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Telangana to provide digital connectivity to 93 lakh households: Sridhar Babu

Hyderabad, Feb 12 (NSS): Telangana is set to usher in a digital revolution, with 93 lakh households poised to receive seamless internet connectivity, announced IT & Industries Minister Duddilla Sridhar Babu. Addressing a delegation from the World Bank at the Secretariat here on Wednesday, the Minister elaborated on the transformative T-Fiber initiative.

Continued on pg 02



Sammakka-Saralamma mini

Medaram jatara begins in Mulugu district

Warangal, Feb.12 (NSS): The Sammakka-Saralamma Mini Medaram Jatara, lasting four days, commenced on Wednesday in Tadvai Mandal of Mulugu district.

In general, the Adivasi community organises the Sammakka-Saralamma Medaram Maha Jatara every two years, with a smaller mini jatara occurring mid-year.

The festivities began on the first day with the Mandameli festival. Temple

priests performed rituals to cleanse the Gaddhe and safeguard the village from malevolent spirits, conducting special pujas illuminated by the full moon.

The State government has allocated Rs.5.30 crores for the event's arrangements, while security measures have been strengthened with the deployment of 1,000 police officers.

Rahul did not have courage to visit Warangal: BRS MLC Kavitha



Hyderabad, Feb 12 (NSS): Congress leader Rahul Gandhi did not have the courage to come to Warangal and run away, alleged BRS party MLC Kalvakuntla Kavitha today.

Speaking at a meeting organised by the Telangana Jagriti Women's Wing at her residence here on Wednesday, she alleged that Rahul Gandhi cancelled his visit to Warangal tour fearing that he would have to stand by the promises made to the people of the State.

Continued on pg 02

BRS demands local body polls only after implementing 42 per cent BC Reservation

Hyderabad, Feb 12 (IANS): The main opposition BRS on Tuesday criticised the Congress government for failing to implement its promise of 42 per cent reservation for Backward Classes (BCs) in local body elections. The party demanded for a resurvey and to hold elections only after the Kamareddy Declaration promising 42 per cent quota was enforced.



Pawan Kalyan begins temple tour to Kerala, Tamil Nadu

Amaravati, Feb 12 (IANS): Andhra Pradesh Deputy Chief Minister and Jana Sena Party President Pawan Kalyan on Wednesday began a three-day pilgrimage to Kerala and Tamil Nadu, seen as part of his 'Sanatan Dharma Parirakshana' (protection of ancient dharma) mission.

After landing at Kochi Airport, the actor-politician left for Sri Agastya Maharshi Temple.

After offering prayers at this temple, he will proceed to Meenakshi Sundareswara Temple at Madurai in Tamil Nadu. He is scheduled to visit various temples in Tamil Nadu on Thursday and Friday. These include Sri Parashurama Swamy Temple, Agastya Jeeva Samadhi, Kumbeshwara Temple, Swamimalai, and Thiruthani Subramanya Swamy Temple.

Continued on pg 02



Bhatti promises 42 percent BC reservation

Hyderabad, Feb.12 (NSS): Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka has affirmed that the State government is dedicated to providing a 42 percent reservation for OBCs, thereby fulfilling the long-standing aspiration of this community. Speaking to the media at the Secretariat on Wednesday.

Continued on pg 02

Andhra Pradesh bans transport of chickens from bird flu-hit districts

Amaravati, Feb 12 (IANS): Andhra Pradesh's Minister for Agriculture and Animal Husbandry K. Atchannaidu on Wednesday ordered authorities to ban the transport of chickens from bird-flu-affected districts until the situation comes under control.

The minister reviewed the situation created by the death of chickens due to the outbreak of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) in Godavari and undivided Krishna districts on Wednesday.

The minister held a teleconference with top officials of the Veterinary Department in East

Godavari, West Godavari, NTR and Krishna districts. Bio-security measures have been implemented at poultry farms in the affected areas. Officials have been directed to ensure that there is no movement of transport vehicles around the affected poultry.

The minister directed the veterinary doctors to be available in their respective areas to render the services.

Atchannaidu directed all district officials to collect samples from dead chickens, send them to laboratories and remain on alert. He wanted officials to ensure full-scale surveillance and monitor the



situation by creating zones. Following the outbreak of HPAI in Andhra Pradesh, neighbouring Telangana has sounded an alert and banned the import of chickens and eggs. Telangana officials are turning back poultry vehicles coming from the neighbouring state.

India's next gen stealth fighter aircraft has Hyderabad's imprint

Hyderabad, Feb 12: A Hyderabad-based company has become the heart of India's upcoming next generation fighter aircraft Advanced Medium Combat Aircraft (AMCA). VEM Technologies Private Limited here has made its mark in the AMCA, manufacturing end-to-end.



Special focus is on creating infrastructure for City people: GHMC Mayor

Hyderabad, Feb.12 (NSS): GHMC Mayor Gadwal Vijayalakshmi today said the government was committed to providing better infrastructure to the residents of the city and added that as part of this, priority was being given to the development of roads.

SHIRAM FINANCE LIMITED DEMAND NOTICE
Registered Office: Sri. Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032.
Administrative Office: 6th Floor (Level 2), Building No.Q2, Aurum Q parc, Gen 4/1, TTC, Thane Belapur Road, Ghansoli, Navi Mumbai-400710.

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Telangana to provide digital connectivity to 93 lakh households: Sridhar Babu

Continued From pg 01
A high-level World Bank delegation, led by Vijanti Desai and Kimberly Johns, visited these villages—Hajipally (Ranga Reddy district), Maddur (Narayanpet), Sangupet (Sangareddy), and Adavi Sriampur (Peddapalli)—to witness firsthand the groundbreaking impact of digital connectivity on local communities.

Bhatti promises 42 percent BC reservation

Continued From pg 01
The Deputy Chief Minister announced that the State government intends to have the OBC reservation Bill passed in the Assembly during the first week of March, after which it will be forwarded to Parliament.



India advancing medical innovation with AI, genomics in Unani medicine: Jitendra Singh

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : India is advancing medical innovation with artificial intelligence and genomics in Unani medicine, said Jitendra Singh, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge) for Science and Technology.

Bank of Baroda DEMAND NOTICE
Name of the Borrower: M/s Vignatha Mines Private Limited, Director: Mr. Puchakayala Kamalakr. Mr. Srinivasa Rao Kongara, H.No.8-2-293/82/G/A/68, R.No.34, Shaikpet, Jubilee Hills S.O. Hyderabad-500033, Telangana.

Former DSP Gangadhar joins Congress

Hyderabad, Feb.12 (NSS): M. Gangadhar, who is contesting as an independent candidate from the Graduate Constituency of Medak, Nizamabad, Adilabad and Karimnagar districts, joined the Congress party on Wednesday.



SCR to operate Special Trains during weekends

Hyderabad, Feb 12 (NSS): To clear extra rush during weekends, South Central Railway (SCR) will run special trains between Charlapalli – Kakinada Town & Charlapalli – Narsapur Train No. 07031 (Charlapalli – Kakinada Town) will run on February 14 & 21.

VH demands Kurnool district to be named after Damodaram Sanjeevaiah

Hyderabad, Feb.12 (NSS): Congress senior leader V Hanumantha Rao has urged Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Nara Chandrababu Naidu to name Kurnool district after former chief minister of combined Andhra Pradesh and former president of All India Congress Committee (AICC) Damodaram Sanjeevaiah.

SIDDIPET BRANCH, #11-1-83/4, Shivaji Nagar, Medak Road, Siddipet. POSSESSION NOTICE
Whereas, the undersigned being the Authorized Officer of Bank of India, 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 demand notice dated 12-11-2024 calling upon the borrowers Mr. Muskanipeta Raju, S/o M.Devaiah and Mrs. Muskanipeta Anitha, W/o Muskanipeta Raju residents of H.No.2-75, Allipur, Chinchwad, Siddipet-502310 to repay the amount mentioned in the notice being A/c No.572175110000103 of Rs.28,42,118.98 + interest from 10-09-2024 (Rupees Twenty Eight Lakhs Forty Two Thousand One Hundred and Eighteen Rupees and Ninety Eight Paise Only) together with all the costs, expenses, charges etc. with monthly rests within 60 days from the date of receipt of the said notice.

SIDDIPET BRANCH, H.No.11-1-83/4, Shivaji Nagar, Medak Road, Siddipet, Telangana-502103. NOTICE FOR PUBLIC AUCTION OF PLEDGED GOLD JEWELLERY ORNAMENTS/COINS
It is hereby brought to the notice of the following gold loan borrowers, their legal heirs, persons engaged in business of gold jewellery/ornaments/coins and general public that in spite of repeated reminders/ notices by the Bank, the following borrowers are not repaying their dues to the Bank.

Gujarat CM to join 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' with 14.3 lakh students

Gandhinagar, Feb 12 (IANS): In a bid to ease examination stress for students, Gujarat Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel will participate in a motivational interaction with students of Crystal International Public School in Ahmedabad on Wednesday as part of the 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' initiative. The nationwide eighth edition of 'Pariksha Pe Charcha' aims to encourage students appearing for board exams to tackle their studies without stress or fear. The program is designed to provide guidance and inspiration to students ahead of their board exams. The live telecast of the event will be streamed in more than 40,000 schools across Gujarat through various digital platforms, ensuring maximum participation. The event will bring together

14.3 lakh students from Classes 10 and 12, including those from science and general streams, along with students from Classes 6 to 12, fostering an environment of exam readiness and motivation across the state. In Gujarat, recent studies have highlighted significant levels of stress among the youth, particularly in academic settings. A study conducted among undergraduate students in the Mehsana district revealed that 41.05 per cent experienced stress, with varying degrees of severity: 9.32 per cent were mildly stressed, 12.18 per cent moderately stressed, 10.07 per cent severely stressed, and 9.47 per cent extremely severely stressed. Similarly, research among medical students in South Gujarat found that 51.1 per cent of participants reported stress, with a mean Perceived Stress Scale (PSS) score of 27.20 ± 6.58. The primary



stressors identified included concerns about the quality of food in mess facilities, poor road connectivity on campus, and academic performance pressures. A study conducted among undergraduate students aged 18-24 in the Mehsana district revealed that 41.05 per cent experienced stress, with varying degrees of severity: 9.32 per cent were mildly stressed, 12.18 per cent moderately stressed, 10.07 per cent severely stressed, and 9.47 per cent extremely severely stressed. A study focusing on higher secondary science students found that nearly 32 per cent experienced depression, with higher rates observed in fe-

male students (37.28 per cent) compared to males (29.90 per cent). Additionally, 20.59 per cent of these students suffered from dysthymia, and 1.64 per cent were identified as having suicidal risk. Notably, students in Class 12 exhibited higher depression rates (38.06 per cent) than those in Class 11 (25.98 per cent). Among medical students in Gujarat.

BJP's Delhi win exposes AAP's 'false assurances', says Shiv Sena leader

Mumbai, Feb 12 (IANS) : Shiv Sena leader Shaina NC on Wednesday lauded the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for its resounding victory in the Delhi Assembly elections, stating that the public has finally recognized and rewarded those who work for the people. The BJP secured a decisive win, clinching 48 out of 70 seats, while the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP) was reduced to just 22, marking the end of its decade-long dominance in the national capital.



TVK names superstar Vijay as its CM candidate, alliance only with parties recognising his leadership

Chennai, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam (TVK) has announced that it will enter into a political alliance only with parties that recognise the leadership of its founder and Tamil superstar, Vijay. In a statement issued on Wednesday, the TVK confirmed that Vijay is the party's Chief Ministerial candidate. This announcement comes amid speculation that TVK was in talks with the All India Anna Dravida Munnetra Kazhagam (AIADMK) regarding a potential alliance. Reports suggested that discussions included securing the Deputy Chief Minister's post and 60 Assembly seats for the 2026 elections.



Dharmendra Pradhan accuses Bengal govt of non-cooperation in implementing Central projects

Kolkata, Feb 12 (IANS): Union Education Minister Dharmendra Pradhan, on Wednesday, criticised the West Bengal government for creating hurdles for implementing several Central projects in the state under various pretexts. The Minister was in Kolkata to deliver his address at a party programme titled "Budget Talk—A phenomenal step towards Viksit Bharat". There, speaking to media persons at the sideline of the said event, Pradhan claimed that when he

was the Union Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas, he had proposed a 7,101-km pipeline covering Jharkhand, Odisha, and West Bengal. He claimed that despite several rounds of dialogues with the West Bengal government even after seven years, the project could not be implemented in West Bengal. Pradhan also said that similar non-cooperation from the state government is evident in the case of the implementation of railway projects in West Bengal.

AIADMK slams CM Stalin over rising crimes against women in TN

Chennai, Feb 12 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu's principal opposition party, the AIADMK, has criticised Chief Minister M.K. Stalin for the increasing incidents of crimes against women, including rape and sexual assault, across the state. AIADMK General Secretary and Leader of the Opposition, Edappadi K. Palaniswami, accused the Chief Minister of failing to curb criminal activities and ensure the safety of women and children. Palaniswami, who is also a former Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu, demanded that Stalin, who directly oversees

the Home Department, take strict action against criminal elements and restore law and order. Listing several recent incidents, Palaniswami claimed that Tamil Nadu has become unsafe under CM Stalin's leadership. Among the cases he highlighted were, the sexual assault of a 13-year-old girl student, allegedly by three government school teachers in Krishnagiri, the suspicious death of a Class 9 girl student in Cuddalore, a pregnant woman being pushed out of a moving train in Vellore after resisting a sexual assault attempt. The AIADMK leader also pointed out the sexual assault case at Anna University and the car chase inci-

dent on East Coast Road in Chennai. Palaniswami also raised concerns about allegations made by a senior woman IPS officer, Additional Director General of Police Kalpana Nayak, who claimed there was an attempt on her life in 2024 due to her efforts in exposing irregularities in police recruitment. The state government denied the allegations, stating that the fire in her chamber was caused by a short circuit. Additionally, the AIADMK leader pointed to reports of contamination in an overhead water tank in Tiruchirappalli district's Srirangam block, questioning why



the Vengaivayal incident in Pudukkottai district remained unresolved. Criticising Stalin's leadership, Palaniswami accused him of acting like a "monarch of the past" by conducting roadshows instead of addressing people's grievances. He alleged that during Stalin's visit to Tirunelveli district, he failed to listen to the concerns of Manjoli estate workers.

Very safe for women: Pilgrims hail Maha Kumbh security, cleanliness arrangements

Prayagraj, Feb 12 (IANS) : Pilgrims visiting the Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj on Wednesday lauded the extensive arrangements made by the administration, particularly the facilities at the ghats and the enhanced security measures. Till now, crores of devotees have taken a holy dip in the Triveni Sangam, the revered confluence of the Ganga, Yamuna, and the mythical Saraswati rivers. The grand religious event, which began on January 13 and will continue until February 26, has drawn millions of devotees from across the country and beyond. Speaking to IANS, pilgrims shared their experiences and praised the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath-led government for its well-organised management.



900 exhibitors, 150 foreign companies to participate in 'biggest-ever' Aero India

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : The 15th edition of Aero India, "Asia's biggest aerospace and defence exhibition", will commence at the Yelahanka Air Force Station in Bengaluru, Karnataka. The theme of this program is 'The Runway to a Billion Opportunities.' Organised in a total area of over 42,000 sq m and with the confirmed participation of over 900 exhibitors, including 150 foreign companies, the event is set to be the biggest-ever Aero India to date. Meanwhile, Defence Minister Rajnath Singh termed the participation of more than 90 countries as a testament to the growing global confidence in India's aerospace and defence capabilities. He said that defence ministers or representatives from about 30 countries have come to participate in the event. "The presence of air chiefs and

secretaries from 43 countries further highlights the significance of this event - not just for India, but for the entire international defence community," said the Defence Minister. Rajnath Singh described Aero India as a crucial platform, which will drive forward the government's vision of a strong, capable India, secure and self-reliant India. "Aero India is a platform that showcases the strength, resilience, and self-reliance of 'New India'. It is not just crucial for India's defence preparedness, but it also plays a pivotal role in shaping the future of our nation. It will demonstrate our defence capabilities and forge global partnerships. Our goal is to enhance collaboration in areas of common interest with our friendly nations, fostering deeper cooperation and shared progress," he said.



India's scientific success shines globally: Union Minister

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : Union Minister Jitendra Singh said on Wednesday that India's scientific progress is being recognised globally with achievements like the development of vaccines and the success of Chandrayaan. While inaugurating the new office of 'Vigyan Bharati' in the national capital, the minister urged that this office must act as a platform for identifying new scientific initiatives and partnerships, similar to IN-SPACE in the space sector and BIRAC in biotechnology. He also called it a much-needed centre for learning and the exchange of ideas and hailed Prime Minister Narendra Modi's leadership for the transformative era in Science.



'Political turncoat': Nitish Kumar betrayed Mahagathbandhan, says Tejashwi Yadav

Patna, Feb 12 (IANS) : Bihar Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Tejashwi Yadav on Wednesday slammed Chief Minister Nitish Kumar calling him a political turncoat who betrayed the Grand Alliance (Mahagathbandhan) by rejoining the BJP-led NDA. Addressing a Teli community rally at Patna's Millar School Ground, Tejashwi made it clear that Nitish Kumar will never be welcomed back into the RJD-led alliance. "Nitish Kumar became the Chief Minister twice with RJD's sup-

port, but he backstabbed us and joined the BJP. Now, there is no question of taking him back in the Grand Alliance," Tejashwi declared. Making a strong anti-BJP stance, Tejashwi asserted that he and the RJD would never ally with the BJP. "I would prefer to die rather than go with the BJP in my entire life," he said, drawing cheers from the crowd. He accused Nitish Kumar of "hypocrisy", reminding the public that when JD-U was part of the Grand Alliance.

OPINIONmail



Agriculture sector growth stronger, steadier than UPA's volatile years

In a sharp riposte to the Congress Party's criticism over the performance of the agriculture sector, the BJP has in its factsheet highlighted that the growth rate in recent years is much stronger and steadier, backed by the government's higher budgetary support, than during 2004 to 2014 when the UPA was in power. "The UPA regime from 2004 to 2014 was the epitome of volatility for Indian agriculture. The growth of Agriculture and allied sectors GDP stood at 5.1 per cent in 2005-06, but the sector declined by 0.1 per cent in 2008-09, highlighting how the Congress miserably failed in its agricultural ventures," the factsheet said. "Any claims of agricultural stagnation under the NDA are outrightly false, as India's agriculture sector has exhibited strong growth in recent years, with an average annual increase of 5 per cent from FY17 to FY23. Further in the first and second quarters of 2024-25, the agriculture sector recorded growth rates of 2 per cent and 3.5 per cent, indicating a strong growth in the sector," it further states. The factsheet highlights that the financial situation of farmers is on an upward trajectory, with an annual increase of 5.23 per cent in agricultural income over the past decade. Despite a one-off fall in employment rate during the pandemic, the NDA Government spearheaded a strong recovery, with the unemployment rate now falling to 3.2 per cent, far below the pre-pandemic levels of 6 per cent even.

It also states that while Congress betrayed farmers, the NDA is ensuring that MSP is 1.5 times the average cost of production regularly. The landmark PM KISAN scheme, just one of the various measures, has benefited 11 crore annadatads between 2019 and 2024, with over Rs 3.45 lakh crore in disbursements done through DBT (direct benefit transfer). Farmers' purchasing capacity has jumped significantly over the past decade. In 2013-14, the total agricultural credit in India stood at just Rs 7.3 lakh crore. In less than a decade, this has more than tripled to Rs 25.48 lakh crore in 2023-24, the factsheet added. It further states that the Kisan Credit Card scheme has been made more expansive by the NDA, as the benefits have also been extended to farmers in the Animal Husbandry and Fisheries sectors in 2018-19, something not previously there under the UPA.

The National Agricultural Insurance Scheme (NAIS) and the Modified NAIS, the UPA's initiatives for crop insurance, only offered limited coverage and a meagre allocation of Rs 2,151 crore in 2013-2014. The PMFBY, has a humongous budget in comparison and is way more inclusive than the NAIS. In 2023-24, the NDA Government allocated a budget of Rs 13,625 crore for the scheme, six times more than the Congress, the factsheet observes. Besides, until 2014, only 318 Farmer Producer Organizations had been registered by the UPA. The NDA Government introduced the Central Sector Scheme of 'Formation and Promotion of 10,000 Farmer Producer Organisations (FPOs)' in 2021, with an outlay of Rs 6,865 crore. As of August 2024, there are 8,875 FPOs in the country, a monumental jump from the UPA days, it states.

The factsheet also highlights the narrowing of the gap between urban and rural areas on consumption expenditure which reflects an improvement in living conditions. PM-KISAN introduced in 2018 provides Rs 6,000 annually to small and marginal farmers, with over 11 crore beneficiaries as of 2024. A total amount of Rs 3.46 lakh crore, through 18 instalments has been disbursed. More than 85 per cent of small and marginal farmers are beneficiaries under the scheme. The government's Aadhaar and DBT systems have streamlined the distribution process, minimising corruption and delays. Furthermore, over Rs 34 lakh crore has been transferred through Direct Benefit Transfer (DBT) to more than 1,167 crore beneficiaries, ensuring timely, transparent, and corruption-free disbursement of welfare funds. At the all-India level, the urban-rural gap in Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) has declined to 71 per cent in 2022-23 from 84 per cent in 2011-12 and it has further reduced to 70 per cent in 2023-24.

the indian mail EDITORIAL

Egg shortage cracks wallets, scrambles food businesses across California

A severe egg shortage is gripping California and the western United States as a deadly avian flu outbreak continues to decimate poultry flocks, driving egg prices to record highs and forcing food businesses to adapt their operations.

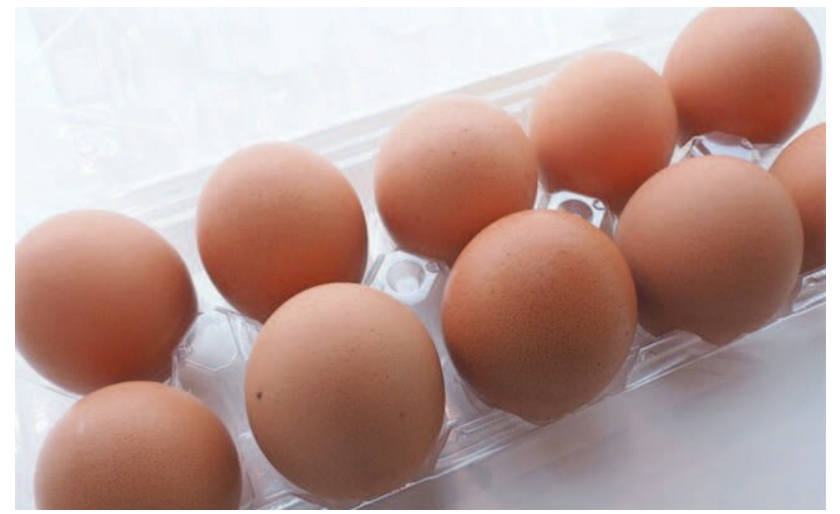
The price for cage-free large white eggs reached 8.65 US dollars per dozen in California when delivered wholesale, while organic brown eggs were sold at 9.39 dollars per dozen, said the US Department of Agriculture (USDA)'s Daily National Shell Egg Index Report on Friday. The report shows that egg prices in California have more than doubled since 2024.

Beth, a Bay Area resident who gave only her first name, shared her recent struggles with egg shopping. "I checked several grocery stores in my neighbourhood, but eggs were either sold out or too expensive," she said.

A trip to a Costco store proved fruitless, with empty shelves greeting her as well. Store staff advised her to return early in the morning to improve her chances. Small businesses are bearing the brunt of the shortage. At Victoria Pastry Company in San Francisco's North Beach neighbourhood, co-owner Merie Belluomini expressed deep concern about securing ingredients for their handmade baked goods. "Since late October, prices are high, high, high. Today I was wondering when this is going to stop. We are worried we won't get any eggs. What are we going to do?"

On Tuesday, Waffle House, a 24-hour restaurant chain, introduced a 50-cent surcharge per egg in response to the most severe egg shortage and dramatically increased costs in decades.

Restaurants are getting creative to manage costs without alienating



customers. In San Diego, Breakfast Republic owner Johan Engman told NBC San Diego they are adjusting portion sizes rather than compromising quality.

Some establishments are exploring plant-based alternatives, with Zareen Khan, owner of Zareen's restaurants in Palo Alto and Mountain View, California, considering increased use of tofu as an egg substitute. The crisis stems from an ongoing outbreak of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI), which, according to USDA data, led to the culling of over 20 million egg-laying hens in the last quarter of 2024 alone. The

virus has caused recurring waves of infection since 2022, severely disrupting egg production nationwide. Outbreaks of HPAI in commercial table egg layer flocks continue into February, with new cases reported in Ohio and the first case reported in Pennsylvania, according to the USDA's Weekly Egg Market Overview published on Friday.

Shell egg availability is still limited in many stores. To manage supply, grocers are restricting how many eggs customers can buy, stopping sales promotions and keeping prices high to control demand, according to the report.



Woman dies of heart attack while dancing at marriage in MP

A 23-year-old woman died of cardiac arrest while she was dancing during a marriage function at a resort in Madhya Pradesh's Vidisha district. The deceased has been identified as Parinita Jain, a resident of Indore, who had come to Vidisha to attend the marriage function of her cousin's sister. A video surfaced on social media showed that Parinita was dancing on stage during the 'haldi' function where more than 200 guests were present. A viral video showed while Parinita was dancing to a Bollywood song 'lehra ke balkha ke', she collapsed all of a sudden on stage on Saturday night. It came to light when the video of the incident surfaced on social media. Family members, who are doctors and were present at the function, tried to give her CPR (cardiopulmonary resuscitation), however, she didn't respond. She was immediately rushed to a private hospital where doctors declared her dead. Parinita, who was a MBA graduate was living with her parents in Indore's South Tukoganj. According to official information, one of her younger brothers also died of a heart attack at the age of 12. However, this is not the first such incident when people dancing to music tunes collapsed and died in Madhya Pradesh.



China allocates disaster relief funds to support landslide-hit Sichuan

China has allocated 80 million yuan (about 11.16 million US dollars) to support disaster relief and recovery efforts after a landslide in the southwestern Sichuan Province buried 10 houses and left over 30 people missing on Saturday. Some 50 million yuan, allocated by the National Development and Reform Commission from the central budget, will be used to restore infrastructure and public facilities in affected areas, according to authorities.

Also on Saturday, the Ministry of Finance, in conjunction with the Ministry of Emergency Management, allocated 30 million yuan from central natural disaster relief funds to support Sichuan in its rapid organisation of rescue efforts.

The funds will be spent on search and rescue work, risk assessment and emergency response measures, and investigating potential secondary-disaster hazards to minimise casualties, according to the ministry, Xinhua news agency reported.

The landslide occurred at about 11:50 am in Jinping Village, which is located in Junping County in the city of Yibin. Two people were rescued in the afternoon, and approximately 200 people have been evacuated to safety after the landslide buried 10 houses and left over 30 people missing.

The finance ministry has instructed Sichuan's provincial finance authorities to disburse the funds to affected areas promptly, and to maximise their effectiveness. Taking the latest developments of the situation into consideration, the Ministry of Natural Resources has upgraded an emergency geological disaster control response from Level III to Level II, and dispatched a team led by Vice Minister of Natural Resources Xu Dachun to guide on-site relief efforts.

Freed Israeli hostage unaware wife, daughters were murdered on Oct 7 until release

Eli Sharabi, one of three Israeli hostages released on Saturday, was unaware that his wife and two daughters had been killed in the October 7, 2023, Hamas attack until his release. When asked about his feelings upon being freed, Eli (52) expressed joy, saying, "I am very happy today. I am happy to be back to my family and friends, my wife and daughters." However, after spending 491 days in captivity, he did not know that his wife, Lianne, and daughters, Noya (16) and Yahel (13), had been murdered in their home in Kibbutz Be'eri. Adding to the heartbreak, he was also informed that his brother, Yossi Sharabi, had died in captivity, with his body still being held in Gaza. The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) shared a photo of Eli with his mother and sister on social media, stating, "In these moments, we remember his wife, Lianne, and two daughters,



Yahel and Noya, who were murdered by Hamas on October 7, along with his brother Yossi, who was kidnapped and murdered in captivity." Eli Sharabi was one of three hostages freed by Hamas as part of the latest prisoner exchange deal, which saw Israel release 183 Palestinian prisoners under an internationally brokered ceasefire agreement.

Chinese DeepSeek gives different answers about kimchi's origin : Seoul spy agency

The Chinese artificial intelligence (AI) model DeepSeek provided different answers to sensitive questions depending on the language -- for example, defining kimchi's origin as Korea when asked in Korean, but claiming it is Chinese when asked in Chinese, Seoul's spy agency said on Sunday. The National Intelligence Service (NIS) said it has also found the AI service provides its advertisers.





Afrikaner groups in South Africa reject Trump's resettlement offer

Johannesburg, Feb 12 (IANS) : Organisations representing Afrikaners in South Africa have said that they will not accept US President Donald Trump's offer of resettlement in the United States.

These Afrikaner organisations, including Solidarity and AfriForum, held a media briefing on Wednesday in Pretoria to respond to Trump's executive order issued on Friday, which accused South Africa of "seizing eth-

nic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property," and offered Afrikaners the opportunity to seek refugee status in America.

In a telephone interview on Sunday, Kallie Kriel, chief executive officer of the Afrikaner lobby group AfriForum, told Xinhua that representatives of Afrikaners would be traveling to the US to meet with Trump's administration later this month. When asked about the alleged "land confiscation," Kriel said the situation had occurred but was not done by the government.

"Land grabs are carried out by politically motivated people. The reason the government should be blamed is that they don't take this seriously or stop it," Kriel said.



UAE condemns Netanyahu's remarks on

Palestinian state in Saudi Arabia

Abu Dhabi, Feb 12 (IANS) : The United Arab Emirates (UAE) strongly condemned remarks made by Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who suggested that a Palestinian state could be established on Saudi Arabian territory.

The UAE's official news agency, WAM, reported that the country had expressed its "strong condemnation and denunciation" of Netanyahu's "unacceptable and provocative" remarks, calling them "a blatant violation of international law and the United Nations Charter."

UAE Minister of State Khalifa Bin Shaheen Almarar reiterated his country's unwavering solidarity with Saudi Arabia, emphasising its commitment to Saudi Arabia's security, stability, and sovereignty, Xinhua news agency reported.

Israeli army kills four Palestinians in Gaza: Health authorities

Gaza, Feb 12 (IANS) : Israeli troops killed four Palestinians, including an elderly woman, in two separate incidents in the north and south of the Gaza Strip, the Gaza-based health authorities said.

"Three Palestinians were killed by Israeli forces while returning to their homes near the Kuwait Roundabout, east of Gaza City. Their bodies were transferred to the Baptist Hospital," the health authorities said in a press statement.

In a separate incident, the health authorities reported that an elderly woman from the Mahna family was shot dead by Israeli forces east of the town of Al-Qarara, near Khan Younis in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday, Xinhua news agency reported. The killings follow the withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Netzarim Corridor -- a strip of land that bisected Gaza from north to south.



Trump 'determined' to implement 'revolutionary' Gaza takeover plan : Israeli PM

Jerusalem, Feb 12 (IANS) : Israel is discussing US President Donald Trump's "revolutionary, creative vision" on the Gaza Strip, the one that Trump is "very determined to implement," Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said.

Trump's plan "opens up many possibilities for us," Netanyahu told a cabinet meeting after his return from Washington to Israel, according to a statement released by Netanyahu's office.

"For an entire year, we have been told that the 'day after' (in Gaza) must involve the PLO (the Palestine Liberation Organization), the Palestinian Authority ... President Trump has presented a completely different vision, one that is much better for the State of Israel," Netanyahu said. According to the statement.



East African bloc approves new chair to monitor peace in South Sudan

Juba, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), an East African bloc, has endorsed the appointment of George Aggrey Owinow of Kenya as the new chair of the Reconstituted Joint Monitoring and Evaluation Commission (RJMEC), the South Sudan peace monitoring body said. Owinow, a retired major-general, was nominated by the Kenyan government and approved by IGAD to replace Charles Tai Gituai, who served in the same capacity since August 2020, the RJMEC said in a statement issued in Juba, the capital of South Sudan. "Owinow's arrival comes at an important juncture of the revitalized peace agreement where a range of critical pending tasks need to be implemented to pave the way for elections in December 2026," the statement said. "Owinow has had a distinguished military and diplomatic career spanning more than four decades, serving in different security and diplomatic missions in Africa," the JMEC said. He served as Kenya's High Commissioner to Uganda in 2020-2022, and as deputy force commander for the African Union Mission

in Somalia (AMISOM) in 2019-2020, Xinhua news agency reported.

The RJMEC has called for more efforts to secure the necessary financial resources to quickly implement the critical pending tasks, including the unification of forces to help meet the new extended deadline for the holding of elections in December 2026.

The RJMEC, in its latest Quarterly Report released on January 21, said the ruling unity government needs to demonstrate political will and commitment to overcoming the many challenges and laying the groundwork for lasting and sustainable peace in South Sudan.

Lebanese army launches retaliatory strikes in response to attacks from Syria

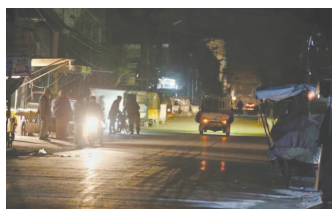
Beirut, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Lebanese army announced that it had launched retaliatory strikes in response to artillery fire from Syria.

In a statement posted on social media platform X, the army reported repeated shelling of Lebanese border regions on Wednesday, and confirmed its units continued to respond accordingly, Xinhua news agency reported.

Exceptional security measures are being implemented along the border, including the establishment of monitoring points, patrols, and temporary checkpoints, according to the statement.

The army emphasised that it is closely monitoring the situation and will take appropriate measures as needed.

On Saturday, the Lebanese army's Guidance Directorate announced that military units had been deployed along the northern and eastern borders to respond to fire from Syrian territory.



Nationwide power outage occurs in Sri Lanka

Colombo, Feb 12 (IANS) : Sri Lankan authorities have been working to restore power following a nationwide outage that occurred on Wednesday, the state-owned electricity producer and supplier, Ceylon Electricity Board (CEB), announced.

The power outage was caused by an emergency at the Panadura grid substation in the country's Western Province, according to the CEB.

The outage began around 11:30 a.m. local time and persisted for over three hours, with authorities working to restore full service, Xinhua news agency reported. CEB Chairman Tilak Siyambalapatiya assured the public that prompt action is being taken to restore power. Meanwhile, Secretary to the Ministry of Energy.



IMF chief sees 'strong progress' in Ethiopia's economic reforms

Addis Ababa, Feb 12 (IANS) : International Monetary Fund (IMF) Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva has praised Ethiopia's "strong progress" in its homegrown economic reform program.

Georgieva, who arrived Wednesday in Addis Ababa on a two-day official visit, met with Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, Minister of Finance Ahmed Shide, governor of the National Bank of Ethiopia Mamo Mihretu, and Minister of Planning and Development Fitsum Assefa, and other senior Ethiopian officials, Xinhua news agency reported.

"It was great to meet Ethiopian PM to discuss Ethiopia's impressive economic performance," she said in a post on social media. "I

saw here in Addis Ababa the signs of a vibrant private sector-led market economy, and I'm delighted the IMF is a partner for the government's homegrown reform agenda."

After meeting Georgieva, Abiy said Ethiopia's macroeconomic reform program, which is supported by one of the IMF's largest financing programs, is based on a homegrown vision and reform agenda that clearly articulates the country's growth and development aspirations.

Baltic States synchronise power grids with Europe

Vilnius, Feb 12 (IANS) : Lithuania, Latvia, and Estonia synchronised their power grids with Western Europe on Wednesday noon, media reported. The three Baltic countries disconnected from the BRELL energy network, which comprises Belarus, Russia, Estonia, Latvia, and

Lithuania, on Saturday morning and operated in isolated mode until Sunday noon. They are now linked to the synchronous grid of Continental Europe (UCTE) via the Lithuanian-Polish electricity connection, LitPol Link.

Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania are fully independent of Russia's and Belarus's electricity systems. They successfully integrated into the EU internal energy market by joining the European continental network via Poland.



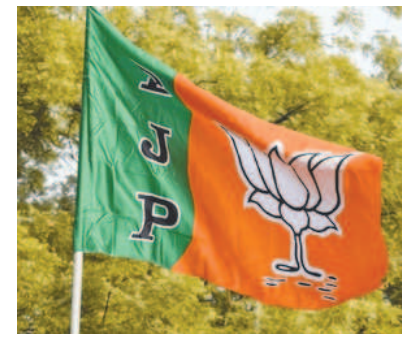
BJP reels out data on household savings, wealth & equity to refute Congress's claim

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) :The BJP has released a factsheet reeling out statistics on household savings and wealth creation in the country to refute the Congress's claim that under the Modi government real wages have declined and household savings and consumption have fallen while the debt burden and income inequalities are rising. The factsheet highlights that the increase in household debt is not due to rising indebtedness per borrower but due to a

greater number of borrowers, reflecting improved credit access. The sharp decline in net household savings and an increase in household liabilities is because Indians are investing in physical assets (real estate and automobiles). The increased number of education loans and consumption of experiences are also leading to the trend, it notes. Countering the Congress claim that income inequality is rising in the country, the factsheet points out that under the Modi government, income brackets have expanded, with an

8.1 per cent rise in the Rs 5-10 lakh bracket and a 3.8 per cent rise in the Rs 10-20 lakh bracket. The wealth generation has trickled down to rural India with 9 out of 10 rural entrepreneurs being the first-generation entrepreneurs. As more Indians are investing in real estate, India has seen a 21 per cent rise in the average price of an average residential unit in the top seven cities, it observes. The factsheet further states that for the first time since independence, average household spending on food was less than 50 per

cent of the overall monthly spending because of increased income. At the all-India level, the urban-rural gap in Monthly Per Capita Consumption Expenditure (MPCE) has declined to 70 per cent in 2023-24 from 84 per cent in 2011-12 showing the rural-urban divide is narrowing. Across social groups, MPCE increased across all categories, with the highest growth observed among Scheduled Tribes (ST) and Scheduled Castes (SC), reducing historical disparities, it added. "The Gini Coefficient, which



measures inequality in consumption expenditure, has declined across all major states. The bottom 5 per cent of the rural population witnessed a stunning 22 per cent growth in monthly consumption expenditure," the factsheet states. Most significantly, even the poorest 5 per cent of households now spend above the poverty line, with rural MPCE at Rs 1,677

against a poverty line estimate of Rs 1,622 as per an SBI Report (based on the Suresh Tendulkar methodology). Besides, with the implementation of GST, the price of almost all household goods has come down, leading to at least 4 per cent of total household savings as per a survey, the factsheet states. The BJP said that the Congress's claim that income inequality in India is worse than during the British Raj is based on a World Inequality Lab report riddled with methodological and data issues. The quality of life has significantly increased with 97 per cent of households having electricity access.

6 SLRs, 3 AK rifles, ammunition looted from Manipur Rifles post in Thoubal

Imphal, Feb 12 (IANS) :Unidentified armed cadres looted several arms and a large quantity of ammunition from an outpost of the Manipur Rifles in the state's Thoubal district, officials said on Wednesday. A police official said that a local armed group came in three vehicles and looted at least six SLRs, three AK rifles, and many different types of ammunition, along with 12 magazines, from the Manipur Rifles outpost at Kakmayai area of Thoubal on Wednesday night.

The armed cadres first overpowered the Manipur Rifles personnel and looted the arms and ammunition at gunpoint. Soon after the incident, additional security forces, led by senior police officials, rushed to the area and launched



Piyush Goyal slams states seeking Central funds on basis of tax contribution

Mumbai, Feb 12 (IANS) : Union Commerce Minister Piyush Goyal has come out strongly against the demand of some states seeking allocation of central funds in proportion to the taxes that they contribute to the Central pool. Criticising this approach as "petty thinking and unfortunate," the minister highlighted the Prime Minister's view that if the country has to prosper, the eight states of the Northeast and eastern Indian states of Bihar, West Bengal, Odisha and Jharkhand must develop as well. "There are some states like

Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Telangana which say they should get back the amount of taxes they have paid. There can't be more petty thinking than this. There cannot also be anything more unfortunate than this," Goyal lamented. The MP from Mumbai North constituency was speaking at the 'Rashtriya Ekatmata Yatra 2025', an event here organised by the Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad and the Students Experience in Inter-State Living initiative on Wednesday. In an oblique reference to the previous Uddhav Thackeray-led



Maha Vikas Aghadi government, the minister also said, "It is unfortunate that some leaders of the earlier government which was there for two-and-a-half years, used to calculate the tax paid by Mumbai and Maharashtra and demand that they should get back this amount in Central funds." However, there is no need to

worry now as the present BJP-led government in Maharashtra is very sensitive towards Northeast India, Goyal said. The Centre distributes funds to the states in accordance with the recommendations of the Finance Commission on the share of states in the total net proceeds of all taxes.



Farmers key to nation's development : Vice President Dhankhar

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : Highlighting farmers' role in the country's development, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar on Wednesday urged youth to take up the profession and assured them of positive economic results if they take advantage of new

technologies, cooperatives and government policies. Addressing the Akhil Mewar Region Jat Mahasabha in Chittorgarh, the Vice President said, "No matter what happens, no matter how many obstacles arise, no one can undermine the role of farmers in India's jour-

ney towards development. Today's governance system bows to the farmers." He said, "When the economic situation of farmers improves, the country's situation improves. After all, farmers are the providers.



Four Bangladeshi infiltrators arrested from Bengal's Nadia district

Kolkata, Feb 12 (IANS) : Four Bangladeshi infiltrators and their Indian agent were arrested from the Hanskhali area of West Bengal's Nadia district, which is pretty close to the international border. Sources from the district police said that these four Bangladeshi infiltrators, who had entered India a few

months back, were trying to go back again to their country late Wednesday night. On being tipped off by their sources, the cops of the local Hanskhali Police first arrested these four illegal Bangladeshi infiltrators. From them, they came to know of their Indian agent, who helped them in entering India a few months back and was assist-

ing them to go back to Bangladesh. Later, the cops also arrested that agent. The four arrested Bangladeshi infiltrators have been identified as Jasim Uddin, Baharul Sheikh, Quddus Sardar and Akalima Sardar. The Indian agent arrested in this connection has been identified as Rajib Biswas, a resident of the Bogula area under Hanskhali Police Station. All four were presented at a district court at Ranaghat in Nadia district on Sunday morning. A district police official said that in the face of interrogation, Biswas admitted to helping the four Bangladeshi infiltrators to enter India and assisting them to return to their native. Biswas had also admitted that he had been involved in the task of arranging illegal cross-overs to the Indian territory for the Bangladeshi citizens for quite some time.

Northeast is the heart of India: Kumaraswamy

Mysuru, Feb 12 (IANS) : Union Minister for Heavy Industries and Steel H.D. Kumaraswamy said on Wednesday that the Northeast is not just a part of the country but is the heart of India. Addressing a gathering at the SEIL - ABVP Rashtriya Ekatmata Yatra, the Union Minister emphasised the importance of national integration and cultural exchange, particularly between the Northeastern states and the rest

of India. He highlighted how initiatives like Student Experience in Interstate Living (SEIL) have played a crucial role in fostering national unity, breaking stereotypes, and building lifelong bonds among students. "The Northeast is not just a part of India but it is the heart of India. It is our collective responsibility to ensure that every citizen feels included and valued. The SEIL initiative, launched in 1966, has built bridges across regions by allowing students to ex-



perience the diversity of our great nation first-hand," he said. Describing the Northeast as a land of breathtaking landscapes, diverse cultures, and rich traditions, Kumaraswamy reminded the audience of its historical sig-

nificance. "It was in Moirang, Manipur, that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose and the Indian National Army hoisted the flag of independent India in 1944.

6.39 cr villagers gained digital literacy under DISHA scheme in 2017-24: Jitin Prasada

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : As many as 6.39 crore people were imparted digital literacy between 2017 and 2024 under the Pradhan Mantri Gramin Digital Saksharta Abhiyan (PMGDISHA), enabling them to send messages and attach files on mobile phones, according to Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Jitin Prasada. The beneficiaries under the DISHA scheme also included field level government functionaries namely Anganwadi and ASHA workers and authorised ration dealers, said Prasada in a recent reply in Rajya Sabha.

Highlighting the outcomes of the scheme, he said that the maximum number of 1.45 crore people in Uttar Pradesh were imparted digital literacy. It was followed by 74.12 lakh beneficiaries in Bihar. Maharashtra with 53.23 lakh beneficiaries.



SEBI bans LS Industries, promoters for stock manipulation

Mumbai, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI) on Wednesday took strict action against LS Industries Limited, its promoter Profound Finance, and four other entities, barring them from the securities market for manipulating stock prices. The probe uncovered suspicious trading patterns, misleading disclosures, and questionable financial transactions, including money transfers to a non-resident Indian (NRI). During the investigation, the regulator observed wild fluctuations in the company's share price. Between July 23, 2024, and September 2024, the stock price witnessed a staggering

1,089 per cent increase from Rs 22.5 to Rs 267.5 apiece. However, by November 2024, the price had crashed to Rs 42.39. In December 2024, it rebounded to Rs 136.87, only to settle at Rs 67.95 in February 2025. SEBI identified a group of traders behind this manipulation, including Multiplier Share & Stock Advisors, Setu Securities, Paresh Dhirajlal Shah, and Ruchira Goyal. These traders allegedly placed large buy orders to artificially inflate prices and later dumped shares, causing the stock to hit lower circuits and crash in value. The investigation also found that LS Industries made several misleading announcements to lure investors. These included plans to enter ar-



tificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, hiring foreign directors, launching a Dubai subsidiary, and acquiring Robochef India Private Limited.

SEBI discovered that directors of Robochef were actively trading in LS Industries' shares when the stock price was at its peak. In its detailed order, SEBI Whole Time Member Ashwani Bhatia stated that the investigation must be completed by May 15, 2025. "At the same time, I deem it fit to sound a note of caution for the in-

vestors. It is noted that the investors at times act in a manner bereft of any caution or rationale," Bhatia said in the order. He further added that the investors in blind pursuit of profit through investment in a company without any fundamentals are like children following the proverbial pied-piper of Hamelin.

Mutual fund SIP inflows cross Rs 26,000 crore mark for 2nd month in a row

Mumbai, Feb 12 (IANS) : Monthly systematic investment plan (SIP) contributions stayed above the Rs 26,000 crore mark for the second straight month, as the month of January clocked Rs 26,400 crore SIP investments, compared to Rs 26,459 crore in December, the Association of Mutual Funds in India (AMFI) said on Wednesday. Despite ongoing volatility in the stock market, assets under

management (AUM) for all open-ended schemes grew marginally by 0.49 per cent to reach Rs 66.98 lakh crore from Rs 66.66 lakh crore in the previous month.

The number of mutual fund folios also increased, reaching 22.91 crore in January, up from 22.50 crore in December, the report added.



Signature Global's expenses up by 6.5 pc in Q3, liabilities jump 17 pc as stock drops

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : Real estate developer Signature Global has reported an increase in its total expenses to Rs 835.89 crore during the third quarter of the financial year 2025 (Q3 FY25), up by 6.54 per cent from Rs 784.60 crore in Q2.

The company's expenses rose by nearly 179 per cent from Rs 299.70 crore in the year-ago period (Q3 FY24). According to its stock exchange filing, the jump in total expenses was due to a higher cost associated with project execution and completion. At the same time, the company's total liabilities saw a steep rise to Rs 11,525.72 crore in Q3, compared to Rs 9,852 crore in Q2 and Rs 7,181 crore in the year-ago period. This was a 16.99 per cent increase from Q2 to Q3, while the total liabilities surged by 60.50 per cent from the year-ago period.



Delhi 6th, Mumbai 7th on Prime Global Cities Index for Q4 2024: Report

Mumbai, Feb 12 (IANS) : New Delhi has been ranked sixth and Mumbai seventh on the 'Prime Global Cities Index Q4 2024', while Bengaluru has jumped from the 27th rank in Q4 2023 to the 13th spot on the list, a report said on Wednesday.

The three Indian cities have recorded a robust increase in their average annual prices of prime residential or luxury homes in the last quarter of the year.

Firms in 10 major manufacturing sectors to invest \$81.8 billion in 2025

Seoul, Feb 12 (IANS): South Korean companies in 10 key manufacturing sectors, including the semiconductor industry, plan to invest a combined 119 trillion won (\$81.8 billion) this year to foster sustainable growth, the industry ministry here said on Wednesday. The figure marks a 4 percent increase from the 114 trillion-won investment made in those sectors last year,

according to the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Energy, reports Yonhap news agency.

The sectors include automobile, display, rechargeable battery, steel, biology, petrochemical, shipbuilding, machinery and robotics, and textile.

The semiconductor industry is expected to increase investment in advanced memory business to respond to robust chip demand sparked by the growth of the artificial intelligence (AI) technology.

The automotive industry plans to expand investment in electric vehicle (EV) transition.

The secondary battery and steel industries, however, will likely decrease their investment due to

sluggish demand and oversupply issues. Detailed plans for the envisioned investments were not disclosed to protect the companies' trade secrets.

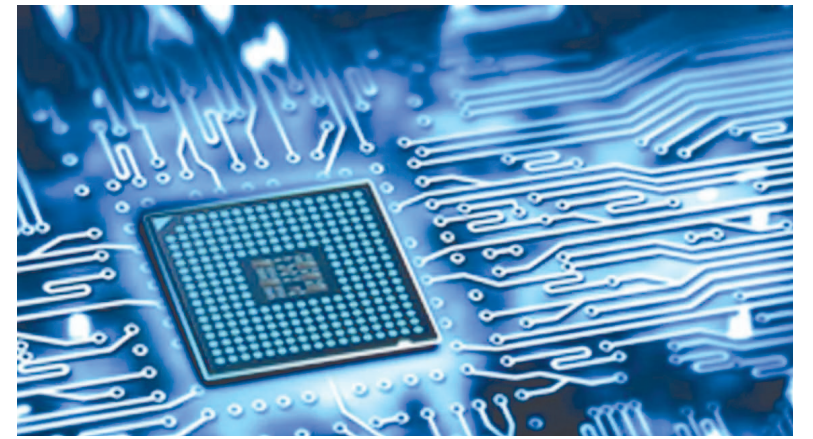
"It is important to make strategic overseas investments amid the intensifying global trade war, but the companies also have to value domestic investment to create jobs and resolve supply chain uncertainties," Industry Minister Ahn Duk-geun said.

Ahn called on the companies to pay particular attention to investment in AI as the fast-evolving technology could bring innovations across various industries. Meanwhile, from planned levies on steel and aluminium imports to threats of duties on cars and chips,

U.S. President Donald Trump's tariff-based policy approach is sending South Korea scrambling to navigate through it and keep the bilateral partnership steady and sturdy.

After slapping a 10 per cent tariff on Chinese imports, Trump ap-

peared to be shifting his attention to South Korea and other trading partners with plans to reinstate a 25-per cent tariff on steel imports and raise the tariff rate on aluminium imports to 25 per cent from 10 per cent -- both starting March 12.



Black Box reports highest-ever PAT at Rs 56 crore in Q3, up 37 pc YoY

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS): Black Box Limited, Essar's technology arm, on Wednesday announced its results for third quarter (Q3) with highest-ever profit after tax (PAT) at Rs 56 crore which rose by 37 per cent year-on-year (YoY).

For 9M FY25, the PAT increased to Rs 144 crore with a growth of 49 per cent YoY, according to its stock exchange filing. PAT margins improved by 120 bps YoY and stood at 3.7 per cent in Q3 whereas for 9M FY25, PAT margins rose by 130 bps YoY at 3.3 per cent. In its filing, the company said that the strong operating performance has resulted in better profitability, despite higher exceptional items. Revenue for Q3 stood at Rs 1,502 crore as compared to Rs 1,655 crore in the year-ago period (Q3 FY24). For 9M FY25, revenue stood at Rs 4,422 crore compared to Rs 4,801 crore in same period last fiscal.

Revenue was predominantly affected due to subdued order book as a result of delayed decision making with some of our large customers coupled with company's strategy to exit the tail customers. However, the company's pipeline for digital infrastructure, across industry verticals including hyperscalers, continues to grow, positioning Black Box for sustained growth and market leadership.



Patanjali Foods' Q3 expenses surge 11.2 pc, FMCG segment's revenue drops 18.4 pc

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : Swami Ramdev's Patanjali Foods has reported a significant increase in its total expenses for the third quarter of the financial year 2024-25, which rose by nearly 11.2 per cent to Rs 8,653 crore in Q3, compared to Rs 7,781.64 crore in Q2 FY25.

This increase was mainly driven by the higher costs of materials consumed, according to its stock exchange filing.

The fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) segment saw a decline of 18.4 per cent, with revenue dropping to Rs 2,038 crore from Rs 2,499 crore in the same quarter last year (Q3 FY24).

The shares of Patanjali Foods dropped by 2 per cent to Rs 1,817.80 on the BSE in intra-day trade on Wednesday.

However, the company's net profit jumped by 71 per cent in the quarter ended on December 31, 2024. For the period from October to December 2024, Patanjali Foods recorded a net profit of Rs 370 crore, up from Rs 217 crore in the same quarter last year.

Along with this, the company's revenue from operations rose by 15 per cent to Rs 9,103 crore as compared to Rs 7,911 crore in the same quarter of the previous fiscal. A major contributor to the company's revenue was its edible oils business, which saw a 23 per

cent increase in sales at Rs 6,717 crore, compared to Rs 5,483 crore last fiscal. Over the past year, the company has delivered a 19 per cent return to its investors, and its stock price has risen 2.49 per cent year-to-date (YTD). The company's market capitalisation stands at Rs 67,088.51 crore, and its shares reached a 52-week high of Rs 2,030 in September 2024. Additionally, the company's board of directors has also approved the issuance of 4,25,478 Employee Stock Options (ESO) under the PFL Employee Stock Option Plan 2023. These options will be granted to eligible employees as part of the company's efforts to reward and retain talent.



Science should prevail over superstition : Pinarayi Vijayan

Thrissur, Feb 12 (IANS) : Kerala Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan on Wednesday questioned whether science congresses are now attended by genuine scientists or individuals disguised as sectarian revivalists while urging that science should prevail over superstitions. While inaugurating the 37th Kerala Science Congress at the Kerala Agricultural University, the Chief Minister highlighted that over the past three and a half decades, the Kerala Science Congress has become a significant platform contributing to the state's scientific and technological progress. He emphasised that beyond its contributions to Kerala's development, the Congress has also gained attention for hosting discussions that serve as models for the entire nation.



Delhi has broken free from shackles of misgovernance : TN BJP

Chennai, Feb 12 (IANS) : Tamil Nadu BJP spokesperson and senior party leader, ANS Prasad, said that the people of Delhi have broken free from the shackles of misgovernance, rejecting the anarchic rule of Arvind Kejriwal's administration, which he likened to the reign of Muhammad bin Tughlaq. Instead, Prasad said, the people of Delhi have chosen a government committed to good governance, inspired by the progress achieved in states governed by the "double-engine" model.

Bihar Industry Dept & SIDBI sign agreement to provide financial aid to startups

Patnam, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Bihar Industry Department has entered into an agreement with the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI) to boost financial support for startups in the state. As part of this agreement, a corpus fund of Rs 150 crore will be established by June 2025 to provide financial assistance to young entrepreneurs. This initiative aims to foster innovation and entrepreneurship by making loans more accessible to startups and small businesses in Bihar. Out of this Rs 150 crore fund, Rs 50 crore will be contrib-

uted by the Bihar government, while SIDBI will arrange Rs 100 crore independently. According to an official of the Industry Department of Bihar, financial assistance will be provided in the form of loans to entrepreneurs who have completed up to 80 per cent of their work. They will be eligible for Rs 6 lakh in financial assistance. Addressing the funding challenges, the official said that many young entrepreneurs in Bihar struggle to secure funds and remain dependent on metro-based investors. This initiative aims to reduce reliance on external investors and provide direct support. At present, around 900 startups are currently operating in the state. Among them, 70 per cent of startups have commenced operations, while 30 per cent remain at the



ideation stage. As per the sector-wise distribution, 11 per cent of startups are operational in agri-services and 11 per cent each in e-commerce and healthcare, 9 per cent in handicrafts. Apart from that Electric Vehicles (EVs) and others also have participation in it.

Brazilian woman, who ingested cocaine valued at Rs 13 core, nabbed

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Customs Department on Wednesday arrested a Brazilian woman with drugs valued at Rs 13 crore at the Indira Gandhi International (IGI) Airport. The woman was caught red-handed with 866 grams of cocaine valued at Rs 12.999 crore in the international market. The woman hid the contraband in her stomach by ingesting about 98 cocaine capsules. The 26-year-old Brazilian reached Delhi from Sao Paulo via Paris and was subsequently nabbed and booked under Sections 21, 23, and 29 of the Narcotic Drug and Psychotropic Substances Act. During the investigation, the accused also confessed to swallowing drug capsules.



Bengal govt announces formation of synergy committee for easy clearance of investment proposals

Kolkata, Feb 12 (IANS) : The West Bengal government, on Wednesday, announced the formation of a state-level investment synergy committee (SLISC) as a single window for clearance of investment proposals for the state. According to a notification issued from the office of Chief Secretary Manoj Pant on Saturday, this committee has been formed to facilitate growth and enhance the "ease of doing business" in the state and expedite the process of obtaining necessary approvals and clearances for setting up and op-

erating industrial projects and other investments. As per the notification, besides the said state-level synergy committee, there will also be a district-level investment synergy committee in each district. "The initiative is to provide a streamlined, single-window interface for approvals, enabling entrepreneurs and investors to obtain required clearances without unnecessary delays," the notification read. The objective is also, the notification claimed, to provide a single-point interface and provide

a centralised platform for all investment proposals and business-related services. This will also facilitate timely approvals, eliminate bottlenecks, and support investments across sectors besides ensuring real-time monitoring, grievance redressal and data integration, the state government has claimed in the notification. "The committee will convene fortnightly to review and address pending applications. Entrepreneurs/investors may present their projects, if so representing the meetings, for real-time resolution of queries and clarifications," the notification read. The secretariat assistance to the committee will be provided by the state industry, commerce & enterprises department. "This State Level Investment Synergy Committee would further strengthen West Bengal's position as a leading investment destination and provide unmatched support to the investors," the notification read. Earlier this week, the two-day Bengal Global Business Summit (GBS)-2025 was organised, the annual event to showcase the state as an investment destination. Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee claimed that this time the event has attracted total investment proposals worth Rs 4,40 lakh crore for West Bengal.

Bengaluru Metro revises ticket prices, new fares range from Rs 10 to Rs 90

Bengaluru, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Bengaluru Metro Railway Corporation Ltd (BMRCL) on Wednesday announced a revision of Metro ticket prices, starting from Rs 10 for travel of 2 km up to Rs 90 for travel

till 30 km. The revised prices will be effective from Sunday. It has also decided to retain the 5 per cent discount on smart cards. The official statement by the BMRCL stated that the new ticket prices are fixed at Rs 10 for 0 to 2 km dis-

tance, Rs 20 for 2 to 4 km, Rs 30 for 4 to 6 km, Rs 40 for 6 to 8 km, Rs 50 for 8 to 10 km, Rs 60 for 10 to 15 km, Rs 70 for 15 to 20 km, Rs 80 for 20 to 25 km and Rs 90 for 25 to 30 km. For above 30 km, the ticket price will remain Rs 90.



Rajasthan Dy CM takes holy dip at Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj

Jaipur, Feb 12 (IANS) : Rajasthan Deputy Chief Minister Diya Kumari took a holy dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj on Wednesday and offered prayers to Ganga with full rituals.

She expressed her gratitude and divine connection with the sacred event, saying: "Being present at the holy Maha Kumbh in Prayagraj is a blessing in itself. The peace and spiritual satisfaction I have received from Maa Ganga's grace is beyond words."

Bathing in the sacred Sangam is a moment of divine connection, and I have prayed for the happiness, prosperity, health, and well-being of all the residents of Rajasthan."

Tripura will be gateway of south-east Asian nations after 'Maitri Setu' opening: CM Saha

Agartala, Feb 12 (IANS) : Tripura Chief Minister Manik Saha asserted on Wednesday that once the newly built 'Maitri Setu' across the Feni river connecting India and Bangladesh becomes operational, the state will be the gateway for the northeastern states as well as south-east Asian countries. Speaking on the second day of the two-day 'Business Conclave', the Chief Minister said that the vital 'Maitri Setu' approaching Bangladesh's Chittagong sea port is ready to operationalise and it would

make Tripura a gateway for northeastern states as well as south-east Asian countries. Prime Minister Narendra Modi and his former Bangladesh counterpart Sheikh Hasina virtually inaugurated the 'Maitri Setu' on March 9, 2021. The around 1.9 km-long double-lane 'Maitri Setu', built at the Indian expenditure of Rs 129 crore, connects Sabroom in southern Tripura with Chittagong seaport in Bangladesh via Ramgarh. Saha said that besides the 'Maitri Setu', Agartala-Akhaura railway project is almost ready to connect the northeastern states with the

rest of the country via Bangladesh and three modern integrated checkposts were set up along the Bangladesh border to boost trade and business, and facilitate smooth cross border movement. Noting that the Prime Minister has given a 'HIRA' (Highways, Internet, Railways and Airways) model to Tripura, the Chief Minister said that currently,



MP's cultural heritage will be on display at GIS-2025: CM Mohan Yadav

Bhopal, Feb 12 (IANS) : Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday said the upcoming Global Investors Summit in Bhopal will create an ample opportunity to establish Madhya Pradesh's cultural and industrial potential, besides providing a platform for investment and business opportunities.



African leaders call for immediate ceasefire in Congo

Dar Es Salaam, Feb 12 (IANS): African leaders called for an "immediate ceasefire" in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and reaffirmed their full support for seeking a lasting solution to the ongoing conflict. A "historic summit," jointly convened by the East African Community (EAC) and the Southern African Development Community (SADC), two major regional blocs, was held on Wednesday in the Tanzanian port city of Dar es Salaam to address the escalating crisis in eastern DRC, Xinhua news agency reported. In a final communique, regional leaders

called for an "immediate ceasefire" and the restoration of supply lines in the DRC, as the March 23 Movement (M23) has reportedly been advancing toward Bukavu, the capital of South Kivu province, after establishing its so-called administration in Goma, the capital of North Kivu province and a key regional hub. Recognising the urgency of the situation, leaders attending the summit directed the EAC-SADC Chiefs of Defence Forces to meet within five days to devise technical measures for enforcing an immediate and unconditional ceasefire. The leaders urged the reopening of

traffic routes to restore humanitarian supply lines, particularly the road linking Goma and Bukavu, which has been cut off by the M23 rebellion's advances, and the Goma International Airport, which was severely vandalised during the hostilities. Political and diplomatic engagement is the most sustainable solution to the conflict in eastern DRC, the communique stated, as regional leaders expressed support for resuming direct negotiations with all state and non-state parties, including the M23, under existing regional mediation frameworks.



Kuwait rejects displacing Palestinians from Gaza

Kuwait City, Feb 12 (IANS): Kuwaiti Foreign Minister Abdullah Al-Yahya has affirmed the country's rejection of displacing Palestinians from Gaza, stressing the importance of adhering to the two-state solution. Al-Yahya told media on the sidelines of a gathering of diplomatic accredited missions in Kuwait that "I do not see the issue of displacement as negotiable". "The Palestinian people alone decide their fate, and we remain firm in this stance both at the Gulf and Arab levels," he said. An extraordinary Arab

summit will be held in Cairo in late February or early March to oppose "Gaza displacement", he noted, adding that the exact date of the summit will be determined in coordination with Arab states, Xinhua news agency reported. On Wednesday, the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry issued a statement on social media platform X, voicing support for the Palestinians' just cause and legitimate right to establish an independent Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital, based on the 1967 borders.



200 people relocated after fatal landslide in China's Sichuan

Chengdu, Feb 12 (IANS): Approximately 200 people have been evacuated to safety after a landslide buried 10 houses and left over 30 people missing in southwest China's Sichuan Province on Wednesday. The landslide occurred at 11:50 am in Jinping Village, which is located in Junlian County of the city of Yibin, according to local authorities. A Level I geological disaster emergency response, the highest level, was initiated in the province at 3:30 pm on Saturday. Emergency rescue, fire, public security, transportation, medical, telecommunications, electricity.

Hamas must release all hostages now : US Secretary of State

Washington, Feb 12 (IANS): Reiterating US President Donald Trump's firm stance, US Secretary of State Marco Rubio called for the immediate release of all Israeli hostages taken by Hamas, following the return of three captives. Taking to X, Rubio posted, "After 490 harrowing days in captivity, Eli, Or, and Ohad are finally home in Israel. President of the United States (POTUS) was clear -- Hamas must release all hostages now!" The statement came after Hamas released three Israeli hostages on Wednesday. The freed captives, kidnapped during the Hamas-led attack on southern Israel on October 7, 2023,

were identified as Ohad Ben Ami, 56, a dual Israeli-German citizen; Eli Sharabi, 52; and Or Levy, 34. According to the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), the hostages were transferred from central Gaza to the IDF and the Israel Security Agency before crossing into Israel. Earlier, three vehicles from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) arrived at the designated handover site in Deir al-Balah, central Gaza. The visibly frail and exhausted hostages stepped onto a platform to speak before being handed over by Hamas' military wing, Al-Qassam Brigades, to the ICRC.



Heavy snow continues across Japan

Tokyo, Feb 12 (IANS): A powerful cold air mass and winter pressure patterns have brought continuous snowfall to coastal and mountainous areas along the Sea of Japan, significantly increasing snow accumulation that caused widespread disruptions to people's lives. While the peak of heavy snowfall has passed in western Japan and the Kantō-Koshin region, intermittent snow is expected to continue in northern and eastern Japan, particularly on the Sea of Japan side, Xinhua news agency reported on Wednesday. As of noon, six-hour snowfall totaled 16 cm in Minakami Town, Gunma Prefecture, and 15 cm in Hinoemata Village, Fukushima Prefecture, according to national broadcaster NHK. Forecasts predict additional snowfall by the morning of Monday, with strong winds and high waves, particularly in northern and eastern Japan.



Big rallies across South Korea to seek, oppose Yoon's ouster

Seoul, Feb 12 (IANS): South Korean protesters from opposite ends of the political spectrum braved frigid conditions to gather for massive rallies across the nation on Wednesday with one

group calling for impeached President Yoon Suk Yeol's immediate resignation and the other group opposing his ouster. A group of protesters led by conservative activist pastor Jeon Kwang-hoon gathered

in the Gwanghwamun area of central Seoul. They demanded the release of Yoon, currently in detention on insurrection charges over his short-lived declaration of martial law on December 3.



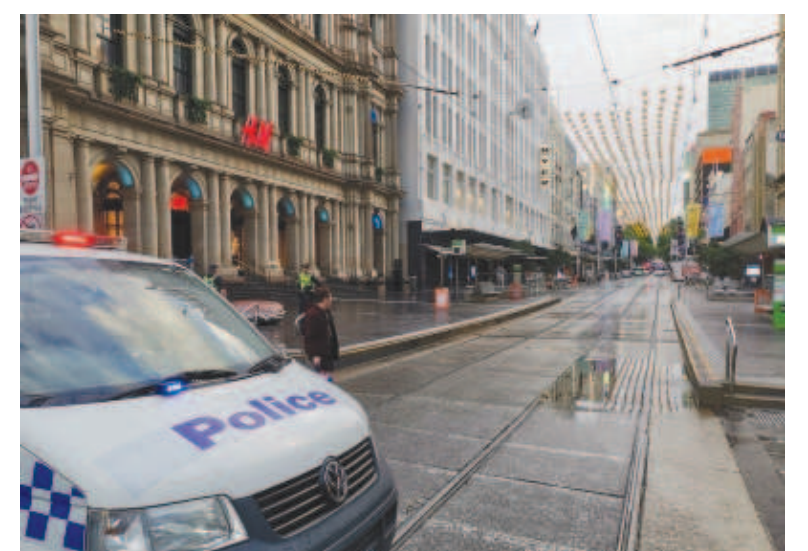
Police probe into online users suspected of plotting violence at Constitutional Court

Seoul, Feb 12 (IANS): Police have launched an investigation into online community users suspected of preparing mob violence at the Constitutional Court amid suspended President Yoon Suk Yeol's ongoing impeachment trial, authorities said on Wednesday. The Seoul Yeongdeungpo Police Station said it is tracking down the users who uploaded several posts discussing their plans for an alleged riot at the Constitutional Court on the online community DC Inside, reports Yonhap news agency.

Police investigating after teenager with gunshot wound arrives at Sydney hospital

Sydney, Feb 12 (IANS): Sydney police have launched an investigation after a teenager arrived at a hospital with a gunshot wound. Police in Australia's state of New South Wales (NSW) said on Wednesday that officers were called to a hospital in Bankstown, about 18 km southwest of central Sydney, on Wednesday night when the 17-year-old presented to the emergency department with a gunshot wound to his right leg. The 17-year-old male, whose injuries were not considered life-threatening, was accompanied by an 18-year-old man. Both men refused to assist the officers with inquiries, NSW Police said. Police attempted to arrest the 18-year-old for concealing an offence when he allegedly assaulted two officers, injuring one. He was taken to a nearby police station where he allegedly "made a number of threats towards officers." The 18-year-old was charged with six offences, including assaulting a police officer, hindering or resisting arrest and three counts of intimidating a police officer. Police seized a vehicle that they believe was used by the males to attend the hospital and com-

menced an investigation into the shooting, Xinhua news agency reported. Anyone with information about the incident has been urged to contact police. Earlier this week, Police in South Australia (SA) said that it has established a new task force to combat violent crimes committed by youth gangs. SA Police announced the new Youth and Street Gangs Task Force on Wednesday as part of a boost to police resources allocated to investigating youth crime, domestic and family violence, cybercrime and retail theft. Commissioner Grant Stevens said that the new task force would respond to crimes as well as undertake preventive and rehabilitative work. "Youth crime is not just about



the criminality, but the recruitment of younger members, so the task force provides an opportunity to break this cycle," he said in a statement. "This permanent task force will disrupt and reduce the criminal activities of a target group of offenders, particularly focusing on crimes of violence that pose a significant risk to community safety."

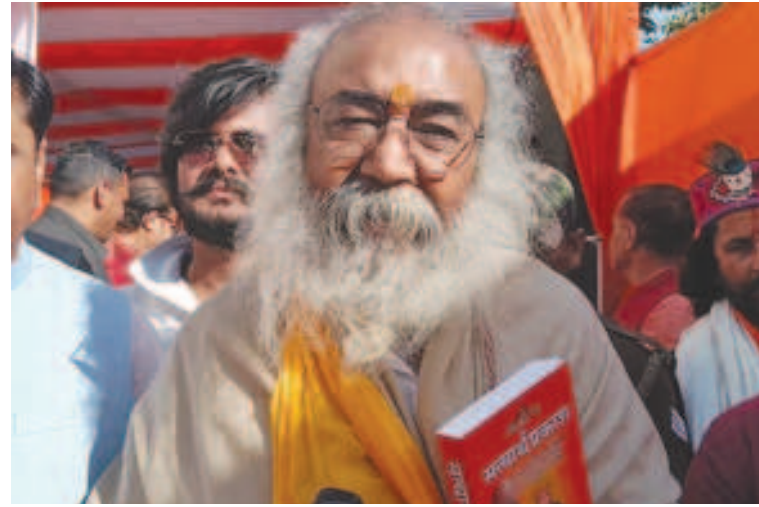
The task force has been formed by merging two existing police operations and adding 13 police officers to its ranks. SA Police data released earlier in January revealed that the number of crimes committed by offenders aged 10-17 rose by 140 per cent from 6,938 in 2018-19 to 16,710 in 2023-24.

India will become a Vishwa Guru following path of Vivekananda, Dayanand Saraswati: Acharya Pramod Krishnam

Kurukshetra, Feb 12 (IANS) : Former Congress leader and spiritual guru Acharya Pramod Krishnam said on Wednesday that India will become a Vishwa Guru by following the path of Swami Vivekananda and Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati.

Acharya Krishnam, Peethadheswar of Kalki Dham, Sambhal, was in Haryana's Kurukshetra on the occasion of Chaturveda Parayan Mahayagna organised on the occasion of the second birth centenary celebration of Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati. "The philosophy, thinking of the penance he did is relevant even in today's era. If India has to be made a Vishwa Guru, then India can become a Vishwa Guru by following the path of Swami Vivekananda and Maharshi Dayanand Saraswati," he stated on the occasion.

"I think India's successful Prime Minister Narendra Modi ji respects Maharshi Dayanand ji for his dedication towards his ideals. I think the Mahayagna organised here on this holy land of Kurukshetra will give a new direction to the country," he added. On the Maha Kumbh underway in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj, Acharya Krishnam said, "Maha Kumbh is for everyone, be it heroines and heroes. I think Sanatan is for everyone and everyone belongs to Sanatan. Sanatan includes everyone, it does not discriminate." "I don't think we will decide who the real Shankaracharya is and who is fake. Only God can decide this. Being a Sanyasi and a sadhu is a matter of detachment. This is not a matter of any exam. This is a matter of self-realisation,



a matter of self-reflection. When a person has a spiritual realisation, then the paths of spirituality open up," he opined. Acharya Krishnam also responded to the Sambhal mosque controversy. He observed that the controversy happened in Sambhal because 500

years ago temples were demolished there. "It is recorded in the pages of history that Muhammad Ghori demolished temples. Mahmud Ghazni demolished temples. Aurangzeb demolished temples," he said.



Bodies of 18 SAMIDRC soldiers killed in DR Congo conflict transported to Uganda for autopsy

Kampala, Feb 12 (IANS) : The bodies of 18 soldiers from other African countries killed in the conflict in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) were transported to Uganda for post-mortem examinations, an official said. The remains of the deceased soldiers, who were part of the Southern African Development Community Mission in the DRC (SAMIDRC), were transported overland and taken to the Mulago National Referral Hospital mortuary in Kampala for autopsy, Henry Okello Oryem, Uganda's minister of state for foreign affairs in charge of international cooperation, told Xinhua by telephone. Oryem said the remains of the 13 slain South African, three Malawian and two Tanzanian troops will be processed and repatriated to their respective countries, Xinhua news agency reported.



Indian origin man gets up to 25 years in drunk driving crash killing 2 teens

New York, Feb 12 (IANS) : An Indian-descent construction executive has been given a sentence of up to 25 years for driving at 150 kmph while drunk and high on cocaine resulting in a crash that killed two teen tennis players.

Amandeep Singh was sentenced on Wednesday to a maximum prison time of 25 years with a minimum of eight years and four months in Mineola on Long Island as nine family and friends of the victim angrily denounced him in court.

"Your anger towards me is fully understood and totally justified," a penitent Singh told them before he was sentenced. "This was all my fault. Losing a child is the greatest grief.

UN human rights chief urges action to prevent further conflict in Congo

Geneva, Feb 12 (IANS) : The United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk on Wednesday warned that the escalating violence in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) could lead to a further deterioration of the situation if no action is taken.

"I am deeply disturbed to see the violence escalate once again," Turk said at a special session of the UN Human Rights Council.

He cautioned that if the current situation continues unchecked, "the worst may be yet to come," with consequences not only for the people of the eastern DRC, but also for the wider region.

"The risk of violence escalating throughout the sub-region has never been higher," Turk said, urging all parties with influence, including state and non-state actors, to intensify efforts to prevent further conflict and support peace processes.



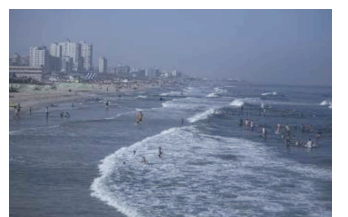
No one has power to displace Palestinians: Turkish President

Istanbul, Feb 12 (IANS) : Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said that no one has the power to displace Palestinians from their homeland. "No one has the power to expel Gazans from their ancient and eternal homeland. Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem all belong to the Palestinians," Erdogan told a press conference on Wednesday at Ataturk Airport before departing for a three-nation Asia tour. Despite the ceasefire agreement between Israel and Hamas, "we see that the Israeli government has more sinister and inhuman plans in mind," Erdogan said.

"Under the pressure of the Zionist lobby, the new US administration's suggestions regarding Gaza have no merit or value for us," he added. During a joint press conference in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday, US President Donald

Trump said the United States plans to "take control of the Gaza Strip," move Palestinians to neighbouring countries, and redevelop the coastal enclave, Xinhua news agency reported.

"The Gaza Strip would be turned over to the United States by Israel at the conclusion of fighting," Trump wrote, insisting that no US soldiers would be needed to gain control of the region. "The Palestinians, people like Chuck Schumer, would have already been resettled in far safer and more beautiful communities.



New initiatives to boost water security in the Mediterranean

Valletta, Feb 12 (IANS) : The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has launched a strategy to ensure a stable water supply for households, farmers and local businesses in the region, Malta's Environment Ministry has said in a statement.

ICC condemns Trump's sanctions order

The Hague, Feb 12 (IANS) : The International Criminal Court (ICC) on Wednesday condemned US President Donald Trump's decision to impose sanctions on the international body.

"The ICC condemns the issuance by the US of an executive order seeking to impose sanctions on its officials and harm its independent and im-

partial judicial work," said The Hague-based court in a statement. The Netherlands, the ICC's host country, and the European Union have both voiced regret.

Dutch Foreign Minister Caspar Veldkamp wrote on social platform X that "the Netherlands regrets the executive order imposing sanctions on the ICC," as the court's work is "essential in the fight against impunity."

"Sanctioning the ICC threatens the court's independence and undermines the international criminal justice system as a whole," European Council President Antonio Costa wrote on X.

The European Commission, for its part, stressed the ICC's "key importance in upholding international criminal justice and the fight against impunity."

"The EU will be monitoring the

implications of the executive order and will assess possible further steps," said a commission spokesman, Xinhua news agency reported. The US sanctions consist of financial penalties and visa restrictions for people who help the ICC with the investigation into American citizens and US allies. Trump warned of "tangible and significant consequences" for those involved.



South Africa expresses concern over US aid cut amid land policy dispute

Johannesburg, Feb 12 (IANS) : South Africa expressed concern over a US executive order to cut financial assistance to the country, the Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) said. US President Donald Trump signed an executive order on Wednesday to cut financial assistance to South Africa, citing disapproval of its land policy and accusing the country of "seizing ethnic minority Afrikaners' agricultural property."

New York live poultry markets shut down for five days to rein in bird flu

New York, Feb 12 (IANS) : New York Governor Kathy Hochul announced that live poultry markets in New York City, and Westchester, Suffolk, and Nassau counties would be shut down for five days to combat the spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI).

Those markets have been ordered to sell down all inventory and complete cleaning and disinfection procedures.

Seven HPAI cases were detected in markets in Queens, The Bronx, and Brooklyn boroughs during routine surveillance since January 31, according to a release by the New York State government.

"While there is no immediate threat to public health and no known cases of HPAI in humans in New York State, we support the

Department of Agriculture and Markets' latest proactive measures to prevent the spread of the disease between animals and humans by temporarily closing live



bird markets in New York City and surrounding counties," said New York State Health Commissioner James McDonald. Those who have regular contact with livestock.



Afghanistan seizes 731 kg of illicit drugs, arrests 25 smugglers

Kabul, Feb 12 (IANS) : Afghanistan's security forces have seized 731 kg of illicit drugs and arrested 25 drug smugglers in the eastern Nangarhar province over the past week, the country's Ministry of Interior Affairs said in a statement on Wednesday. The drugs were confiscated during military operations conducted by security forces on the outskirts of Jalalabad city and in various districts of the province, the statement added. According to the statement, 3,499 stimulant tablets have also been discovered during the operations, Xinhua news agency reported. The Afghan caretaker government has committed to combating illegal drugs, as well as the production and trafficking of narcotics throughout the Central Asian country. Police have discovered 12 kg of illicit drugs in northern Afghanistan's Baghlan province and detained an individual for involvement in drug trafficking from the area, district police chief Qari Naqibullah Muhammadi said on Saturday. The contraband, including 12 kg of hashish, was discovered in the Banu district of this province, the official said, adding the police have also arrested one drug smuggler. Police won't allow anyone to produce or smuggle hashish, poppy, or the objects used in manufacturing heroin in the province, the official said.

Egypt to host emergency Arab summit on Palestine on Feb 27

Cairo, Feb 12 (IANS) : Egypt announced on Wednesday that Cairo will host an emergency Arab summit on February 27 to address the latest developments concerning the Palestinian issue and the Gaza Strip, the Egyptian Foreign Ministry said in a statement. The summit was decided to be held after Egypt's high-level consultations with Arab nations, including Palestine, which requested the summit, and coordination with Bahrain, the current chair of the Arab League (AL) summit and the AL Secretariat, according to the statement. The announcement followed controversial remarks by US President Donald Trump suggesting the relocation of Palestinians from Gaza to neighbouring countries, including Egypt and Jordan. The proposal has been widely rejected both regionally and internationally, Xinhua news agency reported. During a joint press conference in Washington with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Tuesday.



Mpox deaths in Africa exceed 100 since beginning of 2025

Addis Ababa, Feb 12 (IANS) : A total of 107 people have died in the ongoing mpox outbreak in Africa since the beginning of 2025, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC). More than 13,500 mpox cases have been reported in 12 African countries, of which 3,683 were confirmed, Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya told an online media briefing. In the past week alone, eight African countries reported 2,634 new cases, including 878 confirmed ones and 21 deaths, according to data from the African Union's specialised healthcare

agency. Among the 21 African countries affected by the ongoing mpox outbreak since the start of last year, 12 are currently experiencing active transmission of the virus, while nine countries are in the control phase, five of which have gone more than 90 days without any confirmed cases. Meanwhile, Kaseya expressed concerns regarding the challenges in responding to the mpox outbreak in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), especially in the city of Goma, where fighting escalated between the DRC army and March 23 Movement (M23) rebels. Data from the Africa CDC show that the DRC, which is at the epicentre of the current mpox outbreak in Africa, has recorded 1,842 mpox cases in the past week, of which 481 were confirmed. The Africa CDC chief said that the conflict has disrupted laboratory services, hindering mpox testing and reporting in North Kivu, Tshopo, and other provinces. Citing "a steep decline" in mpox reporting over the past week across provinces reliant on testing facilities in Goma, he said that the ongoing insecurity has led to interruptions in the collection, transportation, and confirmation of mpox samples.

Kremlin spokesman 'neither confirms nor denies' report of conversation between Putin, Trump

Moscow, Feb 12 (IANS) : Kremlin Spokesman Dmitry Peskov said on Wednesday that he could "neither confirm nor deny" reports of a conversation between Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump regarding Ukraine, media reported. "As the administration in Washington unfolds its work, there are many different

communications. And these communications are carried out through different channels," TASS news agency quoted Peskov as saying. "And of course, given the multiplicity of these communications, I personally may not know something, not be aware of something. Therefore, in this case, I can neither confirm nor deny it," he added. The New York Post reported earlier that Trump said he

had discussed the settlement of the conflict in Ukraine by phone with Putin, Xinhua news agency reported. Trump, who has promised to end the war in Ukraine but not yet set out in public how he would do so, said last week that the war was a bloodbath and that his team had had "some very good talks". In an interview aboard Air Force One on Friday, Trump told the New York Post that he had "better

not say," when asked how many times he and Putin had spoken. "He (Putin) wants to see people stop dying," Trump told the New York Post. The White House did not respond to a request for comment outside normal business hours. The conflict in eastern Ukraine began in 2014 after a pro-Russian President was toppled in Ukraine's Maidan Revolution and Russia annexed Crimea.



North Korean leader says US causing 'conflicting structure,' vows to bolster nuclear forces

Seoul, Feb 12 (IANS) : North Korean leader Kim Jong-un has accused the US of standing behind the world's disputes, reaffirming the country's policy to further develop its nuclear forces, the North's state media reported on Wednesday. Kim made the remarks during his visit to the Ministry of National Defence the previous day in celebration of the 77th anniversary of the founding of its armed forces, the Korean People's Army, Yonhap reported quoting the Korean Central News Agency (KCNA). Delivering a speech to military and political commanding officers of the ministry, Kim referred to a series of new plans for bolstering "all deterrence" and reaffirmed the country's "unshakable policy of more highly de-

veloping the nuclear forces," KCNA said, without providing details of the plans. The leader claimed that US nuclear strategic assets deployed on the Korean Peninsula, the US-led nuclear war simulation exercises and the US-Japan-South Korea military cooperation are "inviting military imbalance" on the peninsula and in Northeast Asia, causing "a new conflicting structure" and posing a grave challenge to North Korea. North Korea "does not want unnecessary tension" in the region, Kim said, adding that, however, it will take "sustained countermeasures to ensure the regional military balance" to prevent the outbreak of a new war and ensure peace and security on the peninsula.

Israel expands West Bank operation, raids Nur Shams refugee camp

Jerusalem, Feb 12 (IANS) : Israeli forces expanded their military operation in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, launching a raid in the Nur Shams refugee camp, a military spokesperson said. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) said in a statement that large forces from the IDF, Shin Bet security agency, and Border Police began operating overnight in Nur Shams, Xinhua news agency reported. According to witnesses, Israeli troops forced several families out of their homes in the camp, converting them into military outposts. The military offensive involved a large number of Israeli forces, reinforced with bulldozers, which entered the camp and imposed a blockade on it, they said. Witnesses said that bulldozers began demolishing the entrance to the al-Maslakh neighbourhood in the camp.



Afghan Police arrest 34,000 beggars to end begging culture: Official

Kabul, Feb 12 (IANS) : Police in Afghanistan have arrested more than 34,000 beggars from across the country over the past year to give an end to the culture of begging in society, a deputy on counter-narcotics of the Ministry of Interior Affairs said. "We have arrested 34,377 beggars over the past year," the National Radio and Television of Afghanistan (RTA) quoted Mullah Abdul Haq Akhund Hamkar on Wednesday as saying. Major parts of the collected beggars were fake and professional, the official told the state-

owned media outlet, saying the police after investigation have allocated a monthly allowance to the needy one and referred the professional beggars to the concerned entities for further investigation, Xinhua news agency reported. A commission was established to register beggars and categorise them as "professional", "destitute" or "organised", which involves taking their biometric data and fingerprints. According to Taliban officials, nearly 60,000 beggars have already been "rounded up" in Kabul alone. The death of detainees rounded up under anti-beg-

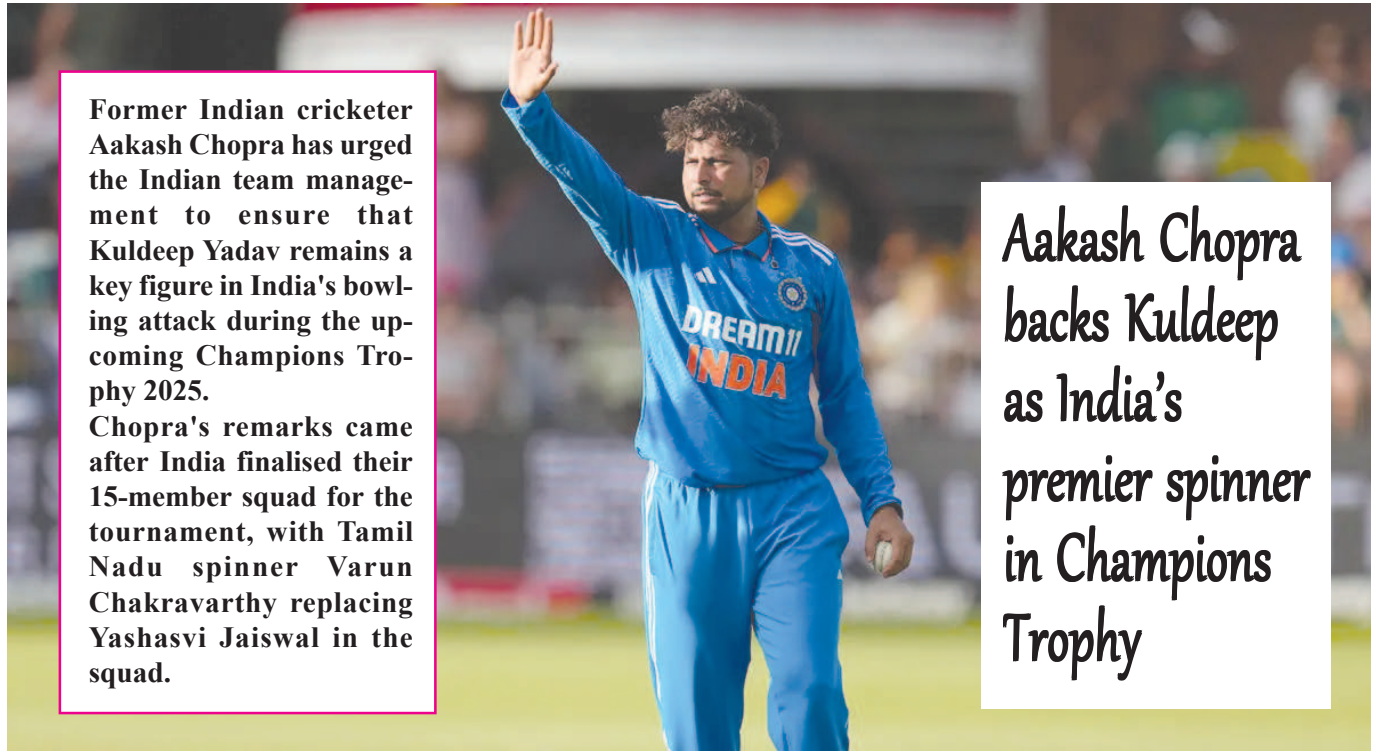
ging laws is factored into the wording of the Taliban's new law, in which Article 25 states: "If a beggar dies while in custody and has no relatives or if the family refuses to collect the body, the municipal officials will handle the burial." Under the new laws, those classed as "destitute" are legally entitled to financial assistance after their release, but none of the women said they had received any help. Officials in Balkh said that they have begun a campaign to round up beggars in Mazar-e-Sharif city and other parts of the northern province.



Champions Trophy: Banton replaces injured Bethell in England squad

Dubai, Feb 12 (IANS) : England have named Tom Banton as a replacement for the injured Jacob Bethell in their 15-member squad for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, starting from February 19 in Pakistan and the UAE. Bethell suffered a left hamstring injury during the ongoing ODI series against India, where he impressed with a half-century in the opening game. The young batter's promising performances had made him a key part of England's plans, but the injury

setback has ruled him out of the marquee event. Banton, who also replaced Bethell in the ongoing ODI series against India, has earned his call-up on the back of scintillating form in the International League T20 (ILT20) in the UAE. The wicketkeeper-batter has been the tournament's standout performer, amassing 493 runs from 11 innings at a remarkable average of 54.77, including two centuries. His explosive batting displays have placed him as the leading run-scorer in the competition, reinforcing his credentials for England's white-ball setup. The right-hander made his ODI debut for England in 2020 but has only featured in six matches, accumulating 134 runs. However, his recent form suggests he could play a vital role in England's Champions Trophy campaign.



Former Indian cricketer Aakash Chopra has urged the Indian team management to ensure that Kuldeep Yadav remains a key figure in India's bowling attack during the upcoming Champions Trophy 2025. Chopra's remarks came after India finalised their 15-member squad for the tournament, with Tamil Nadu spinner Varun Chakravarthy replacing Yashasvi Jaiswal in the squad.

Aakash Chopra backs Kuldeep as India's premier spinner in Champions Trophy



Finch questions timing of Stoinis' shock ODI retirement

New Delhi, Feb 12 (IANS) : Former Australia captain Aaron Finch has hit out at Marcus Stoinis for his sudden retirement from ODIs and questioned the timing of the decision and its impact on the team. Stoinis, who was initially named in Australia's squad for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, announced his retirement from the format last week, forcing selectors to scramble for a replacement. Speaking on ESPN Australia's Around The Wicket podcast, Finch expressed his disappointment over the lack of prior communication from Stoinis to the team management. He believes the all-rounder should have given coach Andrew McDonald and captain Steve Smith a heads-up before being selected in the squad. "When you've had the faith put in you by the selection, the coach, and the captain—maybe a little bit more of a heads-up? Saying, 'You know, this is what I am thinking.' I would be surprised if it was an off-the-cuff decision as well.

Gill and Rohit close in on No. 1 ODI ranking

Dubai, Feb 12 (IANS) : With just a week left for the ICC Champions Trophy 2025, India skipper Rohit Sharma and Shubman Gill are closing in on the top spot in the ICC men's ODI player rankings. The latest rankings update saw Pakistan captain Babar Azam maintaining his position at No. 1, but the Indian duo are closing in following good efforts during the ODI series against England. Gill gained one place to move to second on the latest ODI batter rankings and is just five rating points adrift of Babar after back-to-back half-centuries against England, while Rohit, sitting third, is within 13 rating points of the Pakistan right-hander following his splendid century in Cuttack. Several other prominent batters have re-entered the ODI rankings as teams prepare for the marquee ICC event. Pakistan's Fakhar Zaman is ranked 13th, while New Zealand's Kane Williamson (29th), England's Jos Buttler (38th), Devon Conway (40th), and Joe Root (51st) have also made their way back into the standings after their return to 50-over cricket. The competition among bowlers is just as fierce, with just 18 rating points separating Rashid Khan, Maheesh Theekshana, Bernard Scholtz, Shaheen Afridi and Kuldeep Yadav inside the top five for ODI bowlers.



Golf: Aditi, Pranavi among four Indians in Saudi Ladies International

Riyadh, Feb 12 (IANS) : Pranavi Urs and Aditi Ashok will join Diksha Dagar and Tvesa Malik at the 5 million USD sixth Saudi Ladies International. The four will be part of 112-player field in an event that has a combination of individual and team events. There will be a 54-hole individual stroke play alongside a 36-hole team competition.

India begin Badminton Asia Mixed Team C'ships campaign with 5-0 win over Macau

Qingdao (China), Feb 12 (IANS): Last edition's bronze medallists, India, kicked off their Badminton Asia Mixed Team Championships 2025 campaign with a thumping 5-0 victory over Macau in Group D at the Qingdao Sports Centre Conson Gymnasium on Wednesday.



England men's hockey team arrives in Bhubaneswar for FIH Pro League matches

Bhubaneswar, Feb 12 (IANS) : England men's hockey team touched down in Bhubaneswar, on Wednesday ahead of their participation in the India leg of the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25. The upcoming matches, which will be held at the iconic Kalinga Hockey Stadium, promise to showcase top-tier international hockey, with England eager to maintain their strong run in the tournament. England, currently ranked No. 2 in the world, will face Spain in their opening match in Bhubaneswar. Notably, England have been impressive in the FIH Hockey Pro League 2024-25 so far, securing second place in the overall standings. They have ac-

cumulated 11 points from four games, recording three wins and a draw, and are looking to build on this momentum. A key player for England throughout the tournament has been forward Sam Ward, who has emerged as the team's leading scorer with eight goals. His sharp finishing and ability to find the net have been instrumental in England's success, and he will be a crucial player as the team looks to climb to the top of the standings in this leg of the competition. The England squad will be aiming to put on a strong performance in front of an enthusiastic Indian crowd at the Kalinga Hockey Stadium, which has become a renowned venue for world-class

hockey. "I'm really excited to be playing in India for the first time. My teammates have shared their incredible experiences from the 2023 World Cup here, and I'm eager to experience that atmosphere myself. Hopefully, we'll be playing in front of a packed stadium when we take on India," said England captain Tim Nurse upon arriving in Bhubaneswar. He added, "We're here to win and aim to secure victories in all four games of this leg. Facing India at home will be a tough challenge. We've had some intense battles with them over the past few years, and I expect more closely contested matches this time around."

Champions League: Real Madrid edge Man City in five-goal thriller in play-off first leg

Manchester, Feb 12 (IANS) : Jude Bellingham's late goal completed a stunning comeback from Real Madrid, who twice came from behind to clinch a narrow 3-2 first-leg advantage against Manchester City in the Champions League playoffs. Erling Haaland's double—the second from the penalty spot with just over ten minutes remaining—either side of Kylian Mbappe's looping

strike, appeared to have given City the edge. However, visiting sub Brahim Díaz was quickest to the rebound following an Ederson save to level against his former side, before Bellingham tapped in from close range after good work by Vinicius Jr to seal the win in a pulsating contest, Champions League reports. The loss leave City needing to win by at least a goal in the second leg to at least level the aggregate scores and have any

chance of progressing after a heart-breaking final seven minutes. "Today was tight and in certain times we had chances. Many games at the end we give away. In that level it is so difficult. It is not the first time, it happens many times. "There are mistakes in similar areas. It is difficult to manage. Players take decisions in the moment, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't.

