latest update brings the total number of casualties to 29,092 deaths and 69,028 inju-

ries since the Israel-Hamas conflict broke out on October 7, 2023, according to the statement.

It noted that some victims remain under the rubble amid heavy bombardment and a lack of civil defence and ambulance crews.

Israel has been launching a large-scale offensive against Hamas in the Gaza Strip to retaliate against a Hamas rampage through the southern Israeli border on October 7, 2023, during which about 1,400 people were killed and more than 200 were taken hostage.

Brazil recalls ambassador in Tel Aviv for consultations amid diplomatic crisis with Israel

Brasilia, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Brazilian government has called its ambassador in Tel Aviv, Frederico Meyer, back to the country for consultations after President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva voiced harsh criticism of Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip, in response to the fact that Israel summoned the diplomat for statements, the Brazilian Foreign Ministry confirmed. The Ministry said on Tuesday in a statement that Foreign Affairs Minister Mauro Vieira also summoned Israel's ambassador in Brazil, Daniel Zonshine, Xinhua news agency reported. The Israeli government declared Lula da Silva "persona non grata" on Tuesday.

Lula da Silva on Tuesday accused Israel of committing "genocide" against Palestinian civilians living in the Gaza Strip.

In January, Brazil joined South Africa in bringing a case of genocide against Israel at the International Court of Justice.



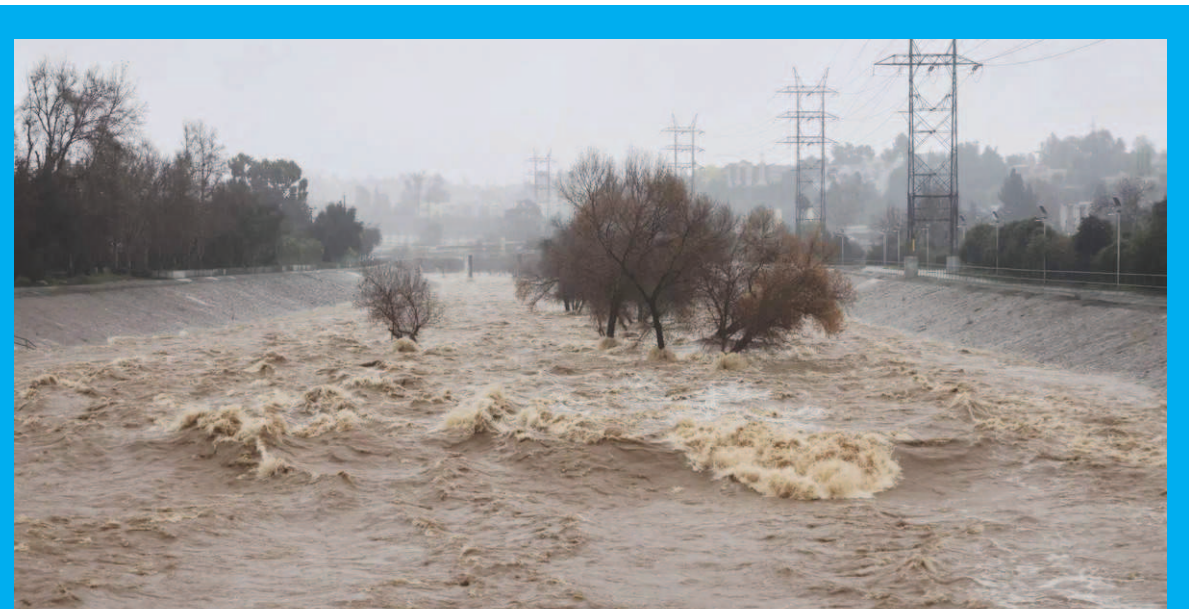
Iran's FM urges UN to prevent Israel's military offensive on Rafah

Tehran, Feb 20 (IANS) : Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian has called on the United Nations to prevent a possible major Israeli offensive on the city of Rafah in southern Gaza.

Amir-Abdollahian made the remarks in a letter addressed to UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, according to a statement published on Tuesday on the Iranian Foreign Ministry's website.

"As you rightly said recently, an all-out offensive on the city would be devastating for the 1.5 million Palestinian civilians there who are already on the edge of survival," said the Iranian Foreign Minister.

He called on the international community not to let such "carnage" happen, stressing that "any military offensive on Rafah would undoubtedly qualify as another phase in the Israeli genocide of the Palestinian nation".



Heavy rain hits California with millions under flood alerts

Los Angeles, Feb 20 (IANS) : New rounds of heavy rain soaked large portions of Southern California, and up to 37 million people are under flood alerts.

A low-pressure system in the Pacific is directing moisture onshore in California, resulting in widespread heavy rain and mountain snow, according

to the US National Weather Service (NWS) as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. Flash flood warnings were issued Tuesday morning for Southern California counties, including Santa Barbara and Ventura, where 2 to 5 inches of rain had already fallen, according to NWS. Several roads across the state were closed because of flooding and rockslides,

California's transportation agency reported. Severe thunderstorms packing damaging wind gusts, hail and even a couple of brief tornadoes may develop Tuesday afternoon and evening, according to NWS. Areas of rainfall and isolated thunderstorms continue to migrate northward across portions of northern and central California.



UK English test scandal: Foreign students launch legal action against Home Office

London, Feb 20 (IANS) : A group of international students, who were falsely accused of cheating in English language tests in the UK, have launched legal proceedings against the Home Office.

The students, many of them from countries like India and Pakistan, are now seeking compensation for unlawful detention, false imprisonment, loss of earnings, and damage to their mental health, ITV News reported.

Bindmans, a law firm representing 23 students who have al-

ready won immigration appeals and had their visas returned, is now working to obtain a blanket compensation scheme for them.

Between October 2020 and March 2022, the firm issued 23 claims with only one case being settled so far.

The move comes 10 years after the Home Office abruptly terminated the visas of 35,000 international students, making their stay in the country illegal over-



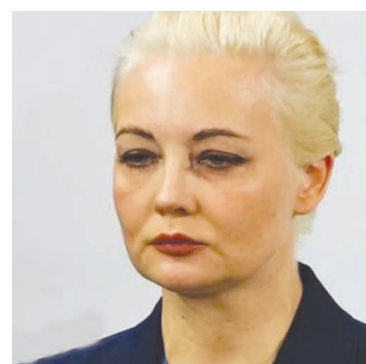
night. A 2014 BBC documentary reported "organised cheating" at two of the UK's language testing centres for international students, run by third parties on behalf of US-based test provider, Educational Testing Service (ETS).

After the BBC report, then Home Secretary Theresa May asked ETS to investigate, which found that 97 per cent of its English tests taken in the UK between 2011 and 2014 were in some way suspicious.

Alexei Navalny's widow Yulia Navalnaya accuses Putin of murder, pledges to continue fight

Moscow, Feb 20 (IANS) : Yulia Navalnaya, the widow of Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, who was reported to have collapsed after a walk, has accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of her husband's murder and pledged to continue his work, a media report said.

In a nine minute video on Tuesday, 47-year-old Navalnaya, said: "Three days ago, Vladimir Putin killed my husband Alexei Navalny, the father of my children and took away the most important thing I had. The person who was closest to me and whom I loved most. During an interview, Navalnaya, an economist who had left her job for raising her kids.



Consensus reached over Afghanistan issue despite Taliban's absence : UN chief

Doha, Feb 20 (IANS) : UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that international representatives have reached consensus on some key issues concerning Afghanistan after a two-day meeting in Doha, but obstacles remain. "We want an Afghanistan in peace, peace with itself and peace with its neighbours and able to assume the commitments and the international obligations of a sovereign state," Guterres said on Tuesday at a press conference after the meeting.

However, Guterres pointed out that overcoming some obstacles is still necessary to break the deadlock on the Afghanistan issue, Xinhua news agency re-

ported. On the one hand, "Afghanistan remains with a government that is not recognised internationally and in many aspects not integrated into the global institutions and global economy," he added. On the other hand, there is a common international perception of deteriorating human rights, particularly for women and girls in the country, Guterres said.

The UN Chief added that a common roadmap must be developed to address the concerns of the international community and the Afghan authorities.

The meeting, chaired by Guterres, was attended by representatives from more than 20 countries and international organisations, including China, Russia.

Madras HC permits TN govt to conduct Formula 4 night street car race

Chennai, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Madras High Court on Tuesday allowed the Tamil Nadu government to conduct Formula 4 night street car race in the city. A division bench of the high court comprising Justices R. Mahadevan and Mohammed Safeek said the state should ensure that no inconvenience is caused to the general public during the race.

The court also directed the state government that during the conduct of the race, vehicles should have silencers as there are several hospitals in and around the racing circuit, adding that the state government should get opinions from experts for the next session. The route for the race includes Flag Staff road, Anna Salai, Swami Sivananda Salai, Napier

Bridge and Kamarajar Salai. The court was hearing a batch of PILs seeking refraining the state from conducting the Formula 4 night street car race in Chennai. The petitioners argued that even though there is an international-standard race track at Iringattukottai, the government is promoting street road race in Chennai.



TN to give payroll subsidy to companies employing women, transgenders, differently-abled

Chennai, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Tamil Nadu government will introduce a special payroll incentive scheme to increase women employment in industries and also to attract Global Capability Centres (GCC) Thangam Thenarasu, Minister for Finance and Human Resources Management, said here on Tuesday. Presenting the state budget for 2024-25, Thenarasu said the

state has the highest contribution to the number of women working in industries in India and with significant gender parity in its labour ecosystem. "The government will introduce a special scheme to incentivise additional women employment in the state. This scheme will offer a payroll subsidy of 10 per cent of the salary of women, differently-abled and transgender employees for two years to all new industrial

units providing direct employment to over 500 such individuals from Tamil Nadu," he said. In addition, creches for infant children will be established in all major SIPCOT industrial estates under public-private partnership to support working women. A new tailor-made skill training programme will be introduced to facilitate women willing to re-enter the job market after taking a sabbatical for reasons such as marriage and pregnancy, Thenarasu said. Thenarasu also said in order to make Tamil Nadu the prime destination for Global Capability Centres (GCC) in India, the state will incentivise the creation of high paying jobs in new GCCs by providing a payroll subsidy of 30 per cent in the first year, 20 per cent in the second year and 10 per cent in the third year for jobs with pay above Rs 1,00,000 per month. The government will also facilitate setting up of GCCs in Coimbatore and Madurai.

Amarinder Singh bats for BJP's alliance with Akali Dal

Chandigarh, Feb 20 (IANS) : Ahead of the meeting with Prime Minister Narendra Modi, BJP leader and two-time Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh said on Tuesday that he is in favour of an alliance of his party with the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD), once a long-time partner of the BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA). Amarinder Singh claimed in an interview with a news channel that even Punjab BJP President Sunil Jakhar is in favour of the alliance. "I will also discuss this

issue with the Prime Minister," the veteran politician said. Regarding distribution of seats between both the parties, he said the matter would be discussed by the high command. "If the BJP and the Akali Dal come together, no one can defeat us," he said. On the demands of the protesting farmers, including the legal provision of the minimum support price (MSP) for crops, Amarinder Singh said he would discuss them and other issues related to the state with the Prime Minister. Amarinder Singh's assertion came days after the Bahujan

Samaj Party (BSP) announced the termination of its alliance with the SAD in Punjab. In the last Assembly polls held in 2022, the number SAD legislators in the 117-member House was reduced to three, down from its tally of 15 seats in 2017, its lowest-ever number. Amarinder Singh and Jakhar, both former Congress leaders, are prominent rebels. Snapping over two-decade long ties, the Akali Dal pulled out of the National Democratic Alliance in September 2020 after sharp differences emerged over the now-repealed three controversial farm

laws. The Akali Dal was one of the oldest allies of the BJP. It was among the first to support the 13-day Atal Bihari Vajpayee government, the shortest Prime Minister's stint in India's history, in 1996. To rebuild the beleaguered Akali Dal and prevent further exodus of leaders, SAD chief Sukhbir Badal, who was known as the 'Super Chief Minister' when the party was at the helm, is on his toes. His wife, Harsimrat Kaur Badal, who held the portfolio of Food Processing Industry in both the Modi-led Central governments, is raking up state-specific issues in



the Parliament. The husband-wife duo won the parliamentary polls in 2019. Supporting the cause of the farmers, Harsimrat Kaur demanded the Aam Aadmi Party

(AAP) bring in legislation guaranteeing MSP for all the 23 crops in the forthcoming budget session in case the Centre doesn't do so.



AAP legislator seeks anticipatory bail in Delhi Waqf Board money laundering case

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : A Delhi court on Tuesday issued an notice to the Enforcement Directorate (ED) in anticipatory bail plea by AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan in connection with the Waqf Board money laundering case. Special Judge Rakesh Syal of Rouse Avenue Court issued the notice to the ED and scheduled a further hearing on Tuesday. Senior advocate Menaka Guruswamy, representing Khan, argued and requested interim protection, but the court declined to grant the relief. Guruswamy pointed out that Khan had been summoned in connection with a money laundering case. She contested the issue of two FIRs being filed regarding the same case, with the first FIR dated November 23, 2016, filed by the CBI. The allegation was related to Khan's alleged wrongful appointment as chairman of the Delhi Waqf Board. Guruswamy pointed out the principle of criminal law that prohib-

its two FIRs for one cause, noting that the second FIR was based on the same allegations as the first, despite the closure of the matter by the agency, terming it as administrative irregularities. She also pointed out that previous bail orders in both cases concluded that there was no loss to the exchequer, as there was no evidence of bribery or recovery of proceeds of crime. Regarding allegations of irregularities in the recruitment of contractual employees, Guruswamy stated that previous bail orders concluded that there was no evidence of loss to the exchequer, attributing the issues to administrative irregularities. She mentioned that Khan had already complied with three sets of summons, including submitting his mobile phone, and requested the court to grant him protection until the next hearing date. The court directed Khan to appear before the ED and considered the request for protection until the next hearing date.

With two aircraft carriers, Indian Navy kicks off MILAN 2024 joint exercise

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : The 12th edition of the Naval exercise 'Milan' began on Tuesday in which more than 50 nations are taking part. According to the Ministry of Defence, the theme of Milan this year is 'Forging Naval Alliances for a Secure Maritime Future'. The Indian Navy said that LCA Tejas 'Flying Bullets' of IAF announced their grand arrival at INS Dega, Visakhapatnam, for Milan 2024, hosted by the Sunrise Command of the Indian Navy.

Two aircraft carriers -- INS Vikrant and Vikramaditya -- will take part in the exercise. "The exercise is a testament to the unbreakable bond between our armed forces across air and sea," the Navy said. Commenting on the joint naval exercise, the French forces deployed in the Indian Ocean and stationed in the UAE said, "Twenty-five years of strategic partnerships, lots of bilateral exercises and operational activities, and once again France and India come together for a multinational maritime exercise -- MILAN 24 - with a maritime patrol aircraft



Atlantique 2. Thanks to Indian Navy for the invite." The Ministry of Defence said that the exercise aims to strengthen the collaboration among the participating navies. One maritime patrol aircraft and 15 ships from friendly foreign countries, and nearly 20 ships

from the Indian Navy will participate in the sea exercise. Nearly 50 aircraft, including MiG 29K and P8I, along with aircraft carriers Vikrant and Vikramaditya will also participate in the exercise. The 12th edition of the MILAN exercise will continue till February 27.

Kamal Nath won't leave Congress: K'taka Dy CM Shivakumar

Bengaluru, Feb 20 (IANS) : Karnataka Deputy Chief Minister and State Congress President D.K. Shivakumar on Tuesday clarified that former Madhya Pradesh CM Kamal Nath will not leave the party and join BJP under any circumstances.

Speaking to reporters at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru, Shivakumar stated, "I am telling you on record Kamal Nath will not go anywhere. There is also no question of other leaders joining BJP. There will be some times where this kind of confusion prevails.



Swami Prasad Maurya lashes out at Akhilesh, may form his own party

Lucknow, Feb 20 (IANS) : Senior Samajwadi Party (SP) leader Swami Prasad Maurya has lashed out at SP president Akhilesh Yadav, saying he will return whatever the latter had

given him. Amid speculation about the formation of a new party, Maurya, who has resigned from the post of General Secretary of the Samajwadi Party (SP).



Nifty hits fresh record high, up for sixth straight session

Mumbai, Feb 20 (IANS) : Nifty extended its gains for the sixth consecutive session on Tuesday, once again touching a fresh record high in the last hour of trade, said Deepak Jasani, Head of Retail Research at HDFC Securities. At close, Nifty was up 74.70 points or 0.34 per cent at 22,197.00, while Sensex was up 349.24 points or 0.48 per cent at 73,057.40. Cash market volumes on the NSE fell to Rs 0.93 lakh crore. The broad market indices ended marginally in the negative even as the advance decline ratio fell to 0.97:1.



India PC market drops 6.6% in 2023 to 13.9 mn units, HP leads: Report

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : India's traditional PC market (inclusive of desktops, notebooks, and workstations) shipped 13.9 million units in 2023, down 6.6 per cent (year-over-year), with HP leading the market, a new report showed on Tuesday. According to the International Data Corporation (IDC), the desktop category grew by 6.7 per cent (year-over-year), notebooks and workstations declined by 11.1 per cent (year-over-year) and 14 per cent (year-over-year), respectively. "Low market sentiments after the pandemic led to reduced consumer demand, resulting in a steep shipment correction in the second half of 2022 and the first half of 2023," said Bharath Shenoy, Senior Research Analyst, IDC India. The total market rebounded in the second half of 2023 (2H23) with 12.9 per cent (year-over-year) growth after a weak first half. The fourth quarter of 2023 (4Q23) grew 11.4 per cent (year-over-year) as both desktops and notebooks grew by 16.8 per cent (year-over-year) and 9.9 per cent (year-over-year), respectively. HP, which led the market, had a share of 31.5 per cent last year as it topped the charts in both the commercial and consumer segments with shares of 33.6 per cent and 29.4 per cent, respectively, the report said. Lenovo secured second spot with a share of 16.7 per cent, while Dell Technologies stood third with a share of 15.5 per cent as it witnessed a steep decline of 24.5 per cent (year-over-year) in 2023.

Akasa Air adopts Digi Yatra's facial recognition system at 9 airports



New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Akasa Air on Tuesday confirmed the adoption of Digi Yatra's facial recognition system across nine major airports across the country including Bengaluru, New Delhi, Varanasi, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Ahmedabad, Guwahati, Kolkata, and Pune. "Adoption of DigiYatra reflects Akasa Air's ongoing commitment to innovation and providing an unparalleled travel experience for its passengers," said the airline's spokesperson. The Digi Yatra service, a fully biometric-based self-boarding solution, ensures a hassle-free travel experience for passengers. Before entering the terminal, travellers can conveniently register their ID and biometric data, along with their flight details, on the user-friendly DigiYatra app. As they navigate through the airport, state-of-the-art biometric technology authenticates and verifies passengers' identities, offering the highest levels of safety and security.

1st human implanted with Neuralink brain chip able to control mouse via thoughts: Musk

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Elon Musk has said that the first human implanted with a brain chip from his brain-computer interface company Neuralink seems to have fully recovered and is able to control a computer mouse using thoughts. "Progress is good, and the patient seems to have made a full recovery, with neural effects that we are aware of. The patient is able to move a mouse around the screen by just thinking," Musk said in a Spaces event on X. The tech billionaire also mentioned that Neuralink is now attempting to get as many mouse button clicks as possible from the patient. Following approval for human trial recruitment in September last year.



China makes biggest-ever cut to mortgage rate to boost housing market

Hong Kong, Feb 20 (IANS) : China's central bank has cut its key mortgage reference rate by a record amount, as it ramps up efforts to stem a prolonged property crisis, a media report said. The People's Bank of China (PBoC) announced on Tuesday that it would cut its five-year loan prime rate (LPR) from 4.2 per cent to 3.95 per cent, while keeping the one-year LPR unchanged at 3.45 per cent, CNN reported. The 25 basis point cut to the five-year LPR is the biggest reduction the central bank has made since it revamped its LPR system in 2019. LPR is the rate at which commercial banks lend to their best customers. The five-year rate usually serves as a reference for mortgages. "Today's 25 (basis point) cut to the five-year LPR is clearly aimed at supporting the housing market," analysts from Capital Economics said in a note on Tuesday, CNN reported. "On its own, it will not revive new home sales. But coupled with efforts to provide increased credit support to the developers, today's cut should help to reduce pressure on the property sector somewhat," they said, as per the report. China's economy has been hobbled by a real-estate downturn since 2021, when a government crackdown on developers' borrowing triggered a liquidity crisis in the sector.

Ashok Leyland flags off work on new factory for making e-buses in Lucknow

Lucknow, Feb 20 (IANS) : Hinduja Group auto major Ashok Leyland on Tuesday flagged off work on the construction of a new integrated commercial vehicle plant for manufacturing electric buses in Uttar Pradesh. "The primary focus shall be on production of electric buses, while also having capability to produce other vehicles powered by existing and other emerging alternative fuels," the company said. UP Chief Minister Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath laid the foundation stone for the factory in a ceremony held at the new site at Kanpur Road in Lucknow. Once operational, the plant will initially have the capacity to produce 2500 vehicles per year. Ashok Leyland said it plans to expand this capacity to 5000 vehicles annually over the next decade, anticipating the growing demand for electric and other types of vehicles in the coming years. "The greenfield manufacturing facility will be spread over 70 acres. Packed with latest in manufacturing technology, this will be Ashok Leyland's most modern and green factory worldwide, delivering world class quality standards," the company said. Uttar Pradesh Finance Minister Suresh Khanna, Minister for Industrial Development Nand Gopal Gupta and senior members of the Hinduja family were present on the occasion. Dheeraj Hinduja, Executive Chairman, Ashok Leyland said,



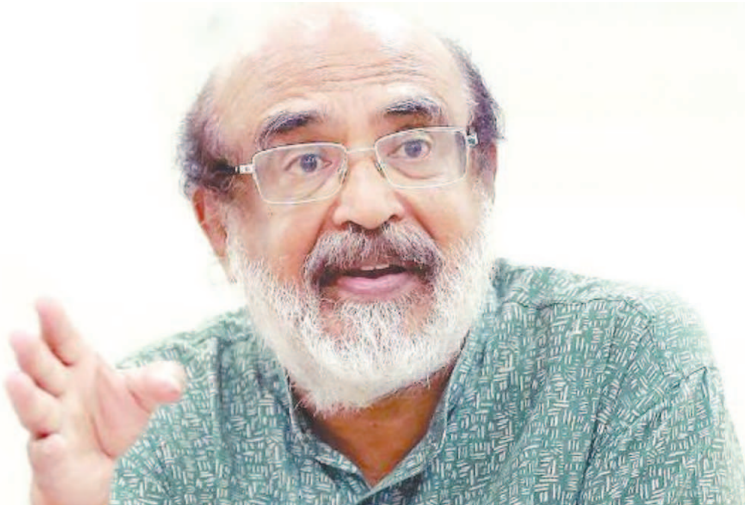
"The Foundation Stone laying ceremony marks the beginning of a new chapter for Ashok Leyland in Uttar Pradesh. Once operational, the facility will have a positive impact on our common goals of generating employment opportunities and advancing sustainable mobility in India. We remain committed to driving innovation and setting new benchmarks in the field of green mobility." Shenu Agarwal, MD & CEO, Ashok Leyland said, "This facility will not only address the rising demand for electric vehicles but also play a vital role in the holistic development of the region. Our focus on electric trucks and buses resonates with the evolving landscape of sustainable transportation and pushes us one step further to build a green mobility future." This facility will be Ashok Leyland's seventh vehicle plant in the country.

In a first, APEDA plans trial run of mango, pomegranate exports by sea to USA & Europe

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Agricultural and Processed Food Products Export Development Authority (APEDA) is planning to send trial shipments of mangoes and pomegranates to the USA and the European Union by sea with the aim of bringing down the transport cost of exporting fresh fruits, the Commerce and Industry Ministry said on Tuesday. "The move is being undertaken as a significant breakthrough has already been achieved with bananas being successfully shipped by sea to the Netherlands in November and to Russia in January," the ministry said. The ministry said that APEDA in collaboration with the Central Institute for Subtropical Horticulture (CISH) has embarked on a proactive initiative to develop sea

protocols tailored for the export of fresh produce to long-distance markets. "This strategic endeavour aims to optimize the export process for promising fresh fruits, facilitating efficient transportation and reducing logistics costs," the ministry said. The implementation of sea protocols is poised to enable a quantum increase in exports of items such as bananas, mangoes, pomegranates, and other fresh fruits and vegetables, further enhancing India's presence in international markets, it added. APEDA has also taken a number of steps to ensure that more and more of its scheduled products are exported to newer destinations. It said that the special emphasis is being given to the One District One Product (ODOP).





Ex-Kerala minister evades ED questioning again

Kochi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Veteran CPI-M leader and former Kerala Finance Minister Thomas Isaac on Tuesday again did not appear before the ED in the Kerala High Court in the masala bonds case.

However, Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has agreed to appear before the court in the same case. On Tuesday, the Court pointed out that they will ensure that there will be no arrest nor will any one be

put under duress. Isaac's counsel said that there was no need for him to appear. However, ED in its response said that Isaac is the main person who knows everything about the masala bond case and that is why he must appear before the court. The ED informed the court that he will not be arrested and the entire questioning will be filmed and will be brought to the court. Meanwhile, the counsel of KIIFB has informed the court that the CEO will not be able to appear but another top official will appear before ED on the 27th and 28th of this month. The ED has agreed to the KIIFB appeal. The court then issued the orders to Isaac asking him to appear before the court on March 8. Isaac has so far been served five notices to appear before the ED but has not turned up.

Lt Gen Upendra Dwivedi takes over as Vice Chief of Army Staff

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Lieutenant General Upendra Dwivedi assumed charge as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff on Tuesday.

Lt Gen Dwivedi took the charge from Lieutenant General MV Suchindra Kumar, who now has been appointed as the General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command.

Before taking over as the Vice Chief of the Army Staff, Lt Gen Dwivedi served as General Officer Commanding-in-Chief, Northern Command from 2022-2024 in extremely challenging op-

erational environment. "An alumnus of Sainik School, Rewa (MP), Lt Gen Dwivedi was commissioned into 18 Jammu and Kashmir Rifles in 1984, a unit he later commanded. The General officer has had a unique distinction of balanced exposure of both Northern and Western Theatres," The Ministry of Defence (MoD) said in a statement.

On assumption of appointment, Lt Gen Dwivedi laid wreath at the National War Memorial and was accorded Guard of Honour at the South Block Lawns.



President's Rule only alternative: NCW chief on Sandeshkhali crisis

Kolkata, Feb 20 (IANS) : President's Rule is the only alternative considering the kind of atrocities, violence and sexual harassment that the women of Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas District in West Bengal are facing, the Nation Commission for Women (NCW) Chairperson Rekha Sharma said on Tuesday. "I spoke to the women there today. I have received 18 complaints, out of which two are rape complaints.



'Why should I meet PM, HM during night', Farooq Abdullah dismisses Ghulam Nabi Azad's claim

Srinagar, Feb 20 (IANS) : Former chief minister and National Conference (NC) President, Farooq Abdullah on Tuesday lashed out at Ghulam Nabi Azad, senior leader and President of Democratic Progressive Azad Party (DPAP), accusing the later of distortion and lies. Reacting to Azad's interview in which he said that Farooq and his son, Omar had tried to forge an alliance with the BJP in 2014 and that the father and son sought meetings with Prime Minister Narendra Modi Union Home Minister Amit Shah secretly, Farooq said, "I have always respected Azad Sahib and I am very sorry to see him making such statements.



Police rescue 7 abducted coal mine labourers near Assam-Arunachal border

Guwahati, Feb 20 (IANS) : At least seven out of 10 labourers who were allegedly kidnapped by militant groups United Liberation Front of Asom-Independent (ULFA-I) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) were rescued near the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, an official said on Tuesday. A senior police officer of Arunachal Pradesh's Changlang district said that seven labourers were rescued on Sunday night, but the remaining three are still missing. "We are attempting to locate the laborers who were brought to a densely forested region.

Since these are rural regions, finding a cell network is nearly impossible," he stated. The officer added: "We are looking for the reason for the kidnapping. The laborers who were rescued are unaware of this. For the rescue effort, we have sent out a strong security personnel." Earlier, ten coal mine labourers were allegedly kidnapped by militant groups near the Assam-Arunachal border, officials said on Sunday. The United Liberation Front of Assam Independent (ULFA-I) and the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN) are suspected of the kidnapping of the coal miners.

Kerala Guv steps out again to take on SFI activists at Kannur

Kochi, Feb 20 (IANS) : In what has become a familiar scene, Kerala Governor Arif Mohammad Khan on Tuesday evening vented his ire on the protesting SFI activists, the student wing of the CPI-M, when he got out of his vehicle and moved towards the protesters at Mattannur in Kannur District. The incident took place when he was going to the Kannur Airport after visiting Wayanad District.

However, the armed security personnel with Khan acted quickly and formed a cordon around him even while he was moving towards the protesters numbering about 100. Khan got irked because the SFI protesters were carrying a banner with the slogan, "Sanghi Governor, get out of Kannur."

An angry Khan shouted, "I will stop my car and get out and come near you every time there is a protest." On Thursday, too, the same scene had played out when Khan, while travelling through Thrissur came out of the car after SFI activists waved black



flags at him. There, too, his security men advised him to get inside the car, which he did. Khan and Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan have been at loggerheads for a while now. On January 27, things went out of hand when Khan during a visit to Kollam District staged a protest by sitting on the road for two hours against the "lapse" on the part of Kerala Police for not taking action against SFI protesters who came near his vehicle. The Centre had intervened on that day itself, as it placed the Governor under Z+ security cover of the CRPF.



'Act against teachers, we will see', Raj Thackeray 'dares' EC

Mumbai, Feb 20 (IANS) : Maharashtra Navnirman Sena (MNS) President Raj Thackeray on Tuesday trained guns at the Election Commission (EC) for its compulsions to involve school teachers in poll-related duties.

Sounding annoyed, the MNS chief demanded to know why the EC is involving school teachers for election work which could directly affect the education of children.

He was speaking to the media here after meeting a delegation

of teachers from the Shardashram Vidyamandir School of Dadar west. The teachers complained that they were being forced to do election duties against their wishes and threatened with 'disciplinary action' if they failed to comply.

"Don't they know that the elections are coming periodically? Have the elections been announced abruptly? They, why can't they create a separate cadre for poll duties, train them and then deploy them for their work," said a visibly irked Raj Thackeray.

On the apprehensions of the teachers that they would face disciplinary proceedings if they flouted the orders, Raj Thackeray countered that "disciplinary action must be initiated against the EC instead of the teaching community".

He directed the school teachers "not to report for election duties or programs anywhere" and instead pay their attention to the student community.

"Every time elections are held, things are being done in a hasty manner. You people don't go for election duties. You just concen-

trate on the school children. If they (EC) act against you, then we will see," said Raj Thackeray.

For the upcoming Lok Sabha elections, BrihanMumbai Municipal Corporation (BMC) and other primary school teachers (Class I-IV) have been asked to report for poll-duties.

More than 4,000 teachers hailing from only civic schools, besides other schools, have been deployed for election work, prompting Raj Thackeray to ask: "Why is there so much work now? What does the Election Commission do for five



years? Action should be taken against the EC for not doing its work for five years."

He queried why the EC does not have a proper system in place, and everytime they go after the teachers even as elections are being

held in the country for so many decades.

"Should not you have your system ready for the polls? The school teachers are supposed to impart knowledge to the children.

5 Hindu migrants from Pak given Indian citizenship in Jaipur

Jaipur, Feb 20 (IANS) : A total of five Hindu migrants from Pakistan were given Indian citizenship certificates in Jaipur on Tuesday. Additional District Collector (South), Abu Sufiyan Chauhan, handed over the certificates to the five Pakistani migrants, including Sanjay Kumar, Sunita, Harsha, Nisha and Rajesh Kumar. After receiving the citizenship cer-

tificate, Sanjay Kumar expressed his gratitude to the district administration and said, "The long wait of many years has ended today. We can now say with pride that we are Indians."

Sufiyan on his part congratulated all the migrants who acquired Indian citizenship and said that the district administration processes the citizenship applications on pri-



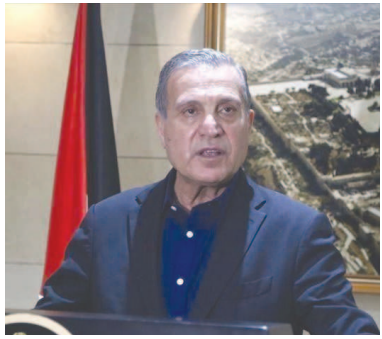
ority basis and issues certificates swiftly so that the applicants do not face any problem. Sufiyan added that till now, Indian citizenship certificates have been issued to a total of 299 eligible applicants.

Pursuing Center to include Khasi, Garo languages in Constitution since 2019: Meghalaya CM

Shillong, Feb 20 (IANS) : Meghalaya Chief Minister Conrad K. Sangma on Tuesday said that the state government has been pursuing the Central government for inclusion of Khasi and Garo languages in the Eighth Schedule of the In-

dian Constitution since 2019. The Chief Minister while replying to the MLAs' queries in the state assembly said that in between 2019 and 2023, he has written eight letters to the Center to include Khasi and Garo languages in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.





Palestinian presidency says statehood key to regional stability

Ramallah, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Palestinian presidency has said that a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital was essential for resolving the conflict and ensuring stability in the region. The statement by Presidential Spokesman Nabil Abu Rudeineh came on Tuesday after the Israeli government unanimously rejected any "unilateral recognition" of a Palestinian state by other countries, Xinhua news agency reported. Abu Rudeineh warned of "different and dangerous" challenges ahead and said the Palestinian position was firm against the "extremist and obstinate" Israeli stance and the "contradictory" US position.

Iran rejects IAEA chief's remarks on nuclear transparency



Tehran, Feb 20 (IANS) : Iran's Foreign Ministry Spokesman Nasser Kanaani has dismissed the recent comments by the head of the UN nuclear organisation that Iran was not fully transparent about its nuclear activities. Kanaani on Tuesday was responding to the remarks made by International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) Director General Rafael Grossi at a summit in Dubai on February 13, where he said Iran was "presenting a face which is not entirely transparent" and this "increases dangers".

Temperatures in Japan rise to unseasonably high

Tokyo, Feb 20 (IANS) : Temperatures rose across Japan as warm air flowed in from the south, with daytime highs hitting a record for February at many locations in northern Japan, the weather agency said. The temperature rose to 17.1 degrees Celsius in Hokkaido's Mombetsu City, matching temperatures usually seen in late June, Xinhua news agency reported. The unseasonably high temperature was 18.8 degrees

higher than the average for this time of year and topped the previous record of 12.6 degrees logged in 1960, according to the Japan Meteorological Agency (JMA) on Tuesday. Temperatures also reached 20.1 degrees in Akita City, northern Japan, 21.8 degrees in Kanazawa City in central Japan and 16.5 degrees in central Tokyo. Unseasonably warm weather is expected to continue in many parts of Japan on Tuesday, the JMA said, adding that the daytime high is forecast to reach 24 degrees in



Shizuoka City and 22 degrees in central Tokyo. Weather officials warned that rain will likely fall in wide areas of northern and eastern Japan, leading to a rapid snowmelt, calling on people to be on alert for possible flooding in low-lying areas, swollen rivers and avalanches.



Zardari to be PPP's candidate for President: Bilawal Bhutto

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : PPP Chairman Bilawal Bhutto-Zardari on Tuesday said that his party has decided that Asif Ali Zardari will be their candidate for the presidential election. "To control the fire spreading in the country, we have decided that Zardari will be our candidate for the presidential election," Bilawal was quoted by Dawn newspaper. He said that when his father, Zardari, will take up the post, he will put out this fire. "He will save the Centre and the provinces," Bhutto said while addressing a rally in Thatta area.

Media reports said that Bilawal has instructed his party to move forward with those who have asked for its votes and would not seek any ministries in return.



Iraqi president condemns killing of Sadrist activist

Baghdad, Feb 20 (IANS) : Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid has condemned the kidnapping and killing of a prominent activist loyal to Shia cleric Muqtada al-Sadr, calling it a threat to security, stability and peaceful coexistence. Rashid said on Tuesday in a statement that the killing of Ayser al-Khafaji, a famous blogger, was a violation of the law, urging the security forces to tighten the security measures to protect the citizens' safety. He also called for an investigation into the incident and bringing the perpetrators to justice, Xinhua news agency reported. Al-Khafaji

was found dead on Tuesday morning on the side of a highway in the Jebala area, north of the city of Hilla, nearly 100 km south of the capital Baghdad, after he was kidnapped on Sunday evening near his house by a group of outlaws, an Interior Ministry source told Xinhua news agency on condition of anonymity. The Interior Ministry confirmed the incident in a statement, without naming the victim or the kidnappers. Al-Khafaji was an influential follower of al-Sadr, who leads the Sadrist Movement and commands the loyalty of hundreds of thousands of Iraqis.



Russia takes full control of coke plant in Avdiivka

Moscow, Feb 20 (IANS) : Russian forces have taken full control of the Avdiivka coke and chemical plant, the country's Defence Ministry said in a statement. It said on Tuesday that Russian forces had taken more favourable lines and positions in the Avdiivka direction, adding that the country's forces had "fully liberated the coke and chemical plant" in the city, Xinhua news agency reported. Russian troops also hit clusters

of manpower and hardware of the Ukrainian army's 71st jaeger and 23rd mechanised brigades, as well as the 116th territorial defence brigade in Donetsk, it added. Ukrainian losses amounted to up to 565 soldiers killed and wounded in this direction, according to the Ministry. Two armoured fighting vehicles, 23 motor vehicles, two US-made M777 howitzers and one D-30 howitzer were destroyed over the past day.



WHO sets up 17 cholera treatment centres in Ethiopia to combat outbreak

Addis Ababa, Feb 20 (IANS): The World Health Organisation (WHO) has said that it has established 17 standard cholera treatment centres in Ethiopia to support the country's efforts in combating a cholera outbreak. The UN health agency said on Tuesday in a statement that the newly established treatment centres will play a crucial role in improving the availability, accessibility and quality of patient care for cholera treatment, Xinhua news agency reported. "This initiative, which is critical for saving lives, ensures that those affected receive rapid and effective care and treatment," the WHO added.

It said the 718-bed capacity cholera treatment centres, which are equipped with the necessary medical equipment, are self-contained medical facilities with designated rooms for screening and triage, observation, admission, recovery, waste disposal, laundry, chlorine preparation, kitchen, and morgue, among others. The WHO said it has also distributed and posted printed standard case management and follow-up protocols at treatment centres. According to the WHO, the death toll from the ongoing cholera outbreak in Ethiopia had reached 468, with 32,548 cholera cases reported across the East African country as of January 30.

Indonesia to launch first hydrogen refueling station

Jakarta, Feb 20 (IANS) : Indonesia has established its first hydrogen refueling station for hydrogen-fuelled vehicles and was planned to be launched at the end of this month, Indonesia's electricity firm said. The breakthrough was showcased at the country's annual automotive show on Tuesday in Jakarta, Xinhua news agency reported. President Director of the country's state-owned electricity company PLN, Darmawan

Prasodjo, said that the hydrogen station was a part of Indonesia's commitment to the development of new renewable energy and the future vehicle ecosystem, which includes providing green hydrogen for transportation needs. "Indonesia is ready to become a major player in the ecosystem of hydrogen-fuelled vehicles, just like we become one of the pioneers in the establishment of electric-vehicle ecosystem," Prasodjo added in a statement. The station facilities would include hydrogen-based



electric vehicle charger as well as Hydrogen Center and Hydrogen Gallery Room as a centre for hydrogen-related training and education in Indonesia. The promotion of the new station at the automotive event, he said, was expected to invite business people and communi-

ties in the automotive world to start switching to green hydrogen-based future vehicles. Indonesia, the world's fourth-largest populous nation, is on its track to reduce carbon emissions and pursue the target of net zero emissions by 2060.



UN warns of worsening hunger in Sudan and beyond amid funding gaps

United Nations, Feb 20 (IANS) : At least 25 million people across Sudan, South Sudan and Chad are struggling with soaring rates of hunger and malnutrition as the crisis in Sudan sends shockwaves around the region, a UN spokesperson said. The ripple effects of Sudan's instability are palpable, with individuals fleeing to

neighbouring South Sudan and Chad, "hungry and arriving with no resources," Stephane Dujarric, the spokesperson for UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, told in Tuesday noon briefing. Due to hundreds of millions US dollars of funding gaps, the World Food Programme (WFP).



Sri Lankans urged to use electricity sparingly as demand spikes due to dry weather

Colombo, Feb 20 (IANS) : Sri Lanka's state-owned electricity producer and distributor, the Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), has urged people to use electricity sparingly as demand for power has grown due to the dry weather, a senior official told the media. CEB spokesman Noel Priyantha told the media on Sunday that electricity demand has increased by between three and four gigawatt hours in the past

month, Xinhua news agency reported. Usually, electricity consumption increases during dry periods in Sri Lanka as people use electric fans and air conditioning to keep cool, energy experts say. Priyantha said the percentage of electricity produced by hydropower has dropped to 21 per cent in recent days due to dry weather, and 4.5 per cent of electricity is generated from solar and five per cent from wind farms.



Mamata accuses Centre of 'deliberately' deactivating Aadhaar of citizens; 'technical glitch', says LoP Adhikari

Kolkata, Feb 20 (IANS) : A political slugfest has erupted in West Bengal over Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee's allegation that the Union government is deliberately deactivating the Aadhaar cards of around 60 citizens of the state. Referring to the complaints from 60 individuals from dif-

ferent parts of West Bengal of reportedly receiving intimation that their Aadhaar cards have been cancelled, the Chief Minister claimed that it is a handiwork of the Centre in the backdrop of the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls. The Chief Minister said in a post on X attaching a letter addressed to the Centre on the issue: "I ve-

hemently condemn the reckless deactivation of Aadhaar cards, particularly targeting SC, ST and OBC communities in West Bengal.

"The Centre's unilateral decision to deactivate Aadhaar cards without any prior investigation or consultation with the state govt is a sinister plot to deprive eligible beneficiaries of welfare schemes, conveniently timed before the Lok Sabha elections.

"We are all CITIZENS of India. Every resident can avail GoWB's welfare benefits, irrespective of whether they have Aadhaar cards." Reacting to the CM's remarks, leader of the opposition in West Bengal Assembly, Suwendu Adhikari, claimed that those who have received intimation of deactivation of Aadhaar received the message by mistake because of some technical glitch in the regional Aadhaar processing office in Ranchi.

"The UIDAI too has issued a clarification that no Aadhaar card has

been cancelled. I urge everyone not to believe any gossip or misinformation. The Chief Minister is unnecessarily trying to create panic.

"No one should be worried. I have spoken to Home Minister Amit Shah and IT Minister Ashwini Vaishnav. Both have assured that whatever complications that have surfaced will be resolved within 24 hours," Adhikari said.

Reacting to Adhikari's remarks, Trinamool spokesman Kunal Ghosh claimed that at least the leader of the opposition has accepted the lapses on the part of a central agency behind the 'deactivation' of Aadhaar cards. Countering Ghosh, Adhikari said the Union government will launch a detailed investigation to find out how such a technical glitch took place at the Ranchi office.

"It will be investigated whether anyone orchestrated a sabotage," Adhikari said.



IAF's Sarang team to display skills in Singapore Airshow

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Sarang Helicopter Display Team of the Indian Air Force (IAF) will perform a four-helicopter display at the Singapore Airshow on Tuesday. The team, after arriving in Singapore, conducted its first practice display on Sunday. The IAF said on Monday that the team was operating from the Changi Airbase of the Republic of Singapore Air Force (RSAF). The Singapore Airshow will feature a variety of display teams from all across the globe. The

show also features leading aircraft and system manufacturers and operators showcasing their products. The Ministry of Defence said the Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) manufactured Advanced Light Helicopter (Dhruv), which the Sarang team operates, is featuring in the show for the very first time. However, the first international display for the Sarang team also happened to be in Singapore for the Asian Aerospace Airshow at Changi Exhibition Center in 2004.



Delhi excise policy case : ED may issue 7th summons to Kejriwal

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) may issue seventh summons to Delhi Chief Minister Arvind Kejriwal in connection with the excise policy case, said an agency source. This comes after Kejriwal on Tuesday again skipped the Enforcement Directorate summons while party sources said that the validity of appearing before the ED is under the scrutiny of the court. The ED had lodged a complaint in local court pursuant to Section 174 of the IPC against Kejriwal, accusing him of deliberately disregarding the initial three summons. "The court has acknowledged this complaint, indicating a prima facie acceptance of Kejriwal's alleged offence, subjecting him to prosecution," said the ED sources.

"The court's focus lies not on the summons' validity but on Kejriwal's purported intentional disobedience of these three summons," the ED sources added. On February 7, the Rouse Avenue court had issued summons to Kejriwal to appear on February 17 on ED's complaint for not complying with summons sent to him in connection with its probe into the money laundering case related to the now-scrapped excise policy matter. The ED on January 31 had issued summons to Kejriwal, and was told to appear before it on February 2. That was the fifth summons issued to the AAP Convenor. Before that ED had issued summons on January 18, January 3, December 22, 2023 and November 2, 2023.



Samajwadi Party facing revolt in the ranks

Lucknow, Feb 20 (IANS) : Swami Prasad Maurya, Pallavi Patel, Kamal Kumar Gautam, Brajesh Prajapati and now Salim Shervani -- the Samajwadi Party in Uttar Pradesh is facing a full-blown revolt in its ranks. When Swami Prasad Maurya resigned from the post of party general secretary last week, many believed that it was designed to quell dissidence within the party over Maurya's anti-Hindu statements. But, when former leader of opposition Ram Govind Chaudhary wrote a letter to party President Akhilesh

Yadav urging him not to accept Maurya's resignation, it became clear that things were not right in the party ranks. Immediately after, Apna Dal (K) leader Pallavi Patel, who is a legislator on SP symbol, declared that she would not vote for the SP candidates in the Rajya Sabha polls since 'Jaya Bachchan and Alok Ranjan' did not come in the PDA (Pichhda, Dalit, Alpsankhyak) category. She also sympathised with Swami Prasada Maurya. Patel and her party leaders carrying the Apna Dal flag, joined Congress leader Rahul Gandhi's Yatra in Varanasi on Saturday. After Pallavi, it was former minister Kamal Kumar Gautam who

resigned from the post of secretary in SP's state executive. Joining hands with Maurya, Gautam claimed that he, too, was feeling sidelined in the party as he had not been given any responsibility for years now. A founder-member of the BSP, Gautam hails from Azamgarh and had joined the SP in 2019. Former MLA Brajesh Prajapati, who had quit the BJP to join the SP in January 2022 along with Swami Prasad Maurya, has also expressed his disillusionment with the SP leadership. He has announced his disassociation from all party activities. The biggest blow, meanwhile, came on Sunday when former MP

Salim Shervani held a press conference in Delhi and announced that he had tendered his resignation from the post of national general secretary of the Samajwadi Party. He alleged that party President Akhilesh Yadav does not give any importance to the PDA (Pichhda, Dalit and Alpsankhyak) communities. In his resignation letter, Shervani asked how the SP was different from the BJP and that the party's candidates for the Rajya Sabha elections on February 27 did not have a Muslim name, as a result of which the community was feeling "ignored".



Assam Rifles recovers large cache of explosives, warlike stores in Mizoram; 1 held

Aizawl, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Assam Rifles has recovered a large cache of explosives and warlike stores from two different locations in Mizoram, officials said on Tuesday. Assam Rifles sources said that the paramilitary troopers recovered large quantities of explosives and warlike stores from Tuisih village in Siaha district on Sunday. The recovered explosive items include 110 gelatin sticks, 100 ordinary detonators.

Man sent to jail for harassing schoolgirl in K'taka

Bengaluru, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Karnataka High Court has sentenced a youth to a three-year imprisonment and also imposed a fine of Rs 10,000 for sexually harassing a minor school girl. The court has also quashed the judgment of a lower court which had acquitted the accused. The division bench headed by Justice Srinivas Harishkumar passed the order recently after considering the criminal appeal petition of the prosecution. The incident had taken place on October 26, 2014 in the limits of Baluru police station in Chikkamagaluru district. The accused was 18-year-old

when he committed the crime and presently is 28. The court also refused to oblige the plea to give him benefit under the Probation of Offenders Act and release him. The bench further underlined that the POCSO Act was implemented on June 20, 2012. The benefit of the Probation of Offenders Act could not be extended to the accused in the crime cases committed under the Act, the court said. The accused, a labourer at a coffee estate, had forcibly held the victim while she was walking on the road and dragged her into a public toilet. He had told her that he had fallen for her and had



forcibly kissed and groped her. The victim had somehow managed to escape from the clutches of the accused and reach her house. The father of the victim had lodged a case in this regard with the Baluru police station. The Pocsso Special Court of Chikkamagaluru had acquitted the accused in the case claiming that the statements of father and mother were contradicting. The evidence of the victim was not trustworthy, the court had stated.



Raj Congress' key tribal leader & four-time MLA Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya joins BJP

Jaipur, Feb 20 (IANS) : Congress Working committee member and MLA from Bagidora in Rajasthan's Banswara district, Mahendrajeet Singh Malviya joined the BJP on Tuesday after quitting from the grand old party. The four-time MLA is a strong tribal face in the state.



Yemen's Houthi group attacks 2 US ships in Gulf of Aden

Sanaa, Feb 20 (IANS) : Yemen's Houthi group has announced that they launched missile attacks against two US ships in the Gulf of Aden, saying the hits were "accurate". In a televised statement aired by the group's satellite TV channel al-Masirah, Houthi military spokesperson Yahya Sarea said on Tuesday evening that the attacks against American ships, Sea Champion and Navis Fortuna, were "accurate and direct," without specifying

the damages or casualties. According to Sarea, the attacks brought the total number of Houthi operations during the past 24 hours to four, Xinhua news agency reported. The first targeted a British ship resulting in its complete sinking. The second shot down a US MQ9 drone in the airspace of Hodeidah Governorate, while the last two attacks targeted two US ships. "Our operations in the Red Sea and the Arabian Sea will escalate and will not stop unless (Israeli)

aggression (on Hamas) stops and the siege on the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip is lifted," the Houthi military spokesperson said in the statement. Earlier on Monday, Britain's Maritime Trade Operations agency said the crew had safely departed the attacked Britain-registered vessel. Meanwhile, the US Central Command said in a brief statement posted on social media platform X that the British cargo vessel was hit by two ballistic missiles fired from Houthi-controlled areas in northern Yemen. "Between 9:30 and 10:45 p.m., February 18, two anti-ship ballistic missiles were launched from Iranian-backed Houthi terrorist-controlled areas of Yemen toward MV Rubymar, a Belize-flagged, UK-owned bulk carrier. One of the missiles struck the vessel, causing damage," the US Central Command said. "The ship issued a distress call and a coalition warship along with another merchant vessel responded to the call to assist the crew of the MV Rubymar. The crew was transported to a nearby port by the merchant vessel," the US Central Command added. Shortly before the Houthi forces'

forces accused the US and Britain of launching an airstrike on the area of Al-Jabanah in the port city of Hodeidah, which is under Houthi control. Residents there said an explosion occurred in an empty location. On Tuesday, the US Central Command conducted "five successful strikes in self-defence" against Houthi targets, including mobile missiles and "for the first time" underwater drones. It said its strikes since January against the Houthi forces aimed to degrade the Houthi military capabilities. However, Houthis, in response, have increased and expanded their attacks on commercial shipping in the Red Sea and Gulf of Aden since last November to include the US and British navy ships recently. The Houthi forces have been controlling the strategic Hodeidah on the Red Sea since the 2018 UN-sponsored Stockholm Agreement, which was backed by the US and Britain, forcing the Yemeni internationally recognised government out.

Death toll of poll workers in Indonesia's election rises to 71



Jakarta, Feb 20 (IANS) : The number of poll workers who died in Indonesia's general election rose to 71, official sources said. "Reports up until February 18 indicate that there were also 4,567 poll workers who were sick while on duty," said Chairman of the General Election Commission (KPU) Hasyim Asy'ari on Tuesday. Health Minister Budi Gunadi Sadikin added, "For us, even one death is too many," despite the fact that the number of deaths has significantly dropped from the

previous election. There were 894 poll workers that lost their lives during last general election in 2019, Xinhua news agency reported. In the 2024 election, of the 6.8 million workers that had health screenings, 398,000 of them had comorbidities, primarily heart disease and hypertension. Sadikin hopes to see an end to poll worker deaths in the upcoming elections. Indonesia held the world's largest single-day election on February 14, with about 204 million voters throughout its 38 provinces.



Biden willing to personally discuss Ukraine aid with top House Republican

Washington, Feb 20 (IANS) : US President Joe Biden has said that he is willing to meet with House Speaker Mike Johnson in order to secure the long-awaited passage of a bill that contains funding for the provision of additional arms to Ukraine. "Sure, I'd be happy to meet with him if he has anything to say," Biden told reporters on Tuesday as he returned to the White House from Delaware, where he spent the weekend. The President said House GOP members, led by Johnson, are "making a big mistake by not responding" to the repeated calls from the White House that they should approve the administration's supplemental budget request and meet Ukraine's

urgent need for resupply of ammunition in its conflict with Russia, Xinhua news agency reported. "The way they're walking away from the threat of Russia, they way they're walking away from NATO, the way they're walking away from meeting our obligations. It's just shocking. I've never seen anything like it," Biden added. Johnson, who's been withholding a vote in his chamber on a Senate-passed national security spending bill in order to squeeze out Democrats' compromise allowing significant upgrades to border security, told reporters last week that he had been requesting a meeting with Biden "for weeks".

UN rights chief slams UK's Rwanda bill

Geneva, Feb 20 (IANS) : The UK's recent legislative moves to facilitate the removal of asylum-seekers to Rwanda run contrary to the basic principles of the rule of law and risk delivering a serious blow to human rights, the UN Human Rights Chief said. The bill would also drastically strip back the courts' ability to scrutinise removal decisions, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk said on Tuesday in a statement as quoted by Xinhua news agency report. The UK's proposed legislation, known as the Safety of Rwanda (Asylum and Immi-

gration) Bill, requires every decision maker -- be it a government minister, immigration office, or court or tribunal reviewing asylum decisions -- to treat Rwanda as a "safe country" in terms of protecting refugees and asylum seekers against refoulement, irrespective of evidence that exists now or may exist in the future, he added. "Settling questions of disputed fact -- questions with enormous human rights consequences -- is what the courts do ... It should be for the courts to decide whether the measures taken by the government since the Supreme Court's ruling on risks in Rwanda are enough," Turk said. "You cannot legislate facts out of

existence." "It is deeply concerning to carve out one group of people, or people in one particular situation, from the equal protection of the law. This is antithetical to even-handed justice, available and accessible to all, without discrimination," he added. The UN human rights office has reiterated the concerns expressed by the UN refugee agency (UNHCR) that the scheme is not compatible with international refugee law, the statement said. "The combined effects of this Bill, attempting to shield government action



from standard legal scrutiny, directly undercut basic human rights principles," Turk added. Turk urged the UK government to "take all necessary steps" to ensure full compliance with the UK's international legal obligations and to uphold the country's history of "effective, independent judicial scrutiny". "Such a stance is today more vital than ever."



Yemeni military official found dead in Cairo

Cairo, Feb 20 (IANS) : The Yemeni embassy in Egypt announced on Tuesday that a senior Yemeni military official was found dead in his apartment in Cairo. "The Embassy of the Republic of Yemen to the Arab Republic of Egypt is following with great interest and concern the issue of the killing of Major General Hassan bin Jalal al-Obaidi, Director of the Military Industrialization Department in the Ministry of Defense, who was found murdered in his apartment in the Egyptian capital Cairo," said the Yemeni embassy in a statement, Xinhua news agency reported. It added that the embassy has assigned specialists to the field, communicated with all relevant security authorities in Egypt, and will follow up on investigations to reach the truth of the incident.



India launches construction of houses for plantation workers in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Feb 20 (IANS) : India has launched the construction of houses for the Indian origin plantation workers across six different provinces in Sri Lanka. The construction will be carried out under the Indian Housing Project (IHP) and around 1,300 houses will be built for 10,000 for Indian origin plantation workers. Sri Lankan President Ranil Wickremesinghe on Tuesday virtually launched the project along with Indian High Commissioner Santosh Jha. In May 2017, during his visit to the plantation regions of Sri

Lanka, Prime Minister Narendra Modi had announced Phase IV of IHP. Along with President Wickremesinghe on November 2, 2023 the foundation stone for the project was laid by Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman during her visit to India's southern neighbour. "Government of India's total commitment under the flagship IHP currently stands at 60,000 houses. In the first two phases, 46,000 houses were covered in Northern and Eastern Provinces," Indian High Commission in Colombo said.

Top US consular official visits missions in Mumbai, Chennai, Delhi

New York, Feb 20 (IANS) : US Assistant Secretary of State for Consular Affairs, Rena Bitter, arrived in India to engage with embassy and consulate colleagues in Chennai, Mumbai and New Delhi. During her week-long visit, which will conclude on February 27, she will also be visiting Doha to observe the work of US consular teams, a US State Department statement said. In India, home to the second largest US consular operation in the world, she will visit facilities in Chennai and Mumbai and lead a delegation in a bilateral consular dialogue with counterparts in New Delhi.



Oxygen shortage kills 8 patients in besieged Gaza hospital : Minister

Gaza, Feb 20 (IANS) : Eight patients have died in a major hospital in southern Gaza's Khan Younis city after days of power outage and oxygen supply shortage due to continuous Israeli strikes on the facility, said Palestinian Health Minister Mai al-Kaila. Conditions of some other serious patients became life-threatening due to the cessation of required treatment under the Israeli attack on the Nasser Hospital, she said on Tuesday in a statement, while calling for international efforts to pressure the release

of bedridden patients and medical staff, who she claimed were taken away by Israeli military trucks from the hospital to an unknown location, Xinhua news agency reported. Israeli forces last Thursday stormed the Nasser Hospital in the southern Gaza Strip city of Khan Younis after demolishing its southern wall, the Hamas-run Health Ministry in Gaza earlier said. The IDF said in a statement posted Sunday on social media platform X that it apprehended

Chappell urges Root to drop 'Bazball' approach after horror dismissal in Rajkot

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Former Australian Test skipper Ian Chappell believes that Joe Root should drop the Bazball approach and "play his natural game" following his dismissal on the reverse ramp shot that led to the visitors' batting collapse in the third Test. Root's struggles, particularly highlighted by England's crushing 434 runs defeat at the hands of India in the third Test - their heaviest defeat in terms of runs since 1934. England were 224-2 on

day three of the third test with Ben Duckett batting at 141, Root batting at 18 dragged a reverse ramp straight to the second slip in the 40th over. His dismissals triggered a collapse for England, who went from 207-2 to 319 all out, conceding a 126-run lead to India. Chappell, emphasised Root's prowess when playing his natural game, suggesting that the attempt to adopt a radical shift in approach was unnecessary. "Root had a bloody fine record playing normally, and he was a quick scorer playing normally. I

don't see why he's trying to change things drastically, and I've never believed you should play premeditated shots," said Chappell to Nine Wide World of Sports. Root's recent numbers didn't paint a flattering picture, especially compared to his stellar form before Brendon McCullum's tenure. Root's average since Brendon McCullum took over is 50.12 – a touch higher than his career average of 49.32. Chappell underscored the importance of playing according to the conditions and the bowlers, ac-

knowledging that aggression should be tempered by situational awareness. "You can't always do it – it's got to be according to the conditions and also who's bowling. Some bowlers you can score off a lot quicker than others, but when a really good bowler is bowling a good spell, you've got to be prepared to try and battle it out and think to yourself 'Well, when he goes off, it'll get a bit easier'. "You're always trying to score runs – that's got to be your prime aim. But, you've also got to realise in some conditions, against

some bowlers you can score quicker than others." It wasn't the first time Root had been dismissed playing a switch hit. He had attempted a similar shot against the Netherlands at last year's ODI World Cup. But England coach Brendon McCullum has backed Root to continue trying to take the game on.



India win 6 medals at WPC series- 2024 Asia Pickleball Open

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : The All-India Pickleball Association showcased their prowess, at the WPC series-2024 Asia Pickleball Open held in Thailand, with Indian players dominating the event with six medals including two gold, one silver and three bronze. The duo of Tejas Mahajan and Vanshik Kapadia, demonstrated exceptional coordination and strategic prowess to win the gold in the open men's doubles category. India also secured its second gold in the team event. The cohesive efforts of Vanshik Kapadia, Tejas Mahajan, Kuldip Mahajan, Himansh Mehta, Divyanshu Kataria,

Sonukumar Vishwakarma, Avinash Kumar, Vrushi Thakare, Isha Lakhani, and Urvi Abhyankar showcased a remarkable synergy, securing a resounding victory. In the open mixed doubles category, Mayur Patil and Isha Lakhani secured the silver, while the international collaboration of Kuldip Mahajan and Hong Yi Wong from Hong Kong earned them the bronze. In the Open Women Doubles category, Isha Lakhani and Vrushi Thakare added to the accolades with a bronze medal, highlighting the strength and talent of Indian women in the sport.

BCB appoints Habibul Bashar as head of women's cricket

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) on Tuesday appointed former national skipper Habibul Bashar as the head of women's cricket. Amidst the backdrop of the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium, where many historic moments in Bangladesh cricket have unfolded, Bashar's appointment was announced during a meeting of the women's wing chaired by Nadel Chowdhury. Habibul worked as a member of the national selec-



tion panel from 2016 to 2024 until it was dissolved. "We have discussed how to go forward in the coming days with women's cricket."

Bazball is overhyped: Kris Srikkanth makes a scathing assessment of England's tactics

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Known for his no-holds-barred aggressive batting, former India captain Krishnamachari Srikkanth has dissed the Bazball tactics employed by England in Tests under the management of head coach Brendon McCullum and skipper Ben Stokes, which has seen them trail India 1-2 after winning the first Test in the five-match series. With two more matches to go, Srikkanth delivered a scathing assessment of England's chances in the ongoing Test series against India, dismissing any hope of a comeback following their

resounding defeat in the Rajkot Test. After a stunning victory in the series opener in Hyderabad, England slumped to consecutive losses in Visakhapatnam and Rajkot, the latest setback, a crushing 434-run defeat in the third Test has cast doubts on the efficacy of England's Bazball approach on Indian pitches.

Srikkanth, a proponent of the slam-bang style of batting in a period when staying at the pitch for hours was the norm, ridiculed the Bazball strategy as "overhyped" and even suggested facetiously that England might consider catching the next flight home to avoid further humiliation. He expressed skepticism about the



effectiveness of such tactics, emphasizing the need for skill and talent to succeed in challenging conditions. "If possible, they can catch the next flight home. But, they have to play the remaining two Tests. I think this Bazball and all that are theories that they propagated. Where has it worked? Did it work

in the Ashes? Frankly speaking, no strategy can work if they continue playing like this. There was so much hype about this Bazball theory. To back up all that talk, I think they needed the skill to bat in these conditions. You need the talent to bowl," said Srikkanth on his YouTube channel.



Warner, Head confirm as Aussies' T20I openers; Smith's role less clear ahead of T20 WC

Wellington, Feb 20 (IANS) : David Warner and Travis Head seem to open the batting for Australia in the T20 World Cup after the duo was confirmed as the opening pair for the three-match series against New Zealand, beginning on Wednesday in Wellington. Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh, captain for the three-match T20I series, also confirmed he will remain in the number three role he has made his own in the 20-over format over recent years.

France's PSG star Kylian Mbappe agrees to join Real Madrid: Report

New Delhi, Feb 20 (IANS) : Paris St-Germain (PSG) striker Kylian Mbappe has reportedly finalised an agreement to join Real Madrid during the upcoming summer transfer window. According to BBC Sports, the French sensation, who currently serves as the captain of the French national team, has informed PSG of his decision to depart as his contract with the club nears its expiration in June. While Mbappe's move to Real Madrid is yet to be officially confirmed through a signed

contract, reports suggest that the announcement could be imminent, potentially following the conclusion of this season's UEFA Champions League, where the two clubs could face each other. Mbappe, aged 25, holds the distinction of being PSG's all-time leading goal scorer, boasting an impressive tally of 244 goals.



FIH Pro League: 'Confidence in the camp is quite high', says hockey midfielder Hardik ahead of Netherlands clash

Rourkela, Feb 20 (IANS) The Indian men's hockey Team is showcasing an impressive performance at the FIH Pro League 2023/24, securing victories in two out of their five games within regulation time. They displayed their resilience

with shootout triumphs against formidable opponents, the Netherlands 2-2 (4-2 SO) and Spain 2-2 (8-7 SO), earning valuable bonus points. Their solitary defeat came at the hands of Australia. India kicked off their campaign in Bhubaneswar with a convincing

4-1 victory over Spain, followed by a thrilling 2-2 (4-2) shootout win against the Netherlands, the top-ranked team in the world, where Hardik Singh secured the opening goal. Subsequently, India faced a setback with a 4-6 loss to Australia but bounced back with

a 1-0 triumph over Ireland to conclude the Bhubaneswar leg on a high. Moving to the Rourkela leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2023/24, India maintained the momentum by securing a 2-2 (8-7) shootout win against Spain in a closely contested match.

