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BJP leader's son among 10 held in Hyderabad for consuming drugs

Police in Hyderabad arrested BJP leader Gajjala Yoganand's son, Gajjala Vivekanand, and nine others for consuming drugs during a party at a city hotel. Vivekanand (37) is the director..

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4th Test: To come out on the right side of the very hard-fought series feels very good, says Rohit Sharma

Following a thrilling five-wicket win over England to win the fourth Test and the series, India captain Rohit Sharma said he was..

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Power giant NTPC's mining arm surpasses 100mn tonnes coal production milestone

Government-owned power giant NTPC's coal-mining subsidiary NTPC Mining Ltd. (NML) has surpassed the milestone of producing 100 million metric tonnes (MMT) of coal..

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Destroyed Telangana is equivalent to 100 years : CM Revanth

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (NSS) : Chief Minister Revanth Reddy alleged that the destroyed of Telangana done by former chief minister K Chandrashekar Rao during the last 10 years was equivalent to 100 years. Addressing the media at Secretariat here on Monday after launching accident insurance coverage scheme for Singareni workers, the Chief Minister said that the

previous BRS government under the leadership of KCR had created a financial crisis in Telangana, resulting in the current government is forced to pay Rs.70,000 crores of debt to banks per annum. "We are solving the problems created by the previous BRS government one by one and are moving forward by doing things useful for the poor in the Telangana."



PM lays stone, inaugurates & dedicates Railway Infrastructure Projects

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (TIM Bureau) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi today laid the foundation stone, inaugurated and dedicated to the Nation around 2000 railway infrastructure projects worth over Rs 41,000 crore via video conferencing. Lakhs of people connected with the Viksit Bharat Viksit Railways event from 500 railway stations and 1500 other venues. Simultaneously, a program was held at the Begumpet Railway Station in which Dr Tamilisai Soundararajan, Governor, Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Deputy Chief Minister, Dr K. Laxman, Rajya Sabha MP, Arun Kumar Jain, SCR General Manager, Bartesh Kumar Jain, DRM, Secunderabad Division participated. The Prime Minister laid foundation stone virtually for development of Begumpet Railway Sta-

tion under Amrit Bharat Station Scheme, including 57 Amrit stations and 156 RuBs / RoBs in SCR jurisdiction today.

Speaking on the occasion, the Prime Minister said today's programme is a symbol of the new work culture of New India. "This resolve is visible in this Viksit Bharat Viksit Railway programme", he said. He mentioned his Jammu & Gujarat events of the last few days from where he launched massive expansion of education and health sector infrastructure. Similarly, today also, 550 stations in 12 States spread over 300 districts are



being revamped. Talking about Gomti Nagar station project in Uttar Pradesh, over 1500 roads and over-bridge projects, PM Modi underlined the scale and speed of the ambition and resolve of new India. **Continued on pg 02**



Kishan sure Modi will be PM again in upcoming LS polls

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (IANS) : Union minister G. Kishan Reddy today said PM Narendra Modi would become the PM after the upcoming MP elections.

Addressing a gathering in Ameerpet, he said five yatras had been launched in the State in the name of Vijaya Sankalpa Yatra and added that he came to Sanathnagar as part of the Vijaya Sankalpa Yatra on Monday.



VH reiterates contest of Lok Sabha election from Khammam

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (NSS): Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao has reiterated that he will contest from Khammam in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls. Speaking at a press conference at Gandhi Bhavan here on Monday, Hanumantha Rao said that he had been working in Khammam to strengthen the Congress party for many years and he had fought against every injustice done to

the people of Khammam. "The party cadre is asking me to contest from Khammam Lok Sabha constituency. Is there any leader who has worked harder than me for the party?," VH questioned.

BJP doing temple politics to gain votes in Lok Sabha polls: Jagga Reddy

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (NSS): Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) working president T. Jayaprakash Reddy came down heavily on the Bharatiya Janatha Party (BJP) for doing the temple politics to gain votes in the upcoming Lok Sabha elections. Speaking to the media at

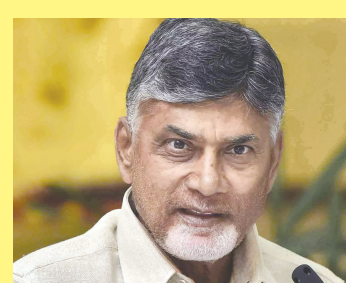
Gandhi Bhavan here on Monday, Congress leader T. Jayaprakash Reddy, popularly known as Jagga Reddy, termed the BJP as the party of 420 and it was using the temples for politics. He said that a cheating case should be filed against the BJP for cheating the people in the name of God.



'Intimidating officials': AP gov't urges SC to cancel Chandrababu Naidu's bail

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Saying that TDP supremo Chandrababu Naidu and his family members are intimidating public officials probing the alleged Skill Development Corporation scam case, the Andhra Pradesh government on Monday urged the Supreme Court to cancel his bail. Appearing for the state government, senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi apprised a bench presided over by Justice Bela M Trivedi

that Naidu's family members are openly threatening officials involved in the investigation in the case with a payback once they come back to power.



Jagan inaugurates Kuppam Canal, releases Krishna water to over four lakh people

Kuppam, Feb 26 (NSS): In a landmark moment for the people of Kuppam, Chief Minister YS Jagan Mohan Reddy today inaugurated the Kuppam Branch Canal and released Krishna water to over four lakh residents in Kuppam and Palamaneru constituencies. The water is sourced from the newly constructed Kuppam Branch Canal, a monumental project

completed at a cost of Rs 560.29 crore under the AVR HNSS (Handri Neeva Sujala Sravanthi) Project Phase-2, located in Rama Kuppam Mandal, Chittoor District.

The significant achievement by the YSRCP government ensures the provision of irrigation water to 6,300 acres of ayacut through 110 minor irrigation tanks in the Kuppam constituency. This development fulfills the long-standing desire of the people of Kuppam for access to drinking and irrigation water, marking a new era of prosperity and growth for the region. Speaking to a sea of enthusiastic supporters at Gundisetipalle in



Shanthipuram Mandal, Chief Minister Jagan said, "Travelling 672 km over hills and canals, climbing 1,600 feet, and entering Kuppam constituency from Srisailam, we are making history today." Exposing the failures of Chandrababu's regime, CM Jagan said, "for 35 years, Chandrababu Naidu represented Kuppam and held the CM office for 14 years.



Prajavani requests should be resolved immediately : Anurag Jayanthi

Rajanna Sirsilla, Feb 26 (TIM Bureau) : Collector Anurag Jayanthi ordered that the applications received by Prajavani should be dealt with immediately. A public hearing was held on Monday in the conference hall of the district integrated office complex. Collector Anurag Jayanthi received applications from the public on this occasion. Later, the collector said how many applications have been received so far for the Prajavani held in Sirsilla and Praja Bhavan in Hyderabad? How many are pending? They were ordered to give a report giving proper reasons for them. Also, how many cases are pending in the Supreme Court and High Court in all the government departments of the district? The officials of all the departments were ordered to give their details and attend the public hearing.



Exams pads and pens are distributed Leaders of BRS

Rajanna Sirsilla, Feb 26 (TIM Bureau) : In Mandepalli village of Tangallapally mandal of Rajanna Sirsilla district, the tenth class students of the government school were distributed pads pens for exams as part of BRS party gift a smile. Former sarpanch Ganapa Sivajyoti, MPTC Bussa Swapna, PACS chairman Bandi Devdas, former ward members Pasula Shekhar, village department presidents Nakka Ravi, principal Aradhana, teachers, BRS leaders Ganapa Madan Reddy, Bussa Lingam, Gurram Kishan Goud, Ragipelli Kishoreddy, Lingampelli Raju, Peddi Ramesh Goud and others participated.

All prepared for inter exams

Rajanna Sirsilla, Feb 26 (TIM Bureau) : Officials have prepared everything for the intermediate exams. Arrangements have been completed in the examination centers. Students should reach one hour before the exam time. Cell phones and electronic items are prohibited. From 9 am onwards, 4609 inter first year students and 3934 second year students from government and private colleges in the district will appear for the exam. The intermediate exams will be held from 28th of this month to 19th of March next month. The exams will be conducted from 9 am to 12 noon. A total of 18 examination centers have been set up in the district. Government Junior College Boys Sirsilla, Sess Government Junior College Girls Sirsilla, Government Junior College Konarapet,

- Arrangements are complete in the centers
- Cell phones and electronic items are prohibited
- District Intermediate Officer Mohan

Government Junior College Illanthakunta, Government Junior College Vemulawada, Government Junior College Chandurthi, Government Junior College Rudrangi, Government Junior College Gambhiraopet, Govt. Varnament Junior College Mustabad, Govt. Jr College Ellareddipet, TSWurS Junior College (Girls) Badenapalli, Sri Krishnadevaraya College Anantanagar Sirsilla, Sahasra Junior College Sirsilla, Sai Shri Junior College Ananthanagar Sirsilla, Pavithra Junior College Examination centers have been set up at Vocational Junior College, Vemulawada. " - Implementation

of section 144. Police will enforce section 144 at the inter examination centres. Also, the officials advised that the xerox shops near the examination centers should be closed from 9 am to 12 noon and cell phones and electronic items should not be brought into the examination centers. Teams for supervision. Teams were formed with officials from various departments to supervise the examinations. Two DECS, 18 Chief Superintendents, 18 Departmental Mental Officers, 7 Additional Chief Superintendents, 2 Sitting Squad, 3 Flying Squad and 3



Custodians have been appointed. " - Tele manas to de-stress students The government has taken up a program called 'Tele Manas' to remove the mental stress and fear among the students appearing for the inter exams. Two toll free helpline numbers 14416 and 1800914416 are available. A help line center has also been set up in the district. The number here is 9440599965. Must reach an hour before Students appearing for the exams should reach the centers an hour before. We have completed all the arrangements in the examination centers. Students should write exams calmly.

District Collector Anurag Jayanthi unveiled the financial literacy poster



Rajanna Sirsilla, Feb 26 (TIM Bureau) : Rajanna Sirsilla District Collector Anurag Jayanthi unveiled the posters designed by RBI to create awareness among people about financial literacy. The posters prepared by the RBI were released on Monday in the auditorium of the district integrated office complex along with the Collector, Bank and officials of various departments. The Collector un-

veiled the poster on the occasion of the 'Financial Literacy Week' organized by the Reserve Bank of India every year from 26th to 1st March. Additional Collector Khimya Naik, SBI Chief Manager Veeranjaneulu, UBI Chief Manager Premkumar, Indian Bank Manager Lovaraju, Lead Bank Financial Literacy Counselor Venkataramana and others participated in the program.

Five drug consumers arrested

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (IANS) : This is the case of usage and consumption of cocaine drug by certain people in a party at Radison Blue hotel, Gachibowli in the Cyberabad limits.

Telangana Grameena Bank MEDCHAL BRANCH
Cell: 9491041929
LOCKER BREAK OPEN & PAYMENT OF RENT DUE FINAL NOTICE
It is the Final Notice to the Locker holder Mandala Pandu, S/o Sathaiiah, R/o Plot No. 2-A, Godavari Homes, Euronautic Enclave, Suchitra, Jeedimetta-500055; Mobile No.7330691490, 9848864776 who is Holding Locker No.18 in Our Telangana Grameena Bank, Medchal-160 Branch. The Rent in the Locker is Due since 22-02-2018. We have Served all the 3 Notices and Due to No Response from Your side to the Phone Calls or the Letters, The Head Office has Decided to Break Open The Locker On 15-03-2024. Pending Rent & Charges to be Borne by the Holder = Rs.25,000/- . The Locker will be Broken Opened On 15-03-2024. Thereafter No Recommendations & Complaints will not be Entertained.
Sd/- Branch Manager, Cell: 9491041929

Bank of Baroda
Basheerbagh Branch, # 3-5-822/1, Ground Floor, Hyderabad Main Road, Hyderabad-500029.
POSSESSION NOTICE
[Rule 8(1) of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002]
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bank of Baroda under the Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 and in exercise of powers conferred under section 13(12) read with rule 3 of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 issued a Demand Notice dated 02.05.2023 calling upon the borrower 1. M/s. MNS Box & Books Private Limited Rep by Director Mr. Machha Bharat Raj and guarantors: 2. Mr. Machha Bharat Raj, 3. Mr. Machha Vipin Raj and Mr. Machha Nitin Raj to repay the amount mentioned in the notice aggregating Rs.39,81,229.66 (Rupees Thirty Nine Lakhs Eighty One Thousand Two Hundred and Twenty Nine and Sixty Six Paise only) as on 01.05.2023 + interest thereon and other expenses thereon, minus recovery if any within 60 days from the date of the receipt of said notice. The borrowers / guarantors / mortgagors having failed to repay the amount, notice is hereby given to the borrower / guarantors and the public in general that the undersigned has taken Symbolic Possession of the property / security described herein below in exercise of powers conferred on him/her under Sub-Section (4) of section 13 of the Act read with rule 8 of the Security Interest. (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on this the 21st Day of February of the year 2024.
The Borrowers and guarantors in particular and the public in general are hereby cautioned not to deal with the property / security and any dealings with the property / security will be subject to the charge of the Bank of Baroda, Basheerbagh Branch for an amount of being Rs.39,81,229.66 (Rupees Thirty Nine Lakhs Eighty One Thousand Two Hundred and Twenty Nine and Sixty Six Paise only) as on 01.05.2023 + interest thereon and other expenses thereon minus recovery if any. The Borrowers attention is invited to the provision of sub-section (8) of Section 13 of the Act, in respect of time available, to redeem the secured assets.
DESCRIPTION OF THE SECURITY
1. Hypothecation of Stock & Book Debts
2. Machinery.

Sr.No.	Description	Qty.	Rate	Amount
i	B 460-Box Wrapping Machine	1	12,50,000.00	12,50,000.00
ii	SW 1000-Grooving Machine Manual	1	5,50,000.00	5,50,000.00
iii	SW 600 A- Gluing Machine Automatic (Used Machine)	1	8,00,000.00	8,00,000.00

Date: 21-02-2024
Place: Hyderabad
Sd/- Chief Manager / Authorised Officer
Bank of Baroda

PM lays stone, inaugurates & dedicates Railway Infrastructure Projects

Continued From pg 01
The Prime Minister said that today projects worth Rs 40,000 crore are seeing the light of day and recalled initiating the Amrit Bharat Station project a few months ago where work to modernize 500 railway stations in the country had begun. He underlined that today's event takes this resolve even further and provides a glimpse of India's pace of progress. Prime Minister Modi congratulated the citizens of India for the railway projects of today. Prime Minister congratulated the Yuva Shakti of India for today's development project as they are the real beneficiaries of Viksit Bharat. He said that the development projects of today will create employment and self-employment opportunities for lakhs of youth, while also benefit those studying in schools. "Youth have the maximum right to decide how Viksit Bharat will unfold", PM Modi exclaimed. He

expressed gratitude towards the youth for bringing the dreams of railroads in Viksit Bharat to reality through various competitions and also congratulated the winners. "Indian Railways is not just a passenger facility but is also the biggest carrier of India's agricultural and industrial progress", the Prime Minister remarked, noting that a faster train will save more time in transportation while also reducing industry costs. Hence, giving impetus to Make in India and Atmanirbhar India. Crediting India's modern infrastructure, the Prime Minister hailed the nation as the most attractive place for investment all

over the world. The Prime Minister concluded his address by showing the way for the next 5 years and said that the capacity of Indian Railways will increase when these thousands of stations are modernized, bringing a revolution of huge investment. Tamilisai Soundararajan, Governor, said 15 railway stations in Telangana will be developed with airport standard facilities and several Vande Bharat Express trains are being run in the Telangana. She also stated that One Station One Product stalls are also being run in many railway stations to promote local products, art forms and cultural heritage in Telangana. Bhatti Vikramarka Mallu, Deputy

Chief Minister, also spoke. Dr K Laxman, MP, Rajya Sabha stated that the occasion is historical in providing modern facilities at the 554 railway stations across the Nation. Arun Kumar Jain, General Manager, SCR stated that 57 stations of South Central Railway and 156 Road Over Bridges and Road Under Bridges are being laid foundation stone / dedicated to the Nation as part of this momentous occasion. He also said that 15 additional railway stations in Telangana, including Begumpet Railway station, are also being laid foundation in today's prestigious program.

FORM NO. URC-2
Advertisement giving notice about registration under Part I of Chapter XXI [Pursuant to section 374(b) of the companies Act, 2013 and rule 4(1) of the companies (Authorised to Register) Rules, 2014]
1. Notice is hereby given that in pursuance of sub-section (2) of section 366 of the Companies Act, 2013, an application is proposed to be made after twenty days hereof to the Registrar at Hyderabad that K B D Industries LLP, a Limited Liability Partnership Firm, may be registered under Part I of Chapter XXI of the Companies Act 2013, as a company limited by shares.
2. The principal objects of the company are as follows: "To carry on the business of manufacture of Extra Neutral Alcohol/Ethanol /Rectified Spirit/Impure Spirit/Absolute Alcohol/Fuel Grade Ethanol, Animal Feed Supplement/CO2 and their by-products and in general to carry-out any other business connected with distillery units and other related activities and ancillary business."
3. A copy of the draft memorandum and articles of association of the proposed company may be inspected at the office at D.No. 8-7-171/6/11/1/101, Sweksha Meridian, Road No.5, Ram Reddy Colony, Swarnadhama Nagar, Old Bowenpally, Secunderabad - 500 011, Telangana, India.
4. Notice is hereby given that any person objecting to this application may communicate their objection in writing to the Registrar at 2nd Floor, Corporate Bhawan, GSI Post, Nagole, Bandlaguda, Hyderabad-500068, Telangana, within twenty-one days from the date of publication of this notice, with a copy to the company at its registered office.
Sd/-
Dated this 26th day of February 2024
For K B D Industries LLP
Aruna Sree Masabattula

BJP leader's son among 10 held in Hyderabad for consuming drugs

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (IANS) : Police in Hyderabad arrested BJP leader Gajjala Yoganand's son, Gajjala Vivekanand, and nine others for consuming drugs during a party at a city hotel. Vivekanand (37) is the director of Manjeera Group of Companies and son of Yoganand, who had contested in assembly polls.

Vivekanand, Syed Abbas Ali Jeffery, Nirbhay, Kedhar and six others were arrested during the search at Radisson Blu hotel, Gachibowli in the Cyberabad limits. Special Operations Team-Cyberabad and Gachibowli Police jointly conducted the operation on Sunday night. Three used plastic covers of cocaine (each of one gram before consumption).



Biren Singh lauds Assam govt's decision to recognise Manipuri associate official language

Guwahati, Feb 26 (IANS) : Manipur Chief Minister N. Biren Singh on Monday lauded the decision of Assam government to recognise Manipuri as an associate official language in four districts by amending the Assam Official Language Act, 1960. "Many thanks Himanta ji for including Manipuri as an associate official language in four districts of Assam. Your recognition and trust on the Manipuris is highly appreciated," Biren Singh wrote on 'X'. The Assam government took this decision in a Cabinet meeting on Friday night. Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma termed it a historic decision.

He said that the Cabinet has approved the Assam Official Language (Amendment) Bill, 2024 to recognise Manipuri language as an Associate Official Language in four districts including Cachar, Karimganj, Hailakandi and Hojai. The Cabinet decision mentioned: "The Bill seeks to amend the Assam Official Language Act, 1960 by inserting a new Section 5B, which will provide for the recognition of Manipuri language as an Associate Official Language in the four districts. "The decision has been taken in the interest of protecting, preserving and promoting the cultural, social, linguistic identity and heritage of the Manipuri people living in Assam," it added. According to Kamalakanta Singha, chief

advisor of the All Assam Manipuri Students' Union (AAMSU), they have been voicing this demand since 1991, and the Assam government has now acknowledged it after thirty years. "In Hailakandi, in 1991, we first brought forward this demand. We persisted in our campaign, receiving backing from numerous other organisations. We finally have a cause to rejoice," he remarked. Singh further said that the number of people who speak Manipuri has surpassed 2 lakh as of the 2011 census, and it is currently over 3 lakh. "Manipuris are living in 13 districts in Assam but Cachar, Hailakandi and Hojai have the largest population," he said. The bulk of people in the Barak Valley region of Assam speak



Bengali, and three of the four districts where Manipuri will be the official associate language are located there. Barak Upanyak Banga Sahitya O Sanskriti Sammelan, the largest language organisation in the Barak Valley, has expressed gratitude to the state government for this.

They have, meanwhile, also called for Bengali to be acknowledged as an associate official language of the state. Gautam Prasad Dutta, the organisation's general secretary, said: "We believe in respectful co-existence and we welcome this step."



Wanted drugs supplier arrested from Delhi airport

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : A 30-year-old inter-state drug supplier, who was absconding for the last one year, was nabbed at Delhi airport, while he was trying to flee to Canada, police said on Monday. The accused was identified as Kanwarbir Singh, a resident of Amritsar district in Punjab. Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Alok Kumar said that a police team was working on information about one absconding drug supplier, Kanwarbir Singh, the kingpin of an interstate narcotics cartel.



Controversy erupts over Chief Engineer, Kerala Minister's staff 'fight' in secretariat

Thiruvananthapuram, Feb 26 (IANS) : A controversy has erupted after reports surfaced on Monday that a chief engineer and the staff of Kerala Water Resources Minister Roshy Augustine was engaged in a brawl at the office of the minister. The incident occurred on Monday, when Alappuzha Irrigation department chief engineer Shyamgopal and Roshy Augustine's assistant pri-

vate secretary S. Premji had a tiff in the office of the Minister in the state secretariat, here. In a complaint to his higher ups, Shyamgopal said he came to meet Minister, who was not present and seeing him in the cabin, Premji asked him to get out after which the brawl erupted. Shyamgopal claimed that he got injured and had to seek medical attention.

Sharpshooter of infamous Gogi gang nabbed in Delhi

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Special Cell of Delhi Police has arrested the main sharpshooter of the Gogi gang involved in firing at a property dealer's office for extortion of Rs 1 crore in the national capital, police said on Monday. The accused was identified as Ankit a.k.a Vishal a.k.a Yamraj (23), a resident of Karala in Delhi. Police said that several incidents of extortion, murders and attempt to murders have taken place in the Delhi area and Yogesh Tunda-Dinesh Karala, handling Gogi gang, has created havoc and unrest among the common masses.

"A police team was tasked to bust the nexus operating in the area. The team worked relentlessly day and night, and through manual and technical surveillance managed to gather valuable information about the associates of the dreaded criminals, who are operating from behind the bars," said a senior police official. On February 15, an incident of firing occurred at a property dealer of King & company, Sector-5 Rohini, for extortion as he refused to pay Rs one Crore extortion money to Dinesh Karal-Gogi gang. During the probe, it was revealed that Ankit was involved in the above said incident and raids were conducted on the suspected hide-



outs of the accused person in the area of Delhi-NCR, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh. "On certain occasions, he narrowly escaped from the clutches of police. The criminal was using all possible ways to remain elusive and it was very difficult to keep a constant tab on his movements as he was changing his mobile number and the hideouts quite frequently to evade his ar-

rest. However, the team did not lose patience and kept on chasing him," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (Special Cell) Alok Kumar. On Wednesday, Ankit was nabbed near Japanese Park, Rohini when he had arrived there to discuss the next course of action with his associates as the property dealer refused to pay the extortion money.

Vigilant women from Kolkata suburbs reunite woman with dementia with her family

Kolkata, Feb 26 (IANS) : Vigil mounted by women in a neighborhood in the northeast suburbs of Kolkata led to the miraculous rescue of a 64-year-old woman -- a dementia patient -- who had wandered nearly 7 km from her home in New Barrackpore. The incident occurred at Khardah's Railway Park on Monday. Khardah is about 17 km from the heart of Kolkata. For quite some time now, the neighborhood has been plagued by thefts during day-time hours when men are away at work. The women have taken it upon themselves to maintain a lookout for suspicious characters from their

balconies and windows. They have also formed a WhatsApp group to communicate with each other. Around noon on Friday, one of them spotted an elderly woman moving around, apparently searching for somebody's house. The information was immediately passed on and others began to track her strange movements from one lane to another. "It was as if she was going around in circles. Finally, she settled down outside a grocery store. This was when some of us approached her and offered water. She looked extremely tired. When we asked where she was headed to, she said that her daughter's house is nearby. However, when we asked her name, she

lost her temper and started walking away. She was muttering to herself. We immediately realised that there was something wrong with her health. After much persuasion, we succeeded in taking her to Sujata Acharya's home. After a while, she had lunch and then took a long nap. When she woke up, she seemed quite friendly. We asked where she lives and she started uttering names of several places, including Khulna in Bangladesh," said Rinku Nag Biswas who also happens to be an active member of the West Bengal Radio Club.



Congress slams BJP govt over rising road accidents in Goa

Panaji, Feb 26 (IANS) : Congress on Monday slammed the BJP government for the rising road accidents and crimes across the state. "In 2023, around 532 people lost their lives in road accidents. More than 2800 accidents occurred last year. On the eve of New Year, 98 road accidents occurred. The BJP government has not taken any measures to make things better," AICC Media Incharge for Goa Harshad Sharma said while addressing a press conference in Congress House along with GPCC General Secretary Vijay Bhike and Virendra Shirodkar.

He said that in the first 16 days of February, nine people have lost their lives in road accidents and this is when the state is celebrating February as road safety month. "This is a matter of grave concern," Sharma said. He said that there is no check on the speed of vehicles and the government has failed to provide safety. Vijay Bhike said that the crime rate under the present government has also increased. "Rape, molestation, theft and drug activities have increased in the state. Still Chief Minister Pramod Sawant boasts of safety. Where is the safety?"

He questioned. He said that this government is busy in organising events and making money out of it. "Youngsters are losing their lives due to road accidents but the Transport Minister Mauvin Godinho is giving irresponsible statements," Bhike said. He said that in the name of revenue, people are being looted. "Transport Minister should be sacked for not working in the interest of the public," he said. Bhike said that even 'traffic signals' are not working properly at many places and an insensitive government has turned a blind eye.

OPINIONmail



SUPREME COURT SCRAPPING ELECTORAL BONDS SCHEME IS A BOON FOR DEMOCRACY

The Supreme Court has taken a step to restrain the limitless corporate funding to allow free and fair elections. It was the issue of Electoral Bonds that had a secret system and brought to light the grim fact that corporate houses had a stronger influence over political process than a common citizen who votes. It was not only 'arbitrary', but also 'unconstitutional'. Also these bonds remained anonymous which was in violation of the citizen's right. Voters need to know if there has been any reciprocal agreement among the receiving political parties and the donors. The SC step also scraps amendments to I-T Act, Companies Act, allowing anonymous, limitless non-disclosed company contributions, as all these are in violation of Fundamental Rights.

All these factors lead to one fact that Electoral Bonds function as political funding, which is not only illegal but also unconstitutional. And yet such funding continued. Till 2022-23, for the BJP, it was the highest at Rs 6,566 crores. The cap on corporate funding is back. The contribution can go up to Rs 20,000 only and no more. The Bench also asserted that Electoral Bond scheme is not exclusively to reign in the black money, and when it is from companies, the contributions are simply business transactions. On the other hand, individual contributions are usually to boost the financial strength of the particular political party. It also turns into a pressure which is violation of democracy, since it may influence the policy making itself. The Bench also described the Electoral Bonds as means to permit unlimited corporate contributions that is an authorization to unlimited unrestricted influence over the political process.

For our democratic set up visualized by our Constitution, the apex court has taken the step to scrap a six-year-old election funding system amounting to unveiling an unholy and "unconstitutional" secret system that allowed individuals and companies to donate money to political parties anonymously and without any limits. The largest beneficiary of the system of donations by Electoral Bonds, introduced in 2017, the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, led by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has come to realise the failure of the entire initiative that had benefitted them since 2018.

Electoral Bonds have been challenged since their inception by the opposition on grounds that it was systematically kept as a secret from public view and thus violated their right to know about the source of it. Under the system, a person or company can buy bonds from the state-run State Bank of India and donate them to a political party.

Individuals can donate any amount of cash. Companies had been restricted based on their revenue and profits, but the bond system removed those limits. The Supreme Court brought reinstated corporate donation limits, saying that treating companies and individuals alike for this was "manifestly arbitrary". "The ability of a company to influence the electoral process through political contributions is much higher when compared to that of an individual... contributions made by companies are purely business transactions made with the intent of securing benefits in return," the court wrote. The court directed SBI to not issue any more such bonds, to furnish identity details of those who bought them, and to provide information about bonds redeemed by each political party. Despite the Supreme Court making no bones about the electoral bonds being unconstitutional, Modi's government had defended the policy earlier, rationalizing their supportive stand saying it helps in rooting out the "black money" in political funding, allowing donors a confidential channel to contribute to any party's funds. Under the system, a person or company can buy bonds from the state-run State Bank of India and donate them to a political party. Undeclared individuals and companies bought 165.18 billion rupees (1.99 billion dollars) of such bonds up to November 2023, according to the Association for Democratic Reforms.

(By Krishna Jha)

EDITORIAL
the indian mail



AMEEN SAYANI MESMERISED LISTNERS THROUGH HIS SILKEN VOICE FOR FOUR DECADES

His was a wonderful voice. It is no more. But when it was broadcast it cut across the language barrier. For even the people who did not speak it lent their ears to listen to Ameen Sayani, the intoner of original "Behnon-Bhaion" on the air waves. His death at the age of 91 is being mourned by millions of Indians who had the opportunity to listen to him in the last century. Sayani was an icon whose time on radio gave generations over four decades a look through the window it did not

know existed till then a hearing into the world of entertainment. The man whose silken voice oozed comfort, charisma and charm was the icon of Indian radio

The urbane and soothing voice was synonymous with Binaca Geetmala, first broadcast on Radio Ceylon and many years later on Vividh Bharati. It started way back in 1951 and given its form of address to its listeners it trod the line of gender equality though the appropriate had been first voiced by Swami Vivekananda in the Parliament of Religions in Chicago.

Such consciousness was in Sayani's genes. In 1945, in a letter to Kulsum Sayani, an educationist who brought out the fortnightly newsletter *Ruhber*, Mahatma Gandhi wrote "Beti Kulsum, I like the mission of *Ruhber* to unite Hindi and Urdu. May it succeed."



CONGRESS-SP ALLIANCE IN UTTAR PRADESH IS A BIG MOMENT FOR INDIA BLOC

Is the tide turning? Suddenly, all of the pieces are falling in their right places for the still fight of the INDIA-Alliance. How else will the Congress and Samajwadi Party announce a deal in the two cowbelt states of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh? It can't be because of rumours that Congress stalwart Kamal Nath has gone soft on Hindutva and was thinking of shifting with son, and sons of soil, to the Bharatiya Janata Party? What is important is that the seat-sharing deal should now put a stop to bickering that the opposition parties had fallen short of their alliance moniker – INDIA-Alliance. In Uttar Pradesh, at least, even with Congress and Samajwadi Party rebels in the fray, there will be one INDIA-Alliance candidate against one BJP candidate in all the 80 Uttar Pradesh Lok Sabha constituencies.

The Samajwadi Party will contest from 63 seats and the Congress from 17. One Congress candidate against one BJP candidate in 17 constituencies as per the Congress-SP INDIA-Alliance seat-sharing deal, and one Samajwadi Party candidate against one BJP candidate as part of the same INDIA-Alliance seat-sharing formula in 63 constituencies.

FORMER PRESIDENT DR ABDUL KALAM'S ASSOCIATION WITH PRAMUKH SWAMIJI WAS A GAME CHANGER

The unique association of Pramukh Swamiji and Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam signalled the beginning of the new age of spirituality spanning 33 years was an unmatched blessing for Dr Kalam. He started as his subordinate scientist at the Defence Research and Development Laboratory (DRDL) in Hyderabad in 1982, and earned the confidence to handle his mandate of developing civilian spinoffs of defence technologies for the benefit of the people.

The unique work led to the development of an indigenous and affordable coronary stent in 1995 and the creation of the foundation for the Indian MedTech industry, valued at \$11 billion in 2023. Dr. Kalam made Swamiji the co-author of his autobiography, *Wings of Fire*, in 1999. It turned out to be a modern classic, selling more than two million copies with translation in 18 languages.

During the 2001 earthquake relief work in Kutch in Gujarat, Dr. Kalam came into contact with the BAPS Swaminathan Sanstha. Impressed by their work, he sought



an audience with Pramukh Swamiji. They met on June 30, 2001 in Delhi. During the discussion on how India could become a developed country, Swamiji surprised

Dr. Kalam by telling him that any amount of material development is futile without the spiritual development of the people.

NUTRITIONAL SECURITY FOR EVERY INDIAN IS ESSENTIAL FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIETY

Nutritional security is essential for all-round development of an individual and the society. Only a physically and mentally healthy person can contribute for growth of the nation. Therefore it is imperative that various factors which contribute to nutrition security must be fulfilled. These include good living conditions, healthy working environment, sufficient remuneration to ensure purchasing capacity, diversified crop pattern, trading system based on justice and equality. The government is duty bound to ensure nutritional security of the citizens.

According to 'State of Working India' report, 82% of male and 92% of female workers earn less than Rs.10,000 a month. The Trade Unions have been demanding Rs.26000/- per month to be fixed as minimum wage to fulfil the bare minimum needs of an individual.



UNITED STATES ONCE AGAIN VETOES UN RESOLUTION GIVING NETANYAHU FULL SUPPORT

The United States has vetoed yet another resolution in the United Nations Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire on February 20, 2024. This is the third time that the United States has vetoed resolutions in the Security Council calling for a ceasefire – the first being in October and the second in December 2023.

The latest veto comes at a time when Israel's genocidal war on Gaza has led to the deaths of over 29,500 Palestinians and over 69,000 in-

jured since October 7. Of the dead, 12,500 are children. The prime minister, Netanyahu, has announced that the ground attack on the last remaining city in Gaza, Rafah, will begin soon. Rafah is in the southernmost tip of Gaza and the area is crammed with 1.4 million people, most of them had to take refuge there after fleeing northern and central Gaza. The United Nations has warned that an attack on Rafah will be catastrophic and have devastating consequences for the civilian population. The United States has been, of late, expressing concern at the mounting Palestinian casualties

and has been asking Israel not to launch the attack on Gaza. Yet, when a resolution, which could help to stop the fighting, is sought to be adopted in the UN Security Council, the United States scuttles such a move.

This is in keeping with the doubletalk that president Biden and his administration have been indulging in, in the past few weeks – make noises about the tremendous toll of civilian lives in Gaza and at the same time provide a shield for Israel to continue carrying on its crimes against humanity.



Two soldiers killed after helicopter crashes in US

Washington, Feb 26 (IANS) : Two soldiers were killed after a military helicopter crashed during training in the US state of Mississippi. Taking to X, Mississippi Governor Tate Reeves posted: "The Mississippi National Guard experienced an Apache AH-64 helicopter crash during a routine training flight in Prentiss County. Tragically, both Guardsmen on board did not survive." The incident occurred in a wooded area around 2 p.m. (2000 GMT) during a routine training flight, NBC News reported citing a statement from the Mississippi National Guard as saying.

"Our paramount concern at this time is to ensure proper casualty assistance is conducted to support the surviving family members," the Mississippi National Guard said, adding that the incident is under investigation, Xinhua news agency reported quoting NBC News.



Egypt denies breach of its airspace by Israeli military aircraft

Cairo, Feb 26 (IANS) : Egypt has denied reports which claimed that Israeli aircraft breached its airspace, according to an unnamed Egyptian security source. Egypt on Monday categorically denied media reports that Israeli military aircraft penetrated Egyptian airspace, the security source was quoted as saying by Egypt's Al-Qahera News TV. The source described these reports as false and baseless. An Israeli military aircraft entered the Egyptian territory about 100 times since the start of the war on Gaza on October 7, 2023.

Italy announces bilateral security deal with Ukraine

Rome, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Italian government has announced a bilateral support agreement with Ukraine ahead of the Group of Seven (G7) leaders' meeting under Italy's presidency. Both events were held on Monday as the conflict between Russia and Ukraine reached its second anniversary. The security partnership with a 10-year mandate between Rome and Kiev includes co-operation in defence, economy, infrastructure and energy, and humanitarian support, among other fields, Xinhua news agency reported, citing Italian media. Italian Prime Minister

Giorgia Meloni has said that security and support for Ukraine will be among the main priorities under the G7 mandate. She was among a small group of world leaders who travelled to Kiev, the Ukrainian capital, to commemorate the second anniversary of the conflict. "We reiterate the centrality of Ukraine to the agenda of Italy's G7 presidency and 360 degrees of Italy's assistance to Kiev, starting from reconstruction and in security matters," Meloni said on Monday from Antonov Airport near the Ukrainian capital, according to Italian media reports. In addition to Meloni, Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau attended the unusual G7 meeting outside the territory of the host country in person, with leaders



from other members of the group -- the UK, France, Germany, Japan and the US -- participating via video link. Other leaders in Kiev on Monday included Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Belgian Prime Minister Alexander De Croo, whose country is holding the rotating presidency of the European Union (EU) Council. The EU is a "non-enumerated member" of the G7. The

next meeting on the calendar under Italy's G7 presidency is the minister-level gathering on industry and digital technology in the northern Italian cities of Verona and Trento on March 13-15. The centrepiece of the Italian G7 presidency will be the summit of heads of state and government to be held in the southern Italian region of Apulia in June.

European Commission President visits Ukraine to show solidarity on second war anniversary

Kyiv, Feb 26 (IANS) : European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen has arrived in Kyiv to show solidarity with Ukraine on the second anniversary of Russia's full scale invasion. In a post on X: she posted: "In Kyiv to mark the anniversary of the 2nd year of Russia's war on Ukraine. "More than ever, we stand firmly by Ukraine. Financially, economically, militarily, morally. Until the country is finally free."



South Korea junior doctors' walkout enters fifth day; health services affected

Seoul, Feb 26 (IANS) : Health services were affected in South Korea as thousands of trainee doctors remained off their jobs for the fifth consecutive day on Monday to protest against the government's plan to raise the medical school enrollment quota. According to the health ministry, till 8,897, or 78.5 per cent, of the 13,000 trainee doctors from 96 major teaching hospitals in Seoul and elsewhere have submitted

their resignations, with 7,863 of them not reporting for work, Yonhap news agency reported. Chungnam National University Hospital on Saturday turned away some patients seeking emergency care due to a limited number of available physicians to handle urgent cases, such as cardiac arrest. The government has also advised patients with mild symptoms to utilise nearby clinics instead of general hospitals. Doctors and medical students have voiced opposition to the government's plan to admit 2,000



more students to medical schools next year from the current 3,058 seats to address a shortage of doctors. Despite authorities repeat-

edly warning of police investigations or even arrests of physicians participating in the walkout in the case of patient deaths, the Korean

Medical Association has large-scale rallies planned to be held in Seoul on Sunday and March 3.



Vladimir Putin's war not only threatens Ukraine but also US: Antony Blinken

Washington, Feb 26 (IANS) : US Secretary of state department Antony Blinken has said that Russian President Vladimir Putin's war not only threatens Ukraine but also Washington, NATO allies and free open international trade. On the second

anniversary of Russia's full scale invasion of Ukraine, the US state department in a statement said: "The US has built a coalition of 50 countries, including all NATO members and the G7 in defence of the freedom of a sovereign democratic nation.

Netanyahu to seek Cabinet approval for ground operation in Rafah

Jerusalem, Feb 26 (IANS) : Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has announced that he will seek Cabinet approval next week for a ground operation in the southern Gaza city of Rafah, where more than half of Gaza's population seeks shelter from Israel's bombings elsewhere. Writing on X, Netanyahu on Monday said that he will convene his Cabinet at the begin-

ning of the upcoming week to approve "the operational plans for action in Rafah, including the evacuation of the civilian population". "Only a combination of military pressure and firm negotiations will lead to the release of our hostages, the elimination of Hamas, and the achievement of all the war's objectives," he wrote. Rafah, the Gaza Strip's southernmost city, has be-



come a sprawling refugee camp, densely populated by about 1.4 million people who have fled from the Israeli attacks in regions further north in the Palestinian enclave, Xinhua news agency reported. The United Nations has warned that an extension of Israel's military operation in Rafah will have "dire humanitarian consequences".

Indian Consulate 'strongly' raises Jaahnavi Kandula's case with US authorities

Seattle, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Indian consulate in Seattle said that it has "strongly" raised the issue of Indian student Jaahnavi Kandula's killing in the US with the city police and the case is now being referred to Seattle City Attorney's office for review. The move comes after the King's County Prosecutor's Office said on Monday that they will not be pressing charges against Seattle Police Officer Kevin Dave, who ran over and killed Kandula, last year due to "lack of sufficient evidence".

In a statement posted on X on Friday, the Indian Consulate said that they are awaiting the

"completion of Seattle Police's administrative investigation and will continue to monitor progress in the case". "We have also raised the matter strongly with local authorities, including Seattle Police for appropriate redress. The case has now been referred to Seattle City Attorney's office for review," the Consulate said. In addition, the Consulate said that it is in "regular touch with the designated family representatives and will continue to extend all possible support in ensuring justice for Jaahnavi and her family". Kandula, a student of the Northeastern University in South Lake Union, died after she was hit by a Seattle Police vehicle driven by officer Kevin Dave at a pedestrian

crossing on the night of January 23 last year. Dave, who was responding to a "high priority" call that day at 8 pm, had reportedly chirped his siren, but did not have it running consistently, as he plowed into Kandula. "After staffing this case with senior deputy prosecuting attorneys and office leadership, I have determined that we lack sufficient evidence under Washington State law to prove a criminal case beyond a reasonable doubt," the King County Prosecuting Attorney said in its statement on Wednesday. Attorney Leesa Manion, however, noted, "Kandula's death is heart-breaking and impacted communi-

ties in King County and across the world." Meanwhile, the Coalition of Hindus of North America (CoHNA), a US-based Hindu advocacy group, said on Friday that it is "shocking" and "disheartening" to see that the investigation into the killing of Kandula is dismissed with no charges against those who struck her. "It is shocking and disheartening to see the investigation into the killing of #JaahnaviKandula be dismissed with no charges against those who struck her. Where is #justice for the family of this young international student, run over in a #Seattle sidewalk by a police car?" CoHNA said in a post on X.

Kandula was thrown 100 feet when she was struck by the speeding police patrol vehicle and died on the spot. "I f---ked up," Dave was heard saying after the accident at the intersection where he accelerated up to 74 miles per hour at one point, much higher than the prescribed limits of 25 and 20 mph respectively. According to the footage, moments after reaching the top speed, he slowed down the car before striking Kandula at the inter-



section. The bodycam video also showed Dave performing CPR on Kandula after the collision. Kandula came to the US in 2021 and was pursuing a Master of Science in Information Systems at the College of Engineering, Northeastern University. She was set to graduate in December 2023. She was the daughter of a single mother, who earned less than \$200 a month and had taken an education loan to send Kandula to study abroad.



Bihar Police busts human trafficking gang, 10 arrested

Patna, Feb 26 (IANS) : Bihar Police on Monday said that they have busted a human trafficking gang and arrested at least 10 persons including a doctor and have recovered two infants during raids on two private hospitals in Patna. Police said that the alleged kingpin managed to escape during the raids. Patna Police City SP West Abhinav Dhiman said that both the private hospitals have been sealed following the raids. He said that the incident came to light when two women who were travelling with an infant in a car were stopped during a vehicle checking drive in Khagaul locality of Patna.

Himachal Police detain newly-married couple in Bihar's Jahanabad

Patna, Feb 26 (IANS) : A team from the Himachal Pradesh Police detained a newly-married couple in Bihar's Jahanabad district on Monday. The police claimed the detained couple, both natives of Bihar's Gaya district, are cousin brother and sister by relation. The girl was living with her family members in Baddi in Himachal Pradesh. The husband is accused of kidnapping the girl and taking her to Jahanabad.



Sandeshkhali crisis: Suwendu Adhikari, Sukanta Majumdar to finalise protest strategy with party high command

Kolkata, Feb 26 (IANS) : West Bengal BJP President Sukanta Majumdar and Leader of Opposition in the state assembly Suwendu Adhikari will be in New Delhi on Monday for a meeting with the party high command to chalk out the final blueprint for organising movements over trouble-hit Sandeshkhali. There have been complaints of

sexual harassments and violence against women by a section of local Trinamool Congress leaders at Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district. State BJP insiders said that besides the Sandeshkhali issue, the two state BJP leaders will also discuss the schedule of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to West Bengal on March 7.

J&K narco-terrorism case : NIA attaches 4 properties, seizes Rs 2.27 crore

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : The National Investigation Agency (NIA) has attached four properties and seized Rs 2.27 crore in cash in connection with the the Jammu and Kashmir narco-terrorism case involving two proscribed terrorist outfits, Lashkar-e-Taiba (LeT) and Hizbul Mujahideen (HM), an official said on Saturday. According to NIA, the properties belonging to four accused have been attached in Handwara of Kupwara district. "Immovable properties attached are the double-storey house of accused Afaq Ahmad Wani, single-storey house of accused Muneer Ahmad Pandey, the house of

Saleem Andrabi and the double-storey house of Islam-ul Haq," said a senior NIA official. So far, a total of 12 accused have been arrested in the Handwara narco-terrorism case, in which the NIA has already filed charge sheet against 15 individuals. "The case relates to the use of the 'proceeds of narcotic drugs' to fund violent terror activities by LeT and HM operating in the Handwara-Kupwara region," said the official. The case was registered following the recovery of a black bag and numerous Indian currency notes of Rs 500 denomination during



checking of vehicles in the Langate area of Handwara. "The seizure was made from a white Creta car without a registration number," said the official. Preliminary questioning of the car's driver, Abdul Momin Peer, had led to the revelations about the narco-terror nexus following which the NIA launched a detailed investigation. "During the initial searches in the houses of various accused, 21 kg of heroin was seized, in addition to various incriminating material, including large sums of cash," said the official, adding the NIA was continuing its efforts to destroy and dismantle the terror network in Jammu and Kashmir and safeguard national security.

Trinamool ignores Congress' call to keep doors open for seat-sharing talks

Kolkata, Feb 26 (IANS) : Congress' desperate attempts to convince the Trinamool Congress to keep the doors for seat-sharing negotiations open do not seem to be cutting any ice with the ruling party of West Bengal. After Congress General Secretary in-charge of communication, Jairam Ramesh, told mediapersons in Delhi that the doors are still open for negotiations with the Trinamool Congress, the latter's national spokesperson and Rajya Sabha member Derek O'Brien on Monday spoke on exactly the opposite lines. According to O'Brien,

Trinamool supremo and West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee has already made it clear that the party will contest all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, besides fielding candidates in some constituencies in Meghalaya and Assam. That stand remains intact, O'Brien said. Now the question that is doing the rounds in the political circles of West Bengal is that why despite repeated rejections from the Trinamool, Congress' central leadership is going soft towards West Bengal's ruling party, even going against the hard-core anti-Trinamool stand of the majority members of the West Bengal

Pradesh Congress Committee (WBPC). Political observers feel that this might be a tactical approach on the part of the Congress, which is to remain flexible with regard to seat-sharing negotiations with the Trinamool, despite the latter's repeated rejections. "In my opinion, this soft stand of the Congress will continue till the time Trinamool announces candidates for all the 42 Lok Sabha seats in West Bengal, conforming the party's present stand. In that case, the Congress can claim that it cannot be blamed for the failure in seat-sharing talks," said a city-based political observer. He also pointed out that even after Rahul Gandhi's Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra faced administrative hurdles one after the other during its West Bengal leg, Congress' central leadership was not vocal against the Trinamool. Even the Chief Minister's jibe at Rahul Gandhi over the latter's interaction with the local 'bidi' manufacturers, no strong counter came from the Congress.



Ahmed Patel's son Faisal miffed with Congress over Bharuch LS seat going in AAP's kitty

Surat, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Congress party in Surat is facing intense internal conflict after Congress-AAP alliance allotted Bharuch Lok Sabha seat to AAP. Bharuch Lok Sabha constituency is closely associated with Faisal Patel's late father and Congress leader Ahmed Patel. This discord comes at a crucial time, as the party seeks unity ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. Faisal Patel has voiced his concerns over the allocation of seats, particularly Bharuch. "My bond with the people of Bharuch, my father's parliamentary constituency, is profound. The recent developments dishearten me, but I differ with the high command's decision," Faisal Patel stated, signaling his intent to engage with party leadership in Delhi

to seek resolution. In response to the Congress-AAP alliance's decision to allocate Bharuch and Bhavnagar seats to AAP, CR Paatil, BJP's Gujarat President, asserted that the alliance would not sway BJP's dominance in these areas. "These seats have remained with the BJP during Ahmed Patel's lifetime and will continue to do so, regardless of any alliances. BJP is strong in Bharuch. This alliance reflects that Congress has already accepted defeat. Even Congress leaders see no hope of victory. Congress should not do such wrong to Gujarat's public. Gujarat's aware public is now also aware about parties that come during elections and then run away," Paatil remarked.

Monkey Fever scare: TN public health department issues advisory

Chennai, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Tamil Nadu public health department has issued an advisory to the Tamil Nadu forest department and local authorities in areas bordering Karnataka as the threat of Monkey Fever looms large over the border villages. Monkey Fever (Kyasanur Forest Disease) cases are on the rise in Karnataka. Till date, two persons have died due to the disease, while 103

others are admitted to different hospitals in Shivamogga, Uttara Kannada and Chickmagalur districts. A study conducted by the Indian Council for Medical Research (ICMR) along with the National Institute of Virology (NIV) has confirmed the presence of the deadly virus in Mysore and Hassan districts of Karnataka, which are bordering Tamil Nadu. The state health and forest authorities have beefed up surveillance along the Tamil Nadu-Karnataka

border, as Monkey Fever cases are on the rise in the neighbouring state. The disease is seasonal and more cases are reported during the dry season. The high-risk category population includes the forest staff, anti-poaching watchers, and forest guards. The Mudumalai Tiger Reserve (MTR) in the Nilgiris, Tamil Nadu, is contiguous with the Bandipur National Park in Karnataka. There are 200 field staff who spend close to six hours per day



in the MTR, potentially exposing themselves to the virus, of which monkeys, rodents and shrews are common hosts. The next few months are going to be crucial for the forest staff, as forest fires will be a norm which will send the ticks flying, exposing the field staff to the virus.



3 doctors, nursing officer put on APO in wrong blood transfusion case in Jaipur

Jaipur, Feb 26 (IANS) : Three doctors and a nursing officer have been put on Awaiting Posting Order (APO) in wrong blood transfusion case in Jaipur, officials said on Monday. The accused medical staff has been identified as orthopedic specialist

S.K. Goyal, Daulat Ram and Rishabh Chalana and Nursing Officer Ashok Kumar Verma. On February 12, 23-year-old deceased Sachin Sharma was admitted to Sawai Man Singh (SMS) Hospital in Jaipur following a road accident.

Punjab asks Haryana to handover farmer undergoing treatment in Rohtak

Chandigarh, Feb 26 (IANS) : Punjab Chief Secretary Anurag Verma on Monday wrote to his Haryana counterpart Sanjeev Kaushal, asking to handover a Punjab farmer who is undergoing treatment in Rohtak. In the letter, Verma said it has come to notice that Pritpal Singh,

a farmer from Punjab who was injured during the 'Dilli Chalo' protest march, is undergoing treatment at the PGI Rohtak. "You are requested to handover Pritpal Singh to Punjab authorities so that his treatment may be done in Punjab free of cost by the Punjab Government," says the letter.





Power giant NTPC's mining arm surpasses 100mn tonnes coal production milestone

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Government-owned power giant NTPC's coal-mining subsidiary NTPC Mining Ltd. (NML) has surpassed the milestone of producing 100 million metric tonnes (MMT) of coal. "The milestone has been achieved on February 25, 2024, on which day the cumulative quantity of coal produced by NTPC Mining Ltd, since January 1, 2017 when coal production started in its first coal mine Pakri Barwadih, reached 100.04 MMT," according to a Power Ministry statement issued on Monday. While the NML achieved the first 50 MMT of coal production in 1,995 days on June 19, 2022, the next 50 MMT of coal production has been achieved in less than one-third of this time, which is just 617 days,

the statement said. NML is targeting a coal production of 100 MMT per annum by the year 2030. At present, NTPC Mining Ltd. has five operational captive coal mines, namely, Pakri Barwadih, Chatti Bariatu and Kerandari Coal Mines in Jharkhand, Dulanga Coal Mine in Odisha and Talaipalli Coal Mine in Chhattisgarh. To achieve sustained growth in coal production, NTPC has implemented a range of strategies and technologies. These include the adoption of rigorous safety measures, improved mine planning, equipment automation, workforce training and implementation of continuous monitoring and analysis systems.

Nifty slips on profit booking in heavyweights

Mumbai, Feb 26 (IANS) : Nifty remained sideways throughout the session on Monday with negative bias and closed with a loss of 91 points at 22,122 levels.

Profit booking was witnessed in some of the index heavyweights at higher levels, said Siddhartha Khemka, Head of Retail Research at Motilal Oswal Financial Services.

Majority of the sectors ended in the red.

However, buying was seen in oil & gas, auto, and realty, he said.

"Globally, investors would take cues from macro data releases lined up during the week. The US New Home Sales Data for January would be an important event to track on Monday.



Micron begins volume production of new chip for AI workloads

San Francisco, Feb 26 (IANS) : Semiconductor leader Micron Technology on Monday announced it has begun volume production of its HBM3E (high bandwidth memory 3E) solution, that will help reduce data centre operating costs by consuming about 30 per cent less power than its rivals.

The 24GB 8H HBM3E will be part of Nvidia H200 Tensor Core GPUs, which will begin shipping in the second calendar quarter of 2024, the US-based company said in a

statement. "AI workloads are heavily reliant on memory bandwidth and capacity, and Micron is very well-positioned to support the significant AI growth ahead through our industry-leading HBM3E and HBM4 roadmap, as well as our full portfolio of DRAM and NAND solutions for AI applications," said Sumit Sadana, EVP and chief business officer at Micron Technology.

With pin speed greater than 9.2 gigabits per second (Gb/s), the new Micron solution delivers more than 1.2 terabytes per second (TB/s) of memory

bandwidth, enabling lightning-fast data access for AI accelerators, supercomputers, and data centres, the company said.

The solution leads the industry with 30 per cent lower power consumption compared to competitive offerings.

Micron is also extending its leadership with the sampling of 36GB 12-High HBM3E, which is set to deliver greater than 1.2 TB/s performance and superior energy efficiency compared to competitive solutions, in March this year.

Markets take a breather after recent run-up

Mumbai, Feb 26 (IANS) : The market took a breather on Monday after the recent run-up as investors' focus shift from earnings to economic triggers this week, said Vinod Nair, Head of Research at Geojit Financial Services. While Nifty was down 90.65 points, or 0.41 per cent, at

22,123.85 at close on Monday, Sensex was down 352.67 points, or 0.48 per cent, at 72,790.13.

The US and India GDP data, eurozone inflation, and US jobless claim data will be influential economic numbers for the central bank to take a call on interest rates.



India is in multiple sweet spots from geo-strategic to demographics

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : India is in multiple sweet spots. From geostrategic to demographics, there are plenty of well-discussed motivating factors for global investors to look at India favourably, Taimur Baig, MD and Chief Economist, DBS Group Research and Nathan Chow, Senior Economist, DBS Group Research, said in a note.

Domestic infrastructure, both physical and electronic, has improved considerably, social welfare has expanded, consumer confidence has risen, and asset markets are buoyant.

External balances, long sus-

ceptible to volatile investment flows and global energy shocks, are beginning to turn for the better as services surplus offsets most of the trade deficit, it said.

"All of this is remarkable given that India has faced two major shocks since 2020. First was the economic contraction during the Covid pandemic, while the second was the food/energy terms of trade shocks after Russia's invasion of Ukraine. At currently projected growth rates, it will only be in 2026 that India will make up the ground lost during the pandemic, illustrating the magnitude of the shock," the research said.

Meanwhile, buying crude oil from Russia and exporting some of it in refined form was a shock ab-



sorber in 2022-23. Looking at the 2024 outlook, although inflation remains under RBI's scrutiny, the economy seems to be doing just fine without additional monetary or fiscal easing. Looking at demand markers both at urban and rural areas, real GDP growth of 5.5-6.5% is par for the course now, it said.

The report said India needs to reduce tariff and nontariff barriers

to trade and make progress towards becoming embedded in the regional supply and value chains. No economy is large enough to do it alone in this world of complex production processes. Regional cooperation and openness to trade will provide India with the kind of high return endeavours critically needed for the prosperity the nation aspires.

Water security to be important for semiconductor industry players: S&P Global Ratings

Chennai, Feb 26 (IANS) : Credit rating agency S&P Global Ratings on Monday said semiconductor chip makers must focus on managing their water resources as water security will be an important factor in their credit profiles. As per the credit rating agency, climate change is testing the chipmakers. Globally, chipmakers already consume as much water as Hong Kong, a city of 7.5 mil-

lion, S&P Global Ratings said. Semiconductor firms' water consumption is rising, both absolutely and on a per-unit basis, as processing technology advances. Meanwhile, climate change is raising the rate of extreme weather, the frequency of drought, and the volatility of precipitation, limiting chipmakers' ability to manage production stability.



Oil India Ltd to hold global partner roadshow in UAE

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Oil India Limited (OIL), India's youngest Maharatna central public sector enterprise, has announced its first-ever global partner roadshow: "Confluence: Where Energy and Opportunity Converge" which is scheduled to take place on 28th February at Abu Dhabi in the UAE.

The Ministry of Petroleum and Natural Gas said that the event, which is expected to attract over 50 leading companies from the energy services industry, signals OIL's commitment to aggressive growth

and international collaboration. It said that the OIL has set its sights on ambitious production targets: 4 MMT oil and 5 BCM gas annual production by 2025-26. "With a target to generate 12 Billion USD in revenue by 2030, the company plans to invest 4.8 Billion USD across a range of activities: ramping up exploration efforts, enhancing field development and expediting production," it said.

It said that OIL is set to expand aggressively across offshore Indian regions.

"The roadshow will be hosted by the Chairman and Managing Di-

rector of OIL, along with Director, Operations and senior officials of OIL. The event will serve as a critical platform to outline OIL's detailed procurement strategies for the upcoming one to five years, offering a unique platform for partners to engage, ideate, and expedite the partner onboarding process," the statement added.



SK Telecom, global telcos to form AI language model joint venture

Seoul, Feb 26 (IANS) : SK Telecom, South Korea's top mobile carrier, said on Monday it will create a joint venture with four global mobile carriers aimed at developing large language models (LLMs) tailored to the needs of telecommunications companies. The joint venture will be established by SK Telecom, Germany's Deutsche Telekom, the UAE-owned e&g Group, Singapore's Singtel and Japan's Softbank later this year, according to the South Korean company. The plan was announced during the Global Telco AI Alliance's inaugural meeting held at the Mobile World Congress Barcelona 2024, reports Yonhap news agency. SK Telecom said the joint venture will develop LLMs that can help telcos improve their customer interactions via digital assistants and chatbots.

Delhi: Minor boy kills senior schoolmate over petty issue, held

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : A Class 6 student was apprehended for killing his senior schoolmate after an argument over a petty issue in northeast Delhi, police said on Monday. The 14-year-old boy, a Class 8 student, was thrashed to death on Friday in Brahmpuri area. Deputy Commissioner of Police (northeast), Joy Tirkey, said that the incident occurred at 2:15 p.m. on Friday and information regarding the incident was received at 4:04 p.m. from JPC Hospital, following which the police teams were dispatched to the hospital and spot. The DCP said that the deceased, a

resident of Brahmpuri, was a student in a private school. On reaching the hospital, it was found that the boy had sustained injuries to the head, face and left hand. "Blood spots were found at several places on the road. He was declared brought dead at JPC hospital," said the DCP. During the probe, the 12-year-old boy, a resident of Gautam Vihar, was apprehended. "It was found that both boys fought over a petty issue after school. Victim sustained injuries in the fight and succumbed to his injuries. Further investigation is in progress," the DCP added.



'The Sacred Amritsar 2024' begins with music & performances

Amritsar, Feb 26 (IANS) : The second edition of 'The Sacred Amritsar', presented by Sleepwell and supported by Rangla Punjab, had its opening reception late last evening that featured well-known poets and performers. Renowned Indian lyricist and playback singer Swanand Kirkere; playwright, writer, and podcaster Sarbpreet Singh; and academic, architect, and poet Sarbjot Singh Behl, joined writer and poet Saumya Kulshreshtha in a session celebrating poetry and the profound impact it carries. They recited several verses. A performance by Sufi singer Karam Rajput was also organised. The Reception set the tone for the next two days, featuring a range of programmes, including morning and evening musical performances at 'The Earth' and Gobindgarh Fort respectively, discourse at The Partition Museum in the after-

noons, a specially-curated heritage walk, and much more. The festival was inaugurated by Namita Gautam Director - Managing Trustee, Sleepwell Foundation and Managing Director, Teamwork Arts, Sanjoy K. Roy. Gautam said: "While our primary focus is on enhancing sleep quality, we also believe in prioritising the well-being of individuals. Our commitment lies not only in ensuring a restful night's sleep but also in providing a serene environment to experience 'Sukoon'." Welcoming everyone to the second edition of the festival, Roy said: "We are delighted to open the second Sleepwell presents 'The Sacred Amritsar', a tribute to the rich cultural heritage and illustrious history of the region and the holy city. Over two days, one will witness an immersive and intellectually stimulating journey through poetry, Sufi music, engaging discourse, and immersive heritage walks. Attendees will have the opportunity to gain insights into the essence of our collective heritage



and identity and history of the city." The morning musical performances of the festival will unfold at The Earth Amritsar, while the evening performances will be against the majestic backdrop of the Gobindgarh Fort. The afternoon sessions at The Partition Museum, some of which are presented by Rangla Punjab, will feature a range of enriching conversations by prominent thinkers, performers, poets, writers, and artists. Today's sessions and performances include, 'Punjab Rang Manch: Journey of Theatre in Punjab', which will witness

Rajender Singh in conversation with Jitender Brar, 'A Game of Fire' in which Navdeep Suri will be in conversation with Kishwar Desai and 'Romance in Punjab', which will witness a conversation between Arvinder Chamak and Jasmeet Kaur Nayyar. The evening performances will include 'Dastan-e-Sahir' with Himanshu Bajpai and Pragma Sharma, and 'Kabira Khada Bazaar Mein: A rock opera by Dastan Live' and a performance by Bir Singh.



Sandeshkhali unrest: K'taka BJP Mahila Morcha seeks SC's intervention

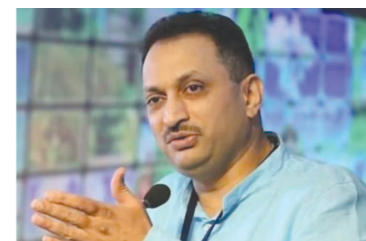
Bengaluru, Feb 26 (IANS) : The President of BJP's Mahila Morcha in Karnataka, C. Manjula, on Monday sought the intervention of the Supreme Court to protect the women victims of alleged harassment by local Trinamool Congress leaders at Sandeshkhali in West Bengal's North 24 Parganas district. Speaking to the media, Manjula, who's also the former Chairman of the Karnataka State Commission for Women, said, "I am an advocate and ex-President of the state women's commission. I

can relate to what is happening to the women in Sandeshkhali. Because of the failure of the law and order system in West Bengal, the police are not doing anything about crime against women. We are aware of judicial activism and the Supreme Court must intervene effectively." "The authorities in Bengal, including the Chief Minister and the police, have failed miserably to protect the women of the state. Where should the common women go? Ensuring their safety and security is the primary responsibility of the state. The Centre can't intervene in the matters of

the state. In this situation, I am humbly demanding the judiciary to intervene," she added. She has also demanded the CBI to probe the events in Sandeshkhali. "Sandeshkhali is rattled by a series of disturbing events. Trinamool leader Sheik Shahajahan's associates are barging into the houses of people and harassing women," she claimed. The women in Sandeshkhali have taken to the streets in protest, but no action has been taken, she said. The Chief Minister (Mamata Banerjee), who herself is a woman, is protecting the goons and turning a blind eye towards the atrocities on women, Manjula claimed. Manjula also said that Mamta Banerjee has not yet visited the village, nor has she spoken to the victims, Manjula said. Meanwhile, stating that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in West Bengal to address a women's rally on March 6, Manjula said that in support of the occasion, Karnataka Mahila Morcha is organising a walkathon across the state covering all the district headquarters on March 5.

'Not farmers but Khalistanis': K'taka BJP MP on farmers' protest

Bengaluru, Feb 26 (IANS) : BJP MP from Uttara Kannada Lok Sabha constituency, Anantkumar Hegde, said on Monday that those who are taking part in protests in New Delhi are not farmers but are Khalistanis. "They arrive in high end cars. Do farmers have this much money? Those protesting are not farmers. It is not farmers' agitation. It is the protest staged by betrayers of the nation. It is an agitation of Khalistanis which is termed as farmers' protest. All of them are funded by foreign countries," Hegde said. He said that these farmers -- who claim discrimination and injustice -- arrive in high end cars and in new tractors whenever a protest call is given. Targeting Chief Minister Siddaramaiah over his criticism of the Central government over allocation of funds.



TN fishermen start hunger strike against arrest of fishermen by Sri Lankan Navy

Chennai, Feb 26 (IANS) : Fishermen of Thangachimadam and Rameswaram areas in Tamil Nadu along with their families have started a relay hunger on Monday against the arrests of Tamil Nadu fishermen by the Sri Lankan Navy. "Sri Lankan government has jailed five of our fishermen. They have been sentenced in between six months to two years. We have not ventured into the sea for the last eight days now," P Jesu Raja, a fishermen leader, told IANS. He said that the hunger strike will continue till all the fishermen are not released unconditionally and an assurance

given that the Sri Lankan government will not arrest fishermen anymore. The fishermen association leaders said that they will continue with the strike even if they die due to starvation. Jesu Raja appealed to the Central government to immediately intervene to get the fishermen released along with their mechanised boats. The fishermen leaders said that the fishermen from coastal districts of Tamil Nadu continue to earn good foreign exchange revenues through exports by their hard work. "The government should not let us down," they said.

Congress demands probe into death of TP murder case accused Kunjananthan

Kochi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Following the fresh indictment of two local CPI-M leaders by the Kerala High Court in the T.P. Chandrasekheran murder case, and fresh claims that one of accused, P.K. Kunjananthan, died due to poisoning, the Congress on Monday demanded a thorough probe into the fresh charges. Twelve years after the brutal murder of former CPI-M leader Chandrasekheran in Kerala, the case came alive Monday after fresh revelations made by a former legislator. On May 4, 2012, a gang of assailants rammed their car into the bike driven by Chandrasekheran. After he fell on the road, they

hacked him to death with swords. Chandrasekheran, once an influential local leader of the CPI(M) in Kozhikode district, had fallen out with the party in 2008 and floated a new outfit called RMP, which reportedly posed a challenge to his former party. What has raised eyebrows now is the revelation made by former Indian Union Muslim League (IUML) legislator K.M. Shaji, who alleged that the 13th accused in the case.



'Deaf & dumb' gang robbing students busted in Delhi, four held

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Delhi Police have busted a gang of thieves and arrested four persons -- who used to pretend to be deaf and dumb -- and mostly targeted students living on rent in the early hours under the pretext of charity collection, said an official on Monday. The official said that the gang used to dispose of stolen items in the open market in Tamil Nadu and police have also recovered 27 stolen mobile phones and 11 laptops from the possession of the gang. The accused were identified as P. Sathyavelu (22), Shiva (22), both residents of Andhra Pradesh; Kumar (24), a resi-

dent of Tamil Nadu, and Prabhu (24), a resident of Karnataka. Police said that specific inputs were received that four accused involved in burglary incidents would come to Press Enclave Road near Malviya Nagar bus stand to execute their plan of theft. As per input, the police team laid a strategic trap. "Four suspicious men were spotted and when questioned about their whereabouts, they pretended to be deaf and dumb, communicating only through gestures," said Deputy Commissioner of Police (south) Ankit Chauhan. Additionally, they also presented a letter showing some entries of charitable donations given to them by different people with signatures and some details.

"Upon their cursory search and checking of their backpacks, three mobile phones and two laptops were recovered which were found to be stolen. Further, upon their instance, 21 more mobile phones and nine laptops were also recovered from their rented accommodation in

Village Bhopura, District Ghaziabad," said the DCP. Explaining the modus operandi of the gang, the DCP said that they used to operate in the early hours of the day to target the houses randomly especially in the areas adjoining the educational institutions.



How Western tech giants unleash propaganda game during India's election season

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS): The advent of technology has led to digital mediums of people outreach programs taking precedence over the conventional poll campaigns. Political parties are increasingly adopting online canvassing over orthodox mediums. However, this has also made the electoral machinery 'vulnerable' to the flip side of technology. Artificial Intelligence (AI) induced fake narratives and mis-information have also added to the humungous task of dealing with fake news, especially during elections. As India prepares for general elections 2024, the agenda and pro-

paganda machinery by the West-backed tech giants is set to get activated again for pushing their ulterior motives. Twitter's latest disagreement with Centre over identification and banning of a couple of accounts has brought the spotlight back on the social media behemoth's attempt to influence country's Parliamentary elections, in 2019. In latest face-off, Twitter objected to Centre's directions to withhold certain account and posts and called it a move to 'quell the freedom of speech' but then agreed to comply with the order. The 'propaganda machinery' of US-based tech giants pose a big challenge during this election season also. In 2019 elections, the in-

terference and meddling into India's electoral affairs by these transnational firms, apparently with the blessing of their governments, was widely seen. These companies colluded with left-liberal ecosystem to devise anti-establishment campaign, with a motive to mobilise public against the Modi dispensation. In 2019, Jack Dorsey-led Twitter, now X, resorted to 'malafide' tricks and stratagems to show the then government in bad light while amplifying the baseless and wild allegations against it. His close association with left-liberal lobby and alleged misuse of social media for furthering vested interests was also called upon by the supposed

right-wing outfits. In one of the viral photos, he was seen flaunting 'Smash Brahminical Patriarchy' poster for which he received huge backlash and also apologised later. Twitter's then CEO Jack Dorsey was also accused of promoting anti-Hindutva accounts during 2019 polls, with an intention to 'bring the government down' and later also summoned by the Standing Committee on IT. Jorsey had accused Indian government of pressuring Twitter to block certain accounts but it was rubbished by Centre as 'blatant lie'. With the world going digital, manipulating the public during elections has become easy and centric. Western powers, via their tech gi-



ants, 'invade' the democratic process of third world countries in name of 'data sovereignty' and when they are dragged to courts, a separate ecosystem goes full throttle to defend them. In 2019 elections, many intermediaries, besides the tech behemoths, also tried to infringe upon

India's election process by manipulating data. They took use of algorithms, data analytics to study voters' inclination and then influenced their minds by populating their social media timeline with 'motivated content'.

K'taka: FIR filed against activists, nurses in religious conversion case

Bengaluru, Feb 26 (IANS) : An FIR was filed against nine activists and two nurses in an alleged "forcefully" conversion case in Kalaburagi district of the state. two Christian nurses -- Ashwini and Rubika -- had allegedly tried to "forcefully" convert people in Ratkal village of Kalaburagi district to Christianity. The Hindu Jagruthi Sena, a Hindu organisation, had filed a case against the two nurses over their "forceful" conversion. However, on Monday, one of the nurses, Ashwini, also filed a case under the Atrocities Act and IPC sections against Hindu Jagruthi Sena President Shankar Choka, Basavaraj, Vishnu and other activists. The Hindu Jagruthi Sena in its complaint said that the accused nurses were offering money and "forcefully" converting people to Christianity.



S.Korean FM meets business leaders in New York

Seoul, Feb 26 (IANS) : South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul met this week with the country's business officials in New York and pledged the government's support for their overseas expansion, his Ministry said on Monday. Cho held the meeting in New York on Monday after attending a G20 meeting in Rio de Janeiro and before travelling to Washington, Yonhap news agency reported. The Minister stressed the importance of the government and the private sector working together as a team at a time when there are no boundaries between economic and national security

issues, and pledged to spare no assistance to minimise the negative impact of the rapidly changing external environment on South Korean businesses and to help their overseas expansion and exports. In attendance were officials from companies and institutions, including Samsung Electronics, Samsung C&T, LG Electronics, Korean Air, CJ, Bank of Korea and Korea Development Bank. Cho plans to raise the issues discussed during meetings with US government and Congressional officials during his visit to Washington starting Monday, his Ministry said.

MEA responds to Indians caught in conflict in Russia, urges caution

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Responding to the reports of Indian nationals forced to fight in the Russia-Ukraine war, the Ministry of External Affairs said on Monday that it is aware of the matter and urged the community there to exercise due caution. "We are aware that a few Indian nationals have signed up for support jobs with the Russian army," Randhir Jaiswal, Ministry of External Affairs spokesperson, said in a statement on Monday. Urging all Indian nationals in Russia to exercise due caution and stay away from the conflict, the statement said that the "Indian Embassy has regularly taken up this matter with the relevant Russian authorities for their early discharge". The response from the ministry came after Karnataka Minister Priyank Kharge made an appeal to the Centre on Thursday to intervene and rescue four Indian youths who were trapped and drafted into a private army in Russia. "The youths from Karnataka, Telangana are stuck there. Fraudulently and by means of cheating the youths were sent to the war. The Indian government must consider this development seriously. The central government must interfere and rescue the Indian



youths from Russia," the Minister told reporters in Bengaluru. Three youths from Kalaburagi district of Karnataka are stuck in Russia, who were fraudulently recruited by a private Russian army group 'Wagner'. Nawaz Kalagi, father of the youth, Syed Iliyas Hussain, who is stuck in Russia, pleaded with the Central government and Prime Minister Narendra Modi to help bring back his son home. "He went to Russia on December 18, 2023. He was told that he would be doing the security helper's job. Now they are being asked to fight in the war. My son used to work in Dubai and from there, he went to Russia," he stated. The incident came to light after the youths made a video sharing their plight and pleading for help. In the video, one of them was heard saying, "Please save us, we are victims of a hi-tech fraud." A group of Indian youths have fallen victim to agents who deceitfully sent them to Russia under the false pretext of providing them with security guard jobs. Instead, all of them were dispatched to war-torn Ukraine-Russia areas.



No difference of opinion between me and Satheesan, says Sudhakaran after show of temper

Kochi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Kerala Congress President, K Sudhakaran, on Monday said there were no differences of opinion between him and his party colleague and Leader of Opposition, VD Satheesan.

Sudhakaran's statement came after he publicly lost his cool over being kept waiting by Satheesan for a joint Press conference on Saturday, and the media went to town with it. The joint Press meeting at Alappuzha was part of the

Congress' statewide yatra and Sudhakaran's angry statements were caught by the live mikes kept in front of him by numerous TV channels. He was heard saying, "Where has this fellow (Satheesan) gone." Sudhakaran then uttered an unparliamentarily word and continued to express his displeasure, which was all recorded and relayed later by the TV channels. Sudhakaran stopped his angry muttering only after Alappuzha District Congress President Babu Prasad warned him that the mikes were live. However, as Satheesan was delayed further, Sudhakaran's displeasure was visible on his face during the joint Press conference. This unpleasantness between the two senior Congress leaders became a point of discussion on social media also. Sources said that after the joint Press meet, Satheesan informed the party

High Command about the humiliation he suffered due to Sudhakaran's behaviour. The two leaders were told by the High Command to meet the media jointly again to clear the air. However, only Sudhakaran surfaced for the meeting with the media and stated that there were no differences of opinion between him and Satheesan. "We are like brothers. What I said was for your (media) sake as you had been waiting for long and you should apologise to me for making such a big thing out of it," said Sudhakaran. Incidentally, a tiff broke out between the two senior leaders when the results of the Puthuppally Assembly by-election were declared last year and the two were caught sparring on who should speak first.



Kamal Haasan won't contest LS polls on Cong ticket : TNCC President

Chennai, Feb 26 (IANS) : Scotching rumours regarding superstar Kamal Haasan contesting general elections on a Congress ticket, Tamil Nadu Congress Committee President, K Selvaperunthagai said on Monday that the President of the Makkal Needhi Maiam (MNM) would not be doing so. He gave the clarification while speaking to media persons at Chennai on Monday. The INDIA bloc has been discussing the sharing of Lok Sabha seats in the state, with the senior partner of the alliance in Tamil Nadu, DMK, taking a tough position that it cannot give more than seven seats to the Congress.

In the 2019 Lok Sabha polls, the Congress contested nine out of the total 39 seats from Tamil Nadu as part of the Secular Progressive Alliance (SPA) led by the DMK. The SPA won all but one seat out of the 39, as the alliance lost in Theni where OP Ravindranath, AIADMK leader and son of former Chief Minister, O Panneerselvam (OPS) won the polls defeating senior Congress leader and former Union Minister, EVKS Elangovan. In the recent rounds of seat sharing discussions with the Congress, the DMK pointed out that it cannot provide the nine seats it gave earlier and can only spare a maximum of seven seats.

New political alignment on cards in TN as PMK MLAs meet EPS

Chennai, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK), the political arm of Vanniyar community which has been a NDA ally in 2019 Lok Sabha polls and 2021 Assembly elections, have started to tilt towards the AIADMK. Earlier, AIADMK has said that it has snapped all ties with the BJP

and will contest the 2024 general elections without any alliance with BJP. On Monday, three PMK MLAs -- C. Sivakumar (Mailam), S.P. Venkiteswaran (Dharmapuri) and S. Sadashivam (Mettur) -- met AIADMK General Secretary and Leader of the Opposition

Edappadi K.Palaniswami (EPS) at his camp office in Greenways road in Chennai to chalk out a workable alliance. The three MLAs have however flatly denied meeting with EPS and said that they had met the Tamil Nadu Finance Minister Thangam Thennarasu but not EPS.

However, speculations are rife that the PMK is likely to enter into an alliance with the AIADMK. Ragunath Krishaswamy political analyst told IANS that the probabilities of PMK entering into a political alliance with the AIADMK are high.

Gurugram civic body to seal tax defaulter's property



Gurugram, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Municipal Corporation of Gurugram (MCG) has launched a drive against those who have not paid property tax for a long period, officials said on Monday. Under the campaign, the civic body's taxation wing will identify and prepare a list of default property owners and take action against them, including sealing their property. An MCG official told IANS that the taxation wing is checking the tax records, and the property of those who despite receiving MCG's notice deliberately did not pay property tax will be sealed. The property will be released only after the payment of

property tax. The officer also said that an MCG team has sealed three defaulter properties in the Gwal Pahari village, including the Ireo Gurugram Hills Society, and a property in Balola village. "The Hills Society owes property tax of more than Rs 50 lakh to the MCG. Along with this, the team also sealed the building of Symphony Interiors located in Gwal Pahari due to non-payment of outstanding property tax of more than Rs 30 lakh," said Laxman Das, Zonal Taxation Officer. The team also sealed a restaurant on which property tax of more than Rs 26 lakh is outstanding.

Calcutta HC seeks reports on violence in Sandeshkhali during Bengal panchayat polls

Kolkata, Feb 26 (IANS) : As Sandeshkhali in West Bengal continued to simmer, the Calcutta High Court on Monday directed the state government to submit details of complaints of violence received from the area during panchayat polls last year. A Division Bench of Calcutta High Court Chief Justice, TS Sivagnanam, on Monday, verbally informed that he distinctly remembered that a case pertaining to poll violence at Sandeshkhali was referred to his Bench during

the time of panchayat polls. He asked the state government to get the details of the case and submit that to his Bench. The Chief Justice also sought the details of the petitioner in this case. He gave this direction while hearing a matter related to the ongoing tension in Sandeshkhali which has been on the boil for nearly 15 days. The matter will come up for hearing again on February 26 and by then the state government will have to submit to the court the details of poll violence at Sandeshkhali last year. Meanwhile, an association of law-



yers on Monday made an appeal at the Calcutta High Court's single-judge Bench of Justice Kausik Chanda, seeking permission to visit Sandeshkhali where fresh prohibitory orders under Section 144 have been issued. Justice Chanda advised the petitioners to

apply to the state government seeking permission and wait for 48 hours. "If the state government does not provide permission within that period, only then the petition would be accepted by the court," Justice Chanda observed.



HDIL money laundering scam : ED attaches immovable properties worth Rs 13 cr

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Enforcement Directorate (ED) has provisionally attached immovable properties valued over Rs 13 crore in the form of shops in the SGS Mall at Pune (Maharashtra) under the provisions of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA) in bank loan fraud of Rs 6117.93 crore. According to an ED official, they had initiated an investigation on the basis of the FIR filed by Punjab & Maharashtra Co-operative Bank (PMC) against Joy Thomas, Waryam Singh (Directors of PMC Bank), Rakesh Kumar Wadhawan, Sarang Wadhawan and unknown other

persons invoking various sections of IPC, 1860. "ED investigation revealed that Housing Development & Infrastructure Pvt Ltd (HDIL) and its group companies availed the OD/Credit Facility from the PMC Bank. Despite repeated defaults in payments by HDIL and its group companies, the OD limits were enhanced from time to time to avoid them being classified as NPA," said the official. Further, ED investigation also revealed that Rakesh Wadhawan and his son, Sarang Wadhawan, were the main Directors/Promoters and were authorised to operate all the bank accounts of HDIL and its group companies. "All the key decisions of the com-

panies were taken by them. They in connivance with other accomplices have layered the proceeds of crime in the bank accounts of HDIL and its group companies which were under their direct/indirect control. They have also diverted the proceeds of crime into their personal bank accounts and the bank accounts of their close associates to acquire assets," said the official.



PIL in SC seeks directions to Centre and States to consider reasonable demands of farmers

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : A PIL has been filed in the Supreme Court seeking directions to the Centre and governments of Delhi, Haryana, Punjab, Madhya Pradesh, and Uttar Pradesh to consider the "reasonable demands" of farmers who are protesting. The public interest litigation (PIL) said that the government should ensure fair and respectful treatment to the protesting farmers and instruct authorities to not cause hindrance in farmers' peaceful march and gathering in Delhi. It alleged that usage of tear gas, rubber bullet pellets, expired shells etc., against peacefully protesting farmers has resulted into serious and grievous injuries and "in some cases death of the farmers thus injured, due to the actions of the police authorities". "The actions taken by the respondent governments by creating fortification across the borders of the national capital, creating hostile.



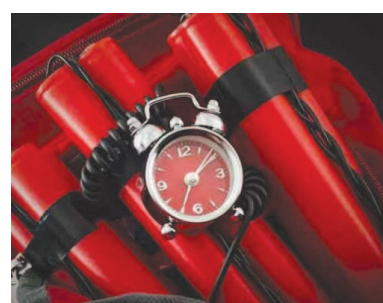
AAP withdraws from LS polls in Goa, supports Congress

Panaji, Feb 26 (IANS) : Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) on Monday declared support to Congress for both of the Lok Sabha seats in Goa, after a seat-sharing agreement reached between them. The AAP, which had recently declared Benaulim MLA Venzy Viegas as its candidate for South Goa Lok Sabha seat, has now withdrawn his candidature. On Saturday, Goa AAP President Amit Palekar and GPCC President Amit Patkar jointly addressed a Press conference, wherein they appealed to other opposition parties Revolutionary Goans Party (RGP) and Goa Forward Party (GFP) to support them. RGP had already declared their candidate a month ago, while GFP has said that they will not contest the Lok Sabha election. "For us state and nation is first... and hence for the bet-

terment of the state and our country, we have decided to withdraw from the fray and lend our support to Congress candidates for both seats of Goa. Congress will fight these both seats under INDIA bloc," Amit Palekar said, adding that a decision has been taken by their leaders to defeat BJP. He said that 'seat-sharing arrangements' have been made by both parties to fight together against the BJP. Congress leader Amit Patkar thanked his party leaders along with AAP leaders including Arvind Kejriwal for giving both seats to the grand old party. "After deliberation over this seat sharing, it was decided that Congress should fight the South Goa seat for betterment of Goa. I appeal to parties who are also fighting against BJP to support us," Patkar said.

HC seeks action plan from Delhi govt, police to tackle bomb threats to schools

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Delhi High Court has called upon the city government and the police to present an action plan to address the recurring incidents of bomb threats targeting schools in the national capital. This directive came as the court responded to an application filed by lawyer Arpit Bhargava, who contended the 'lack of progress' in investigating and resolving three out of five bomb threat incidents reported from city schools last year. Justice Subramonium Prasad issued notices to the authorities, asking



them to submit their responses to the plea. The court also said that the counter affidavit from the Delhi government and the Delhi Police should outline the proposed action plan to tackle the ongoing security concerns.

UPA govt refused to hike K'taka's share from 30% to 40% : BJP

Bengaluru, Feb 26 (IANS) : Karnataka BJP on Monday placed a resolution in the Assembly condemning the attempt's to point fingers at the Centre by the state government and false implication regarding the distribution of taxes and grants. "We all must show our commitment for Karnataka's development. But we must also strongly criticise the politically motivated and wrong statistics to portray the Centre in bad light. We strongly condemn the resolution adopted by the government on the economy," said Leader of Opposition (LoP) R. Ashoka, who presented the resolution in the Assembly. He said that the government must stop the attitude of blaming the Centre to cover up its failures to ensure the economic growth due to poor tax collection. The resolution reads: "It has been over 75 years that India became a

democratic republic and most of this time, Congress was in power. For many years, Karnataka's share was just 20 per cent and a long fight had to be undertaken to hike the percentage to 30 per cent." It said that the Congress-led UPA government had refused to hike the state's share from 30 per cent to 40 per cent. "The Congress that declined to raise objections against the UPA government for the more percentage to the states for development has raised this topic again only for the sake of politics," the resolution reads. It said that a few days after the BJP-led NDA government was formed, the policy of Cooperative Federalism was adopted and hiked the state's share from 32 per cent to 42 per cent. "GST law has been framed as per the constitution. The GST compensation had been decided based on 14 per cent economic growth of the state for five years. As per 14 per cent financial growth, Karnataka had received Rs 1,06,258 crore as com-

pensation from the Central government. Although it ended in 2022, the state government was trying to give a fake account by including the year 2023-24," the resolution reads. It said that the Central government had been following the system of DBT to the bank account of the beneficiaries of the various Central government sponsored schemes. "Cess and Surcharge has been existing since the days of the Congress government and the Centre has the power to levy tax only for certain programs. Karnataka had received Rs 1,06,258 crore as the GST compensation, Cess and the Surcharge," it reads. It said that despite not achieving 14 per cent economic growth, giving 14 per cent compensation to the states helped to bring stability in growth. On Thursday, Minister for Law, Justice, Human Rights, Parliamentary Affairs, Legislation and Tourism H.K. Patil had presented the resolution which said that the people of Karnataka have noticed



that, from the last decade, many instances of bias in allocation of funds by Central government, in providing grants recommended by finance commissions, sanctioning central share as per drought relief norms. "Along with the idea that the underdeveloped and poor states shall get more funding, the Central government is striking the roots of progressive states like Karnataka by not following the principles of the federal system and by making justice to the states that have made the best progress," the resolution read. It said that the House unanimously resolves to urge the Central government to take strong stand of equal distribution and non-discriminatory allocation of financial resources in the interest of the citizens.

Social media shutdown enters seventh day in Pakistan

Islamabad, Feb 26 (IANS) : Despite the passage of seven days, the services of social media giant X, formerly Twitter, remained suspended across Pakistan even though the authorities are yet to offer any explanation for the outage, a media report said. Thousands of Pakistanis turn towards the Elon Musk-owned platform for quick dissemination of information, but they are unable to access it since last Monday, Geo News reported.

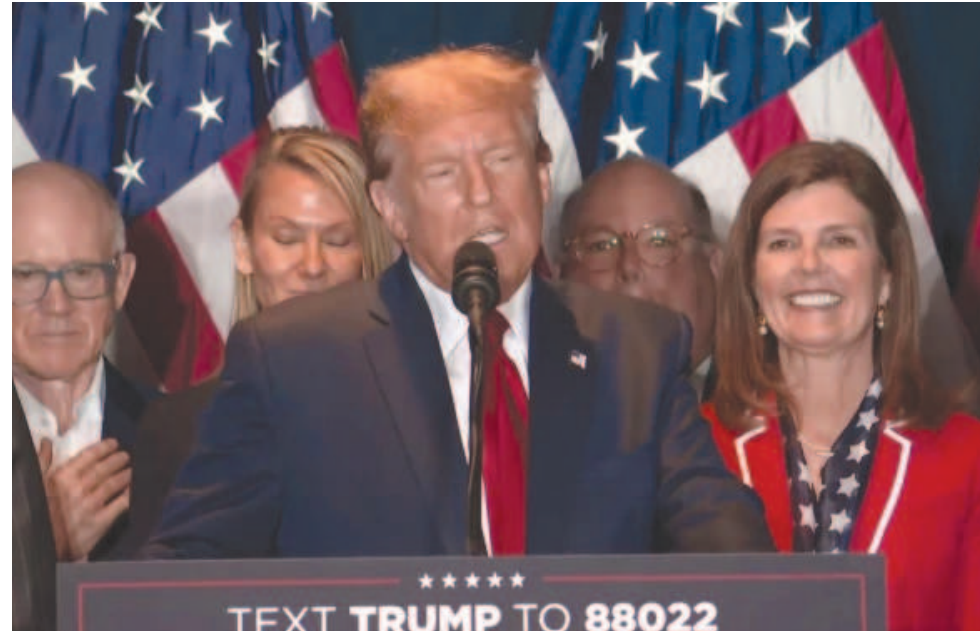
Global internet monitor NetBlocks said that VPN services have also been restricted in the country, causing difficulty for the users in accessing the micro-blogging site, Geo News reported.

"User reports indicate possible problems at X," said website tracker Downtechnology.com. While boasting of being among the top internet user population globally, Pakistan struggles with internet availability, ranking low compared to its peers, while reportedly authorities intermittently disrupt access to social media platforms. Ahead of the February 8 general elections, users were unable to access several social media sites, for which authorities concerned blamed a "technical error".

Trump projected to win South Carolina Republican primary

Washington, Feb 26 (IANS) : Former US President Donald Trump has defeated the country's former Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley in the South Carolina Republican primary, multiple media organizations have projected. The Associated Press, ABC News, NBC News and Fox News made the projection just a few minutes after polls closed in the southeastern US state on Sunday at 7 p.m. local time, Xinhua news agency reported. The defeat delivered a crushing blow to Haley,

who was born in the state and served as its governor from 2011 to 2017. A growing number of Republican figures have urged Haley to drop out so that they could focus on the fight against the Democratic Party. In a speech earlier this week, Haley vowed to continue her 2024 presidential campaign beyond Monday's contest.



Putin's critic Navalny's body handed to his mother

Moscow, Feb 26 (IANS) : The body of leading Russian opposition figure Alexei Navalny has been returned to his mother, his spokesperson has said. In a post on X, Kira Yarmysh on Monday said: "Alexei's body was handed over to his mother. Many thanks to all those who demanded this with us." "Lyudmila Ivanovna (Navalny's mother) is still in Salekhard. The funeral is still pending. We do not know if the authorities will interfere to carry it out as the family wants and as Alexei deserves. We will inform you as soon as there is news," she

added. Navalny's mother Lyudmila had reportedly been told to agree to a "secret" burial. If she refused, he would be buried at the prison colony where he died, the BBC reported. Earlier in the day, Navalny's widow, Yulia Navalnaya, accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of holding her late husband's body "hostage" and demanded its release without conditions. Navalny died on February 16 in a Russian prison inside the Arctic Circle. Seen as Putin's most vociferous critic, Navalny was serving a 19-year jail term for offences widely considered politically motivated.

S.Korea voices concerns over N.Korea-Russia military cooperation

Washington, Feb 26 (IANS) : South Korean Foreign Minister Cho Tae-yul has expressed concerns over growing military cooperation between North Korea and Russia, saying it could potentially help Pyongyang's ability to "threaten security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond". Cho made the remarks on Friday during a UN Security Council (UNSC) briefing on the Ukraine issue at UN headquarters in New York on the eve of the second anniversary

of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Yonhap news agency reported. "If and when it turns out to be the case that North Korea receives in return, whether advanced military technology or oil shipments exceeding limits under Security Council resolutions, this would redound to North Korea's ability to threaten security on the Korean Peninsula and beyond," he said. "Both dimensions of this nexus constitute unequivocal violations of multiple UNSC resolutions and undermine the global non-proliferation regime," he added. The White House has re-

vealed that the North provided Russia with military equipment, munitions and ballistic missiles, some of which were fired at Ukrainian targets on December 30, January 2 and January 6. In return for the arms provision, Pyongyang has been seeking military assistance from Russia, "including fighter aircraft, surface-to-air missiles, armoured vehicles, ballistic missile production equipment or materials, and other advanced technologies", according to US officials. "My government is deeply troubled by the emerging military cooperation between



Russia and North Korea," Cho said. "North Korean munitions and missiles have been sighted in Ukraine, which not only aggravates the human suffering but also risks further escalating and prolonging the war in Ukraine." Noting the UNSC's "inherent shortcomings and current constraints", Cho said it is imperative for the council to devise "effective strategies to navigate these complexities to fulfil its fundamental duty of maintaining international peace and security". "I wish to reaffirm Korea's commitment as a member of the Security Council to actively contribute to realizing this goal," he said.



Iranian Forces kill Jaish al-Adl militant group commander in Pakistan

Tehran, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Iranian forces have killed senior Jaish al-Adl militant group commander Ismail Shahbakhsh and some of his companions in Pakistan, a media report said. The development comes one month after the two countries conducted airstrikes on each other's territories.

In a post on X, Iran international media quoting the country's state media reported: "Military forces have, in an armed clash inside the Pakistani territory, killed senior Jaish al-Adl militant group commander Ismail Shahbakhsh and some of his companions." Jaish al-Adl, a Sunni extremist organisation, which is designated terrorist organisation by

Iran, operates predominantly in the southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan, as per Al Arabiya News.

Tension between the two nations had escalated after which both of them had recalled the ambassadors.

Pakistan's concerns are that Baloch terrorist outfits find refuge across the border in the Sistan-Balochistan province of Iran while Tehran claims anti-Iran militant groups such as Jaish al-Adl having hideouts in Balochistan province in Pakistan. After diplomatic efforts, both countries restored bilateral ties and agreed to reinstate the ambassadors.

IDF announces death of soldier killed in Gaza; ground op death toll rises to 239

Tel Aviv, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) on Monday announced the death of a soldier killed in battle in south Gaza, raising the death toll of Israel's ground invasion into the Palestinian enclave to 239 since late October, media reported. He was named as Staff Sergeant Narya Belete, 21, of the Givati Brigade's reconnaissance unit, from Shavei Shomron in the West Bank, The Times of Israel reported.

In addition, an officer and two soldiers in the Givati Brigade were seriously injured in the battle in the southern Gaza Strip on Saturday, the Israeli military said.



Israel-Hamas war: Ceasefire, hostage exchange likely before March 10

Tel Aviv, Feb 26 (IANS) : The Israel delegation led by Chief of Mossad David Barnea and Director of Shin Bet, Ronen Bar, are back in Jerusalem after marathon mediatory talks in Paris and Cairo with US, Qatar and Egyptian officials. The Mossad Chief, according to Israel Defence Ministry sources, have briefed the Israeli War Cabinet members informally and said that the ceasefire is almost likely before the commencement of the Ramadan month on March 10.

According to Israel Defence Ministry sources, Hamas has almost come down to all the suggestions put forward by Israel, including release of all hostages, including the bodies of those who are dead. Israel has also informed the mediators that if the deal did not work out, Prime Minister Benjamin

Netanyahu will step up the Israel troops' ground offensive in Rafah area of Gaza Strip housing a huge population of women and children.

The Israeli side has also agreed for the rehabilitation of the Palestinians who are displaced from northern Gaza, according to information available. While Israeli side was led by David Barnea and Ronen Bar, Qatar Prime Minister Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Chief of Central Intelligence Agency William Burns and Egyptian Intelligence Chief Abbas Kamel also were involved in the negotiations.



Knife-wielding man kills 1 at convenience store in Japan's Sapporo

Tokyo, Feb 26 (IANS) : A convenience store employee died after a man stabbed him and two other co-workers in Sapporo in the northernmost Japanese prefecture of Hokkaido on Monday, local media reported.

The incident happened around 6:50 a.m. local time when the man armed with what appeared to be a kitchen knife started attacking people at a Seicomart store in Sapporo's Kita Ward, Kyodo News said. All three store employees were taken to a hospital with stab wounds, with police arresting the assailant at the scene, the report said.

The employee in his 40s was later confirmed dead. The two other workers are a man in his 60s and a woman in her 50s, it added as quoted by Xinhua news agency report.

The police said they arrested Hirotaka Miyaniishi, 43, an unemployed man living in the same ward, who has admitted to stabbing all three.



National shooting : Narmada, Neha and Aishwary Tomar win in trials

Bhopal, Feb 26 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu's R. Narmada Nithin won the Women's 10m Air Rifle T4 trials, even as Uttar Pradesh's Neha overcame two seasoned opponents to take the Women's 25m Pistol T3 title and Olympian and local star Aishwary Pratap Singh Tomar, scored a facile win in the Men's 50m Rifle 3 Positions (3P) T4 match, on competition Day 3 of the National Rifle/Pistol Selection Trials at the M.P. State Shooting Academy ranges here on Monday. Narmada had earlier reached the T3 finals on Sunday but was not to be denied on the day as she shot 251.8 to deny another local favourite Ashi Chouksey, who came second for the second day running. Rajasthan's Nisha Kanwar was third.

ISL 2023-24: Confident Punjab FC aim to return to winning ways against fellow strugglers Hyderabad FC

Hyderabad, Feb 26 (IANS) : Currently languishing at the 11th position on the points table, first-timers Punjab FC (PFC) will be aiming to return to winning ways as they face bottom-dwellers Hyderabad FC in Round 16 of the Indian Super League (ISL) 2023-24 season which will be played at the GMC Balayogi Stadium here on Tuesday. While Punjab FC are currently 11th on the table with 14 points from 15



Hardik Pandya takes 2-22 on return to competitive cricket at DY Patil T20 Cup

Navi Mumbai, Feb 26 (IANS) : Fast-bowling all-rounder Hardik Pandya picked figures of 2-22 on his return to competitive cricket action after almost four months at the DY Patil T20 Cup, where he captained Reliance 1 in the opening game of the competition against Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) here on Monday. At the DY

Patil Cricket Academy, Pandya, who was recently seen at the National Cricket Academy (NCA) in Bengaluru, opened the bowling and took the wickets of Eknath Kerkar (caught & bowled) and Rahul Tripathi for a duck. Interestingly, he then came out to bat at No.10 and remained unbeaten on three off four balls as Reliance 1 beat Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited by two wickets in a tense chase of 126.



Wicketkeeper Gurbaz in line for debut as Afghanistan name squad for Ireland Test

Kabul, Feb 26 (IANS) : Afghanistan have named their Test squad for the one-off Test match against Ireland starting in Abu Dhabi on February 28. Limited-overs star Rahmanullah Gurbaz has been named in Afghanistan's squad for the one-off Test match against Ireland and could potentially make his debut in the format.

Rashid Khan, who is still recovering from the lower-back surgery, is not part of the squad. Afghanistan have added additional spin cover in the form of leg-spinner Khalil Gurbaz.

Fast Bowler Ibrahim Abdulrahimzai also earned a recall to the squad to be led by Hashmatullah Shahidi, while Yamin Ahmadzai and Mohammad Saleem Safi were ruled out with injuries.

"We have quite a good playing history with Ireland, both countries have played plenty of cricket against each other and have been granted ICC Full Membership at the same time," Afghanistan Cricket Board CEO

Naseeb Khan said. "This will be our second Test against them, and we are eagerly looking forward to what will be an exciting Test match between the two teams."

Afghanistan had won the earlier Test match between these sides in Dehradun in 2019. Overall, the team has played eight Test matches, winning three of them. Afghanistan are also scheduled to play a two-match Test series against Bangladesh and a one-off home Test against New Zealand in 2024.

Afghanistan Test Squad:

Hashmatullah Shahidi (c), Rahmat Shah (vc), Ikram Alikhail (wk), Rahmanullah Gurbaz (wk), Ibrahim Zadran, Noor Ali Zadran, Abdul Malik, Baheer Shah, Nasir Jamal, Karim Janat, Khalil Gurbaz, Zahir Khan, Zia Ur Rehman Akbar, Nijat Masoud, Ibrahim Abdulrahimzai and Naveed Zadran.



IPL 2024: Punjab Kings' home games to take place at newly developed stadium in Mullanpur

Mohali, Feb 26 (IANS) : Punjab Kings on Monday announced that their home matches for the coming edition of the Indian Premier League (IPL) will be played at the newly developed Maharaja Yadavindra Singh Stadium in Mullanpur, Mohali instead of the PCA IS Bindra Stadium. The stadium, which has hosted domestic matches for the last couple of years, boasts of all the modern facilities and top-class infrastructure and can host a capacity of 33,000 fans. The Mullanpur stadium also has a well-equipped herringbone drainage system, which helps in the removal of water within 25-30 minutes after the rain stops.

Instead of using traditional soil, the ground is made of sand, which is difficult to maintain but provides good stability. It is equipped with two international-standard dressing rooms having facilities for steam, sauna and ice bath, while a world-class gym has also been set up at this complex, the Punjab Cricket Association (PCA) informed in a statement on Monday.



IVPL 2024: 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle's 94 in vain as VVIP Uttar Pradesh beat Telangana Tigers by 45 runs

Greater Noida, Feb 26 (IANS) : Pawan Negi's scintillating innings of 139 runs off 56 balls led VVIP Uttar Pradesh to a commanding 45-run victory over Telangana Tigers in the sixth match of the ongoing Indian Veteran Premier League (IVPL) held at

the Shaheed Vijay Singh Pathik Sports Complex, here on Monday. The match was marked by the highly-anticipated return of 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle in IVPL, who received a warm reception from fans. Gayle's explosive knock of 94 runs from 46 balls, featuring three fours and 10 sixes,

showcased his batting prowess, although it wasn't enough to secure victory for Telangana Tigers. VVIP Uttar Pradesh scored a massive 269/4 in the allotted 20 overs and then restricted Telangana Tigers to 224/8 despite a Gayle masterclass.

Asian Cycling: Gold winner Sarita, mason's daughter from Jharkhand, aspires to provide better life for her parents

New Delhi, Feb 26 (IANS) : After clinching a gold medal in the junior Team Sprint event at the Asian Track Cycling Championships here, India's Sarita Kumari, whose father works as a mason in Jharkhand, wants to provide a better life for her parents. Her journey to the podium is inspirational.



4th Test: To come out on the right side of the very hard-fought series feels very good, says Rohit Sharma

Ranchi, Feb 26 (IANS) : Following a thrilling five-wicket win over England to win the fourth Test and the series, India captain Rohit Sharma said he was pleased to come out on the winning side of the very hard-fought series.

India's win in the fourth Test was fashioned by knocks of 90 and 39 not out from Dhruv Jurel, while sharing a crucial 76-run stand for the eighth wicket with Kuldeep Yadav in the first innings and a decisive 72-run partnership for the

sixth wicket with Shubman Gill, who made 55 not out. With the ball, debutant fast-bowler Akash Deep took three wickets on day one, followed by Ravichandran Ashwin and Kuldeep taking 5-51 and 4-22 re-

spectively in the second innings, to give India their 17th consecutive Test series win at home. "It's been a very hard-fought series, so to come on the right side of it feels very good.