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Centre to host roadshow in Kolkata on coal mine auctions

The Ministry of Coal will host a roadshow on Coal Mine Auctions and Opportunities in the Coal Sector on Wednesday in Kolkata, according to an official statement issued... **07**




Centre Assures Sitarama Sagar Project Approval In A Month, Nasa Report On Medigadda By Month-End: Uttam

Udaipur, Feb.19 (NSS): Irrigation Minister N. Uttam Kumar Reddy secured an assurance from Union Minister for Jal Shakti C.R. Patil.

For First Time, Peak Power Demand Crosses 16,000 Mw Mark In Telangana

Hyderabad, Feb.19 (NSS): Electricity demand in Telangana has reached an all-time high, exceeding the 16,000 MW mark. In light of this, Deputy Chief Minister Bhatti Vikramarka held a meeting with officials on Wednesday to discuss the current power supply conditions. Officials reported that the peak electricity demand in Telangana hit 16,058 MW at 7:55 AM on February 19. This figure surpasses the previous high of 15,998 MW recorded on February 10 of this month.





Chandrababu Naidu to attend swearing-in of Delhi CM

Amaravati, Feb 19 (IANS) : Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu will attend the swearing-in ceremony of the new chief minister of Delhi likely to be held on Thursday. The Telugu Desam Party (TDP) national president left for the national capital on Wednesday evening. According to the Chief Minister's Office (CMO), Chandrababu Naidu is likely to call on Union Home Minister Amit Shah, Union Minister for Water Resources C.R. Patil, and Union Minister for Agriculture Shivraj Singh Chouhan. **Continued on pg 02**



Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj inspires us in building strong, self-reliant, prosperous India : PM Modi

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi led the nation in paying homage to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his 395th birth anniversary. Taking to X, PM Modi posted that Shivaji Maharaj's valour and vision laid the foundation for Swarajya (self-rule). "I pay homage to Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj on his Jayanti. His valour and visionary leadership laid the foundation for Swarajya, inspiring generations to uphold the values of courage and justice," wrote the PM in his post. He further said that Shivaji inspires us to build a strong, self-reliant and prosperous India. PM Modi also posted a video clip in honour of the great king. He said for him he is not just a name or a king but "Shivaji is a God and there is nothing bigger than God". The PM said in the video, "...so many years have passed by but his values, and commitments continue to inspire us today... and based on these values.




SCR GM Conducts Inspection of Hyderabad Division

Hyderabad, Feb.19 (NSS): SCR General Manager Arun Kumar Jain conducted inspection of Hyderabad Division today. He was accompanied by Lokesh Vishnoi, Divisional Railway Manager, Hyderabad Division and other senior officials from both the Headquarters and Division throughout the inspection. The General Manager carried out inspection from Mudkhed to Medchal and reviewed the safety aspects of tracks, signalling, newly installed electric traction systems, passenger amenities.

BJP-BRS working together to defeat Congress in MLC Elections: TPCC Chief

Kamareddy, Feb 19 (NSS): Telangana Pradesh Congress Committee (TPCC) President Mahesh Kumar Goud has alleged that there is a secret agreement between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and Bharat Rashtra Samithi (BRS) regarding the MLC elections, indicating that the opposition party is backing the BJP candidate to secure a victory in the polls. During a meeting with graduates in Kamareddy on Wednesday, the TPCC chief remarked that it has become customary for the BJP to invoke divine support to attract votes during elections. He also pointed out that both BJP and BRS are exploiting social media to disseminate misinformation.




BRS party born for Telangana : KCR

Hyderabad, Feb 19 : Former CM KCR said in view of the socio-historical needs of the Telangana society, the BRS party was the party, which was born for Telangana. He said as a political entity party of Telangana, the BRS was a party of people. It achieved the State of Telangana and performed its historic responsibility. He urged the party cadres to work towards empowering all sections of the Telangana society by working for the strengthening of Telangana's existence and ensuring that the people of Telangana do not suffer the same hardships after recovering from the wounds of the past and do not fall prey to the past exploitation and colonialists and give a lasting victory to the people of Telangana. He directed the leaders to get involved to build the party from the village level to the State level and work in parallel with the party's success and the permanent victory of the people of Telangana.

Tummala directs officials to explore partnerships with E-Commerce Companies

Hyderabad, Feb.19 (NSS): Representatives of Texport Industries Private Limited paid a courtesy call on Textiles Minister Tummala Nageswara Rao at the Secretariat on Wednesday. They briefed the Minister on the progress of the construction work of a garment manufacturing unit undertaken at a cost of Rs. 60 crore in Peddur, Rajanna Siricilla district. The company representatives told the Minister that their company has long-standing business relationships.



Govt ignoring sufferings of Chilli Farmers: Ys Jagan

Guntur, Feb.19 (NSS): Former chief minister and YSRCP president YS Jagan Mohan Reddy today visited the chilly yard in Guntur in support of the chilly farmers, who are suffering due to non-availability of minimum support price in Guntur.



LIC Launches a new Pension Plan – LIC's Smart Pension Plan

Hyderabad, Feb 19 (TIM Bureau) :Sri Puneet Kumar, LIC Zonal Manager released posters today launching the new product at Zonal level. The new plan, LIC's Smart Pension Plan (Plan No: 879), has several features that fulfill the needs of the customers seeking returns by way of assured amount as pension. Sri Puneet Kumar spoke

on the occasion and said that the LIC is continuously focusing on the development and expansion of their product portfolio to satisfy the growing needs of the population. As the demand for safe retirement and pension plans is increasing day by day, LIC's Smart Pension Plan is specifically designed for the domestic market. This pension plan has options to take annuity for self

or for self and spouse or for any two lineal descendant/ascendant of a family or siblings or Parent-in-law. There is also an option to get back a percentage of Purchase Price on attaining 75 years age or anytime thereafter. Any individual of age 18 years and above can take this policy with a minimum premium of Rs One Lac and there is no upper limit for this premium.



IN THE COURT OF THE HON'BLE XIX SENIOR CIVIL JUDGE CITY CIVIL COURTS AT: SECUNDERABAD O.S. No. 21 OF 2025
BETWEEN:
Smt. Shanu Agarwal and Three Others. ...Plaintiffs.
And
HDFC BANK Ltd and Another. ...Defendants.
To,
All Concerned,
Please take notice that, the above named Plaintiffs herein have filed the Suit for declaring the Plaintiffs as joint owners of the suit schedule properties being they are the Class-I legal heirs of late Arun Kumar Agarwal, S/o. Shyam Sunder Agarwal who expired intestate on 03-02-2024. The matter is posted on 28-02-2025 for calling any objections and reply from the concerned parties if any, and you are hereby summoned to appear in person or through an Advocate duly instructed at 10.30AM on 28-02-2025 before this Hon'ble Court, failing which the matter will be heard and the same may be determined Ex-Parte.
SUIT SCHEDULE PROPERTY
All that part and parcel of the Residential Flat bearing No. 907 in "C" Block consisting built-up area of 1884 Sq Feet including the common areas in Ninth Floor of the residential building named as "Necklace Pride" together with an undivided share of land admeasuring 66.09 Sq.Yards out of total land admeasuring 29,818 Sq.Yards situated of the land bearing Municipal No.6-6-8 to 32 & 395, in Sy.Nos.33 to 39 and 85/1, KavadiGuda, Secunderabad, under G.H.M.C. limits and bounded by: **Boundaries for the Main Property:** North: Residential Houses of Gandhinagar Colony, South: Commercial Retail development, Common access road to the Residential Development and the Commercial Retail Development, KavadiGuda Main Road & Properties of Ms. CPWD, NTPC, PGCIL, BEL., East: Bhogida Road to Secunderabad Station & Properties of Ms. PGCIL, West: Gandhinagar Road & properties of Ms. NTPC. **Boundaries for the Flat No. 907:** North: Open to Sky, South: Open to Sky & Flat No 906, East: Corridor & Flat No. 901, West: Open to Sky.
Sd/- G.PADMANABHA RAO, Advocate
11-12-222, Road No.4, Income Tax Colony, Sri Ramakrishnapuram, Hyderabad-500035, Phone: 98858 36922.

Chandrababu Naidu to attend swearing-in of Delhi CM

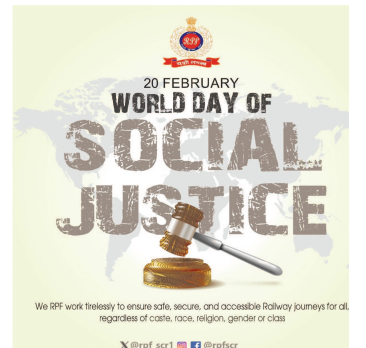
Continued From pg 01
The Chief Minister is expected to discuss with Amit Shah issues relating various projects and other matters pertaining to the State. Chandrababu Naidu will discuss with C.R. Patil issues relating to the release of funds for the Polavaram project, particularly on Central assistance for building the left and right canals to supply water with a capacity of 17,500 cusecs. The Chief Minister is expected to discuss with Shivraj Singh Chouhan the issues being faced by chilli farmers. Naidu, who has written several letters to the Centre mentioning the problems being faced by the chilli farmers, will be directly taking up the issues to the notice of the Union Minister and making a request for Central assistance.

CHAMPIONING SOCIAL JUSTICE : THE ROLE OF THE RAILWAY PROTECTION FORCE

Hyderabad, Feb 19 (TIM Bureau) : The World Day of Social Justice is celebrated every year on the 20th February. It has been started by the UN to create awareness that even today, there are many people who are unable to get an equal opportunity to lead a better life. The aim of the event is to promote fairness. Fairness means equal access to the same standards of education, health care and all public services. This access must be fair i.e no person should be denied access merely by reason of caste, race, religion, gender or class. Social justice refers to the equitable distribution of resources, opportunities, and privileges within a society. Every year this day is celebrated with a view to raise awareness and promote practical solutions to address the

issues of poverty, exclusion, gender inequality and social justice. In the context of India, the Indian Railways which is one of the largest Railway networks in the world weaves an intricate matrix of connectivity across the length and breadth of the country. With its Railway lines reaching out to some of the remotest parts of the country, it provides the most accessible and inexpensive method of travel to many people. This tangled web of Railway lines unites all Indians into one single thread. In the vast expanse of its trains and stations, millions of Indians irrespective of caste, race, religion, gender or class meet, intermingle and bond. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) plays a pivotal role in ensuring the safety and security of all these passengers. The very essence of social justice lies in ensuring that all individuals have equal access to rights, resources, opportunities

and protection. It encourages fairness, inclusivity and the dismantling of barriers that hinder the right to equal opportunity. Social justice is not just legal fairness, it also involves access to social goods such as health, education, employment and above all, security. Within this broad framework, the role of various institutions, including law enforcement agencies is vital in ensuring that no individual is denied equal access to these services. In this context, the role of agencies like the Railway Protection Force is crucial in maintaining not just security of Railway property and passengers but also in upholding the social justice that is the basic right of every individual. The Railway Protection Force (RPF) is an armed force of the Union entrusted with the responsibility of securing the country's vast Railway network. Beyond the enforcement of law, the RPF plays a crucial role in the



broader concept of social justice by ensuring that the rights of vulnerable populations are respected, protected, and upheld within its specific sphere of influence. The Indian Railway system serves millions daily, with a significant portion being women, children, senior citizens, and individuals from marginalized communities. The RPF stands as a shield for these vulnerable passengers, protecting them from crimes such as theft, harassment.

CAN FIN HOMES LTD
Taranaka Branch: No.12-13-416/1,3rd Floor, Mani Mansion, Street No 1, Taranaka, Hyderabad - 500017. Tel.No.040-27005553, Mob: 7625079156.
APPENDIX- IV-A (See proviso to rule 9 (1))
SALE NOTICE FOR SALE OF IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES
E-Auction Sale Notice for Sale of Immovable Assets under the Securitisation and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002 read with proviso to Rule 9 (1) of the Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002
NOTICE is hereby given to the public in general and in particular to the Borrower (s) and Guarantor (s) that the below described immovable property mortgaged/charged to the Secured Creditor, the Physical Possession of which has been taken by the Authorised Officer of Can Fin Homes Ltd., Tarnaka Branch, will be sold by holding e-auction on "As is where is", "As is what is", and "Whatever there is" on 12/03/2025 for recovery of Rs.27,56,355/- (Rupees Twenty Seven Lakhs Fifty six thousand Three Hundred and Fifty Five Only) due to Can Fin Homes Ltd. from Mr. Hari Sai Avinash Kumar Sastry (Borrower) and Mr. Hari Naga Balaji Sastry (Guarantor), as on 19/02/2025 together with further interest and other charges thereon. The reserve price will be Rs. 26,00,000/- (Rupees Twenty Six Lakhs Only) and the earnest money deposit will be Rs. 2,60,000/- (Rupees Two Lakhs Twenty Thousand Only).
DESCRIPTION OF THE IMMOVABLE PROPERTY:
All that the Residential Flat No 203 in second floor of Cherishma Heights along with Undivided share of land admeasuring 26 Sq Yds OR 21.73 Sq Mts (Out of 645.82 Sq Yds or 539.90 Sq Mts) with super builtup area of 950 Sq Ft including common areas and parking on Plot Nos 07,08 & 09 in Survey Nos 312,313 & 314 Situated at Nagaram Village, Under Nagaram Municipality, Keesara Mandal, Medchal Malkajgiri District, Telangana State and bounded by: **Boundaries for Land:** North: Plot No.06, South: Plot No.10, East: Plot Nos.16, 15 & 14, West: 40 Wide Road, **Boundaries for Flat No 203:** North: Open To Sky, South: Corridor & Staircase, East: Flat No 204, West: Open To Sky. **Known Encumbrance if any:** Nil
The detailed terms and conditions of the sale are provided in the official website of Can Fin Homes Ltd., (<https://www.canfinhomes.com/SearchAuction.aspx>). Link for participating in e-auction: www.bankeauctionwizard.com.
Date: 19-02-2025, Place: Tarnaka Sd/- Authorised Officer, Can Fin Homes Ltd.

SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED
Registered Office: Sri Towers, Plot No.14A, South Phase, Industrial Estate, Guindy, Chennai-600032
Branch Office Address: 19-20, 2nd Floor, Kota Complex, Beside Prashanthi Residency, Opp: Modern High School, Mahabubnagar-509001.
NOTICE TO THE BORROWER INFORMING ABOUT SALE (30 DAYS' NOTICE) 8 (6) OF SECURITY INTEREST (ENFORCEMENT) RULES 2002

Sl No.	Particulars of Borrowers /Guarantors
1	Ganji Ranjith Kumar , S/o:Ganji Srinivasulu, Age: 40 Years, Occ: Self Employee, Address:1 Hno: 1-7-150/A, Boyappallygate,Mahabubnagar,Mahabubnagar(M&D),Pin Code: 509001, B/O: Medical Shop At Mahabubnagar. Borrower
2	G. Aruna @ Ganji Aruna , W/O: Ganji Rajith Kumar, Age:31years, Occ: House Wife., Hno: 1-7-150/A, Boyappally Gate, Mahabubnagar, Mahabubnagar(M&D), Pin Code: 509001. Co Borrower/Guarantor
3	Dowlaghar Rajesh , S/o Ashok Nagar, Age: 33 Years, Occ: IT Employee., HNo:4-8-6/1r/3/1, Christiananapally, Mahabubnagar, Mahabubnagar(M &D), Pin Code: 509001. Guarantor

Sub: Sale of property belonging to **GANJI RANJITH KUMAR** (Borrower/Guarantor) in the account of **MHBNRTF1703180001** for realization of amount due to Shriram Finance Limited under The Securitization and Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002. **Shriram Finance Limited, MAHABUBNAGAR - Branch**, the secured creditor caused a demand notice dated 27.11.2023 under section 13(2) of The Securitization And Reconstruction of Financial Assets and Enforcement of Security Interest Act, 2002, calling upon you to pay **Rs. 54,73,863/- (Rupees FIFTY FOUR LACK SEVENTY THREE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED SIXTY THREE RUPEES ONLY)** within the time stipulated period therein. Since you failed to comply the said notice within the stipulated period, the Authorized Officer, has taken symbolic procession of the immovable secured assets under Section 13(4) of the Act read with Rule 8 of Security Interest (Enforcement) Rules, 2002 on **30.05.2024**. And After the Authorized Officer of Shriram Finance Limited received Physical possession of the property on 22.10.2024. Even after taking possession of the secured asset, you have not paid the amount due to **Shriram Finance Limited**. As such, it has become necessary to sell the below mentioned property by holding public e-auction after 30 days from the date of receipt of this notice through online mode. The date and time of e-auction along with the Reserve Price of the property and the details of the service provider, in which the e-auction to be conducted, shall be informed to you separately. Therefore, if you pay the amount due to Shriram Finance Limited along with subsequent interest, costs, charges and expenses incurred by Shriram Finance Limited before the date of publication of sale notice, no further action shall be taken for sale of the property and you can redeem your property as stipulated in sec.13(8) of the Act.
Schedule of Property: (Mortgaged under the Name of **GANJI RANJITH KUMAR** Mortgage deed dated 20.03.2017 Registered as Document No. **2967/2017** on the file of the office of Sub-Registrar at (Mahabubnagar))
ALL that the plot no. 73, sy. Nos. 190&191, admeasuring 231 sq. yards, (193.13sq.mtrs). Situated at Yengonda G.P of Mahabubnagar town & district and bounded as follows and **Bounded as follows: TOWARDS EAST** : 20 feet wide road & others plots., **TOWARDS WEST** : 25 feet wide road., **TOWARDS NORTH** : Plot No.74., **TOWARDS SOUTH** : Plot No. 72.
Note "It is informed that **"SHRIRAM CITY UNION FINANCE LIMITED"** has been amalgamated with **"SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED"** as per order of NCLT, Chennai. Subsequently the name of **"SHRIRAM TRANSPORT FINANCE LIMITED"** was changed as **"SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED"** with effect from 30.11.2022 vide Certificate of Incorporation pursuant to change of name dated 30-11-2022."
Date : 19-02-2025 Sd/-Authorized Officer
Place: MAHABOONNAGAR SHRIRAM FINANCE LIMITED

The acquisition of land for integrated Gurukul schools should be expedited

Adilabad, Feb 19 (TIM Bureau) : Secretary Board of Intermediate Education Commissioner Krishna Aditya has instructed the officials to expedite the procurement of land required for the Integrated Gurukul School for Young India Integrated Residential Schools and complete it by tomorrow. Commissioner Krishna Aditya held a meeting with the joint Adilabad district collectors on Wednesday at the Collector's Chamber. Earlier, upon his arrival at the Adilabad Collectorate, Com-

missioner Krishna Aditya was welcomed by District Collector Rajarshi Shah, Nirmal Collector Abhilasha Abhinav, and Asifabad Additional Collector Deepak Tiwari, presenting them with flower plants. Later, addressing a meeting held in the Collector's Chamber, he said that experimental steps will be taken to bring about ambitious changes in the education system in Telangana, and in this context, Young India Integrated Residential Schools will be established across the state. He said that the government aims to provide quality education by



constructing these schools within two years, and that the acquisition of land required for this integrated Gurukul school should be expedited. He inspected the site at Adilabad Rural Nishan Ghat for the newly built integrated residential educational institutions.

GHMC to hold Property Tax settlement program from Feb. 22

Hyderabad, Feb.19 (NSS): The "Property Tax Resolution" (PTP) programme for resolution of property tax issues will be conducted at the municipal circle offices of GHMC from February 22, 2025 to 29, 2025 from 10 am to 1pm. GHMC Commissioner Elambarthi said the special "Property Tax Solution" (PTP) would be conducted for resolution of the property tax issues for the people under the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation limits. "This program includes tax issues, revision requests (Revision Petitions – RPs). The special programme has been set up to address the issues such as amendments in property tax estimates.

FORM NO. 14 [See Regulation 33(2)] OFFICE OF THE RECOVERY OFFICER - III DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD (DRT 2) 1st Floor, Triveni Complex Abids, Hyderabad-500001.
DEMAND NOTICE
NOTICE UNDER SECTIONS 25 TO 28 OF THE RECOVERY OF DEBTS & BANKRUPTCY ACT, 1993 AND RULE 2 OF SECOND SCHEDULE TO THE INCOME TAX ACT, 1961. RC/883/2024 26-12-2024
Punjab National Bank Versus M/s Alex Logistics And Others
To
(CD 1) **M/s Alex Logistics**, a Partnership Firm, Rep. by its Partners Mr. Sangal Babu and Mr. G.Issac, Warangal (Rural), Telangana-506015.
(CD 2) **Mr. Sangal Babu, S/o Mr. Sundaraiiah**, Partner of M/s Alex Logistics, R/o Birth No.1 and 2, A1 55-2-473/A, Bheemaram, Hasanparthy, Hanamankonda, Warangal (Rural), Telangana-506015.
(CD 3) **Mr. Gaddikoppula Issac, S/o Joseph Christopher**, H.No.19-88, Karl Mark Colony, Bhupalpalle, Warangal (Rural), Telangana-506015.
(CD 4) **Mr. Sangala Vijay Kumar, S/o Mr. S. Sundaraiiah**, 55-2-473/A, Bheemaram Rural, Hasanparthy, Hanamankonda, Warangal (Rural), Telangana-506015.
This is to notify that as per the Recovery Certificate issued in pursuance of orders passed by the Presiding Officer, DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD(DRT 2) in OA/389/2023 an amount of **Rs.26,05,737/- (Rupees Twenty Six Lakhs Five Thousand Seven Hundred and Thirty Seven Only)** along with pendentlitle and future interest @ 10.25% Simple Interest Yearly w.e.f. 29/03/2023 till realization and costs of **Rs.78,000/- (Rupees Seventy Eight Thousand Only)** has become due against you (Jointly and severally) Fully/Limited).
2. You are hereby directed to pay the above sum within 15 days of the receipts of the notice, failing which the recovery shall be made in accordance with the Recovery of Debts Due to Banks and Financial Institutions Act, 1993 and Rules there under.
3. You are hereby ordered to declare on an affidavit the particulars of your assets on or before the next date of hearing.
4. You are hereby ordered to appear before the undersigned on **13-02-2025 at 10:30 a.m.** for further proceedings.
5. In addition to the sum aforesaid, you will also be liable to pay:
(a) Such interests as is payable for the period commencing immediately after this notice of the certificate / execution proceedings;
(b) All costs, charges and expenses incurred in respect of the service of this notice and warrants and other processes and all other proceedings taken for recovering the amount due.
Given under my hand and the seal of the Tribunal, on this date: 26-12-2024
Recovery Officer DEBTS RECOVERY TRIBUNAL HYDERABAD (DRT 2)



KCR is a seasonal politician : Ponguleti

Hyderabad, Feb 19 (NSS): Minister for Revenue and Housing Ponguleti Srinivas Reddy has commented that former chief minister and BRS President K Chandrashekar Rao is a politician who only makes his presence felt during election seasons. He pointed out that KTR has spent the past 14 months at his farmhouse while attempting

to persuade the public of the upcoming local elections. According to Ponguleti, it would be wiser for KCR to focus on his own future and that of his party rather than concerning himself with the future of the Congress party.

Maha Kumbh 2025: Devotees continue to flock to Prayagraj

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : As the holy city of Prayagraj, also known as the Sangam Nagri, nears the end of the Maha Kumbh, devotees continue to pour in large numbers for their sacred dips in the Triveni Sangam. The Makar Sankranti festival may have passed, but the enthusiasm of pilgrims remains undiminished, with each day bringing more visitors. As the Maha Shivaratri Snaan approaches on February 26, thousands are still making their way to the

holy site. According to the Uttar Pradesh Information Department, over 55.56 crore devotees had taken a holy dip by February 18, with more than 30.94 lakh pilgrims participating in the dip by 8 a.m. on the most recent day. The faith, devotion, and spiritual fervour of the masses are palpable as they continue to arrive in droves, chanting the praises of Mother Ganga. Several devotees expressed their satisfaction with the arrangements made by the state government for the grand event, especially under



the leadership of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath and Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One devotee shared, "I am feeling very happy to be at the Maha Kumbh. The arrangements here are excellent. Yogi Ji and Modi Ji have made outstanding arrangements for this event." Another pil-

grim said, "It felt very good, the arrangement is very nice, and there wasn't too much crowd. I took a dip very peacefully with a lot of faith." A third devotee from Bhopal praised the vigilance of the authorities, stating, "This time, the authorities are very alert and on top of things. They have managed

the crowd and traffic well. Every arrangement is so satisfying. I must say, CM Yogi has made wonderful arrangements for us." The enthusiasm at the Maha Kumbh Mela remains high, with devotees from all over the country and beyond making their way to the holy city for the ritual. The meticulously planned crowd management, cleanliness, and security arrangements have played a vital role in maintaining order and ensuring a peaceful and smooth experience for the pilgrims. As the event nears its conclusion, the impact of this historic gathering continues to inspire spiritual reflection and reverence for millions across the globe.



Bihar: BPSC accuses coaching institutes of spreading 'propaganda' amid protests

Patna, Feb 19 (IANS) : As protests over the 70th BPSC Preliminary Examination resumed in Patna on Wednesday, the Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) has hit back, alleging that some coaching institutes are misleading students on social media. BPSC has urged aspirants not to fall for propaganda and instead focus on preparing for the main examination. The commission alleged that certain coaching centres are fuelling the agitation for their own interests. Despite protests, BPSC has already declared the prelims results, and the process for the mains exam is underway. A group of agitating candidates, backed by well-known coaching teachers like Khan Sir and Guru Rahman, are demanding a re-examination of the preliminary test.



Eknath Shinde exhorts cadres to gear up for BMC elections

Mumbai, Feb 19 (IANS): Shiv Sena President and Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Eknath Shinde exhorted party workers to be ready for the upcoming elections to the Brihanmumbai Municipal Corporation and other civic and local bodies in the state, especially after the party's stellar performance in the Assembly elections. At the party rally, Shinde asked the cadres to step up outreach with the voters by taking up work done by the MahaYuti government during June 2022 and November 2024. "There should be a Shiv Sena 'shakha' and a Shiv Sainik in every ward," he said and appealed to the cadres that one blow was given in the Assembly elections now another blow be given in the upcoming BMC elections to assume power. "Shiv Sena

needs to be expanded and strengthened further," added Shinde. He instructed the workers and office bearers to register 123 names in the voter list as members in each ward and to register more than 10,000 members in each ward. Without directly mentioning Uddhav Thackeray, Shinde said, "Some people rake up the issue of separating Mumbai from Maharashtra when the elections come. But as long as there is sun and moon, no one can break Mumbai from us." Deputy CM Shinde said that the government will promote the stalled redevelopment and bring back the thrown-out Mumbaikars to Mumbai. By bringing together all the government undertakings like MHADA, MMRDA, Mahapreet, and MIDC, develop-

ment started in Mumbai through clusters like Thane. The government has built seven sewage treatment plants in Mumbai. He further said that in the next three to four years, the polluted and untreated water going into the sea will be processed and released and the water of Mumbai's sea will become blue. After becoming the Chief Minister, all the roads in Mumbai will be made of concrete in two phases. However, in the name of repairing Mumbai's roads, some have made Rs 3500 crore so far. Shinde said in his first speech in the state Assembly after becoming the chief minister in June 2022 he had announced that the MahaYuti will win more than 200 seats or else he would go to his native village to do farming.

BJP sweeps Gujarat local body polls, PM Modi calls it a 'victory for development'

Gandhinagar, Feb 19 (IANS) : The ruling BJP has once again reinforced its dominance in Gujarat by sweeping the local body elections and securing a decisive victory in the Junagadh Municipal Corporation (JMC). The party has won 60 out of 68 municipalities and all three taluka panchayats where voting took place on February 16. Prime Minister Narendra Modi also expressed gratitude to the people of Gujarat for their unwavering support for the party. PM Modi posted on the social media platform X: "Gujarat's relationship with BJP is not only unbreakable, but it is continuously getting stronger! I express my heartfelt gratitude to the people of Gujarat for giving their full support and blessings to the BJP in the municipal elections held in the state. This is another big victory in the politics of development. This will give our

hardworking workers an opportunity to serve the people with more energy. I congratulate all the BJP workers, whose tireless hard work and efforts have led to this glorious victory." Following the results, Gujarat BJP president C R Paatil attributed the party's success to PM Modi's leadership, Union Home Minister Amit Shah's strategic guidance, and Chief Minister Bhupendra Patel's governance. "We lost two municipalities to the SP, while one went to the Congress. However, in comparison to 2018, the BJP has added 14 more municipalities. While we have a clear majority in 60 municipalities, we are optimistic about forming the board in five others with independent support," Paatil stated. Gujarat Congress chief Shaktisinh Gohil acknowledged the party's poor



'Improved performance': Congress on Gujarat local body polls

Gandhinagar, Feb 19 (IANS) : Congress chief Shaktisinh Gohil on Wednesday claimed that his party's performance has improved as compared to the 2018 local body elections in the state. "Despite the challenges, the outcome cannot be viewed as disappointing. In 2018, the Congress had only 78 members in the Assembly. Today, we only have 12 members in the Assembly still we were able to secure 11 more seats in the local bodies whereas our performance in 2018 was in single digits," he claimed.



BJP appoints Amit Goyal as Jaipur city president

Jaipur, Feb 19 (IANS) : BJP has appointed Amit Goyal as district president of Jaipur city on Wednesday. With Amit Goyal's selection, the party has now announced 40 out of 44 district presidents. The remaining four district presidents are expected to be elected soon. Around 14 candidates had filed nomination papers for the Jaipur district president post. The election process took place at the Civil Lines community centre, where the election officer reviewed all nominations. Following the deliberations, Amit Goyal was unanimously elected to the position. After being elected, Amit Goyal expressed his gratitude to the organisation and Chief Minister Bhajan Lal Sharma for their trust in him.



Two loyalists of Jitendra Awhad join Ajit Pawar camp

Mumbai, Feb 19 (IANS) : NCP-SP legislator Jitendra Awhad on Wednesday received a major blow as his two staunch supporters Abhijeet Pawar and Hemant Wani joined the Ajit Pawar's NCP. Abhijeet Pawar, who was Awhad's personal assistant and managed his political affairs, along with NCP-SP's State Vice-President Hemant Wani, joined the NCP on Tuesday in the presence of Ajit Pawar,

along with hundreds of young party workers from Thane and Mumbra. Ajit Pawar criticised Awhad, saying that NCP boasted of several prominent figures from the Thane district but left due to one individual. "At that time, no one introspected why they left. Introspection was necessary. People make mistakes while working, but if someone

deliberately makes mistakes, no one will stay with them," he said. He also made a sarcastic remark on Jitendra Awhad indirectly. Ajit Pawar remarked, "When Abhijeet Pawar was to join the party, some calls were made, asking him to meet and find a way out mutually."

Drugs valued at Rs 42 crore seized in Mizoram & Assam

Aizawl/Silchar, Feb 19 (IANS) : The security personnel in Mizoram and Assam have seized highly addictive methamphetamine tablets valued at Rs 42 crore and arrested three drug peddlers including two Myanmar nationals during the past 24 hours, officials said on Wednesday. A defence spokesman said that 9,298 kg of methamphetamine tablets, also known as Yaba or party tablets, valued at around Rs 27.90 crore have seized at Vangkai crossing point two in Mizoram's Champhai district on Tuesday and apprehended two Myanmar nationals.



OPINIONmail



India-Qatar relations elevated to Strategic Partnership as PM Modi continues to solidify ties with Middle East nations

Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani on Tuesday signed an agreement to elevate India-Qatar relations to a Strategic Partnership with focus on trade, energy, investments, innovation, technology, food security, culture & people-to-people ties. Both leaders held wide-ranging talks at New Delhi's Hyderabad House, exchanging views on regional and global issues of mutual interest. Besides establishing bilateral strategic partnership relations, both leaders also witnessed the exchange of an agreement on the avoidance of double taxation and the prevention of fiscal evasion with respect to taxes on income. Earlier, the Amir, who is accompanied by a high-level delegation that includes ministers, senior officials, and a business delegation, was accorded a ceremonial welcome at the forecourt of Rashtrapati Bhavan. In the evening, the visiting leader will hold discussions with President Droupadi Murmu who will also host a banquet in his honour. In a special gesture, Prime Minister Modi travelled to the Air Force Station in Palam on Monday evening to receive the Amir on his landmark visit, his second to the country after March 2015.

"Went to the airport to welcome my brother, Amir of Qatar H.H. Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. Wishing him a fruitful stay in India and looking forward to our meeting tomorrow," the PM had posted on X after receiving Sheikh Tamim Bin Hamad Al Thani. The Amir expressed his thanks to the Prime Minister, the Government of India and the friendly people of India for the warm welcome and generous hospitality, noting the depth of the historical relations between the two countries, and stressing that India is one of the most important economic partners of the State of Qatar. The exchange ceremony was attended by Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Chief of the Amiri Diwan Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Khulaifi, Minister of State for Energy Affairs Saad bin Sherida Al Kaabi, Minister of Labour Ali bin Saeed Al Marri, Minister of Communications and Information Technology Mohammed bin Ali Al Mannai, Minister of Commerce and Industry Sheikh Faisal bin Thani Al Thani and a number of other dignitaries. "India and Qatar have deep-rooted historical ties of friendship, trust and mutual respect. In recent years, the ties between the two countries including in the areas of trade, investment, energy, technology, culture and people-to-people ties have continued to strengthen," read a statement issued by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA), last week.

The two countries have also witnessed regular high-level interactions among the leadership. After Amir's India visit in March 2015, PM Modi paid an official visit to Doha in June 2016 and in February 2024. The two leaders have also regularly met on the sidelines of other events, including the COP28 Summit in Dubai (December 2023) and the UN General Assembly. After M Venkaiah Naidu (June 2022), Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar also visited Doha in November 2022 to attend the opening ceremony of FIFA World Cup. External Affairs Minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar has also had multiple interactions with Qatar's Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al-Thani in Doha and on the sidelines of India-GCC Foreign Ministers meeting held in Riyadh under the Chairmanship of Qatar. Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh visited Doha in October 2024 and participated in the 3rd Asia Cooperation Dialogue Summit and the 2nd ACD Business Forum while Railways Minister Ashwini Vaishnav also travelled to Qatar to meet Qatar's Minister of Communications and IT, Minister of Transport and Governor of QCB and Chairman of QIA. "The Indian community residing in Qatar forms the largest expatriate community of Qatar, and is appreciated for its positive contribution in the progress and development of Qatar."

EDITORIAL
the indian mail

ADB plans to expand operations by 50 pc over next decade

The Asian Development Bank (ADB) announced on Tuesday that it has approved a plan to scale up its operations by 50 per cent over the next decade, leveraging its existing capital base to enhance its development impact across Asia and the Pacific. The Capital Utilisation Plan (CUP) outlines a pathway for increasing the ADB's annual financing commitments from \$24 billion in 2024 to more than \$36 billion by 2034. According to the bank, this expanded financing will bolster the efforts of ADB's developing members to address critical development priorities in the region.



Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway transports over 8 million passengers

The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway (Whoosh) has transported 8.01 million passengers since its commercial launch on October 17, 2023.

KCIC data shows that the average occupancy rate currently stands at 60.73 per cent, with a single-day passenger record of 24,400.

To accommodate increasing demand, daily trips have been increased to 62 as of February 1, providing more flexible and frequent departures. With trains running every 30 minutes, Whoosh continues offering commuters a fast and reliable travel alternative, Xinhua news agency reported quoting the PT Kereta Cepat Indonesia China (KCIC). In response to growing commuter demand, KCIC has also

launched the Frequent Whoosh Card, a subscription pass designed for greater flexibility and affordability. To further enhance the passenger experience, KCIC has introduced several new services. A new shuttle bus now connects Halim Station with Pantai Indah Kapuk 2 (PIK2), one of Jakarta's most popular coastal destinations, making it easier for travellers from Bandung to explore the city's beaches, culinary hotspots, and entertainment areas. Additionally, the opening of the first Whoosh official merchandise store at Halim Station allows passengers to purchase a variety of branded souvenirs, including apparel, accessories, and memorabilia. "We want to create a more personalized and memorable travel experience for passengers. With of-

icial merchandise, customers can take home a unique memento of their journey on Whoosh," said KCIC Corporate Secretary Eva Chairunisa, noting that these initiatives reflect KCIC's commitment to enhancing connectivity and convenience for travellers. The Jakarta-Bandung High-Speed Railway is currently the only high-speed railway in Southeast Asia and the Southern Hemisphere. It covers a distance of 143 kilometres with a maximum operating speed of 350 km/h, and a design speed of KCIC400AF train of 420 km/h (260 mph), making it the fastest commercially operating railway network in the world, tied with a handful of lines in China. The travel time between the two cities averages 45 minutes, down from 3 hours with the existing railway line.

Kash Patel moves a step closer to FBI directorship

Kash Patel moved a step closer to becoming the first Indian American to head the FBI with the US senate narrowly voting on a procedural measure to advance his nomination for a full vote of confirmation.

The US Senate, which must confirm the nomination, voted 48-45 along party lines to open debate on the nominee, starting the countdown for 30 hours of discussion before Patel is expected to receive final approval Thursday. Patel, who is 44 years old, has been one of the most controversial of those named by

President Donald Trump to his cabinet and administration. The others — Director of National Intelligence, Health Secretary Robert F Kennedy Jr and defence secretary Pete Hegseth were confirmed in party-line voting that is also expected to put Patel over the finish line as well.

Republican senators who had seemed opposed to some of these controversial nominees had all fallen in line with the president and confirmed every one of his nominees except Matt Getz, who was nominated to head the justice department as attorney general. He was forced to withdraw his nomination when it became clear several Republican senators re-



mained unconvinced of his fitness for the job in the light of a barrage of negative news reports about his sexual relations with minors.

Patel is a former public defender who has seen a meteoric rise in the power structure of Washington DC in recent years, rising up to be the chief of staff at the department of defence and deputy

director of national intelligence in President Trump's first term. Trump has now been nominated to head the FBI, an agency that investigated Trump for alleged mishandling of classified documents after leaving office in 2021 and for trying to overturn the 2020 election defeat to President Joe Biden.

Kerala CPI-M blasts AI but uses it to resurrect Nayanar

The Kerala unit of the CPI-M is no stranger to contradictions, and its latest stance on Artificial Intelligence (AI) is a prime example. State party secretary M.V. Govindan recently praised AI, highlighting its benefits, but just days later, he reversed his position and sharply criticized it.

Adding to the irony, the party on Tuesday released a video promoting the upcoming CPI-M state party conference in Kollam next month. The video features a digital recreation of E.K. Nayanar, the legendary three-time former CPI-M Chief Minister. In the brief video, Nayanar urges party members to ensure the success of the upcoming conference. Nayanar passed away in 2004 at the age of 84. While the video has been well-received, the document set to be discussed at the conference talks about the dangers of AI.

Govindan's flip-flop on AI has sparked online debates. Last month, during a party meeting, he argued that AI could lay the foundation for a socialist transformation, claiming that AI would replace 60 per cent of the workforce, leading to a loss of purchasing power among them.

Africa Business Forum urges to harness Africa's potential to drive economic transformation

African leaders, experts, and key stakeholders convened at the Africa Business Forum calling for the continent to harness its untapped potential to drive economic transformation.

The eighth edition of the forum, the continent's premier business gathering, took place in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia's capital, under the theme "From Potential to Prosperity: Activating Africa's Regional Value Chains." It brought together policymakers, investors, and key figures from both the public and private sectors, Xinhua news agency reported. Participants underscored the urgent need to leverage Africa's abundant natural resources and human capital -- more than 60 per cent of the continent's population is under 25 years old -- to accelerate socio-economic development.

Addressing the forum, Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) Claver Gatete emphasised the need to capitalise on Africa's wealth of resources to augment the continent's participation in global value

chains. "With over 65 per cent of Africa's workforce engaged in agriculture, why does Africa remain a net importer of food? Why must we continue to rely on external markets when our agro-industrial potential is unparalleled," Gatete asked African leaders and experts at the forum. "The time for incremental change is over. Africa must industrialise with urgency." Describing Africa's development trajectory as a "paradox," Gatete said while the continent is rich in natural and human resources.



Kenya secures funding to tackle climate change challenges

Nairobi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The United Nations (UN)-backed Green Climate Fund (GCF) has approved 50 million US dollars for key projects to bolster climate resilience and promote sustainable development in Kenya. The initiative, led by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), represents a significant investment to help vulnerable communities adapt to climate change, improve livelihoods, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions, the FAO said in a statement Wednesday. The project will transform agricultural value chains in the Lake Region Economic Bloc, an economic cooperation organisation in western Kenya, benefiting 2.7 million people, half of whom are women, the FAO said. This densely populated region is highly dependent on agriculture.



Why are we giving \$21 million to India? They got lot more money: Trump on voter funds row



Washington, Feb 19 (IANS) : As the US Department of Government Efficiency (DOGE) cancelled \$21 million funding for "voter turnout in India," US President Donald Trump voiced in favour of the decision. Speaking at his Mar-a-Lago residence in Florida, Trump raised the question of why \$21 million was given to India, a country with a lot more money. "Why are we giving \$21 million to India? They got a lot more money. They are one of the highest taxing countries in the world in terms of us; we can hardly get

in there because their tariffs are so high. I have a lot of respect for India and their Prime Minister, but giving \$21 million for voter turnout? In India? What about voter turnout here?" Trump remarked. The controversy erupted after the DOGE, led by Elon Musk, announced the cancellation of the \$21 million grant on February 16. In a post shared on X, DOGE outlined several foreign assistance programmes that had been deemed unnecessary or excessive, with the India voter turnout project topping the list.



South Korean Constitutional Court moves forward with Yoon's impeachment trial despite tight schedule

Seoul, Feb 19 (IANS) : The South Korean Constitutional Court decided on Wednesday to proceed with its 10th hearing of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's impeachment trial as planned, increasing the likelihood that a ruling could be reached by the end of next month. Yoon had initially requested a postponement of Thursday's 2 pm hearing, citing a scheduling conflict with the first preliminary hearing of his criminal trial on insurrection charges. Moon Hyung-bae, the acting court president, rejected the request, noting that the criminal trial hearing was set for 10 a.m. the same day, leaving enough time for both proceedings.

Moon also cited other factors, including the need to coordinate the schedules of all parties involved, such as Yoon and the National Assembly's legal teams, the justices, and the witnesses. However, near the end of Tuesday's hearing, the court agreed to push the impeachment hearing to 3 pm, following a renewed request from Yoon's lawyer Yun Gap-geun, who argued that "unforeseeable circumstances" during the criminal trial could cause delays. With the rescheduling, the 10th hearing is expected to conclude around 9 pm at the earliest. The court's decision to adhere to its hearing schedule, despite time constraints, suggests the proceedings could conclude soon, potentially paving the way for a verdict by late March on whether to remove Yoon from office or reinstate him. At Tuesday's hearing, the legal representatives of Yoon and the National Assembly summarised their arguments to date. The court also reviewed previously admitted but unexamined evidence. No witnesses testified. The hearing will leave only one additional hearing Thursday before proceedings wrap up, and each side is asked to present their final statements. Impeached Prime Minister Han Duck-soo and Hong Jang-won, former first Deputy Director of the National Intelligence Service, have been called to testify as witnesses Thursday.

US to deport illegal migrants from India to Costa Rica

New York, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Central American country of Costa Rica has agreed to accept illegal Indian migrants deported from the US, creating a bridge for working out their eventual fate. The deportations will start on Wednesday under a US-funded programme and the mi-

grants will be detained in a temporary centre near the border with Panama, the office of President Rodrigo Chaves Robles has announced. Neither Costa Rica nor the US has said what would happen to the migrants after their detention in Costa Rica. The deal helps the US avoid setting up massive detention facilities within the

country for migrants waiting to be deported and avoid the negative optics, "The Government of Costa Rica agreed to collaborate with the United States in the repatriation of 200 illegal immigrants to their country," the President's office said, adding that the deportees would include those from India and Central Asia.



Russia and US to appoint ambassadors, announce negotiating teams to end conflict in Ukraine

Riyadh/Moscow, Feb 19 (IANS) : Russia and the United States will soon announce teams to negotiate a path to ending the war in Ukraine besides also ensuring the "earliest possible appointment" of ambassadors in both Moscow and Washington. "Russia and the United States will hold regular consultations on Ukraine after both sides appoint negotiating teams," Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said at a press briefing following talks with US officials in Riyadh, on Wednesday. A meeting of deputy foreign ministers will be scheduled in the near future to "remove barriers" to the work of embassies, Lavrov said following the talks with US Secretary of State Marco Rubio, National Security Advisor Mike

Waltz and US special envoy to the Middle East Steve Witkoff. On the Russian side, senior political, intelligence, and economic officials participated, including Yuri Ushakov, the Kremlin's foreign affairs advisor. "The first is probably the most urgent and certainly not the most difficult. This is to ensure the earliest possible appointment of Russian ambassadors to the United States and the United States to Russia. To remove the obstacles that for many years, primarily from the administration of [former US President Joe] Biden, have been primarily built on the direction of our diplomatic missions, seriously complicating their work," Lavrov was quoted as saying by Russia's state-owned Tass news agency

while announcing the agreements reached during the meeting. Lavrov stated that the deputy heads of the diplomatic departments of the two countries "will agree to meet in the very near future and consider the need to eliminate these artificial barriers in the work of embassies and other foreign institutions of Russia in the United States and the United States in Russia". During these contacts, he said, senior diplomats will have to not focus on "the specific manifestation of these obstacles, but will try to approach them systematically in order to put an end once and for all to these inconveniences that really hinder the development of everyday normal relations".

Angola's cholera death toll climbs to 150

Luanda, Feb 19 (IANS) : The number of people killed in the latest cholera outbreak in Angola has reached 150, the Health Ministry has said. A total of 4,235 people have been infected since early January, the ministry said. Cases have been reported in 10 of the country's 21 provinces, with 86 per cent of overall cases and 84 per cent of deaths occurring in the capital, Luanda, and the neighbouring Bengo Province. Since February 1, Angola has recorded more than 100 new cholera cases daily, peaking at 295 on February 8, the ministry said. However, laboratory testing remains limited, with only around 20 samples analysed per day. More than 925,000 people had been vaccinated against cholera, covering 86 per cent of the target population, the

health ministry said in a February 10 bulletin, Xinhua news agency reported. The World Health Organization (WHO), in a cholera flash update, said it has been working on vaccination and safe water initiatives in Angola. It also plans to support Angolan health authorities in case-finding, case-management, health campaigns, and response team training. According to the WHO, Cholera is an acute diarrhoeal infection caused by consuming food or water contaminated with the bacterium *Vibrio cholerae*. It is a global public health threat and indicates inequity and lack of social and economic development. Access to safe water, basic sanitation and hygiene is essential to prevent cholera and other waterborne diseases.



UN Chief Guterres calls for consensus on security council reforms

United Nations, Feb 19 (IANS) : Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has said that now is the time to develop "greater consensus" in the process of reforming the Security Council to strengthen "trust in the United Nations, and trust in this Council". "This Council should be enlarged and made more representative of today's geopolitical realities", he said on Wednesday at a meeting of the Council on multilateralism and reforming global governance. He recalled the call for reform in the Pact for the Future adopted unanimously at last year's summit of world leaders outlining their vision for the UN beyond its 80th anniversary. "Now is the time to build on the momentum provided by the Pact for the Future, and work towards a greater consensus among regional groups and Member States — including the permanent members of this Council — to move the intergovernmental negotiations forward", he said. "The Pact also recognises that the Security Council must reflect the world of today."

Gurugram: Strengthen interdepartmental coordination, says CEO GMDA

Gurugram, Feb 19 (IANS) : Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA), Shyamal Misra chaired a meeting with different departments to discuss various projects, to further resolve any on-ground hindrances, improve the civic services and accelerate the ongoing infrastructure development works being undertaken in the city. The matter of incomplete connectivity of surface drains under NHAI with the master stormwater drains of GMDA was raised in the meeting.

GMDA officials said that storm water drains laid by NHAI along Iffco Chowk, Signature Tower, Jharsa Chowk, Manesar Bus Stand, and Hero Honda Chowk among other key locations are yet to be linked with the master drain of GMDA, in the absence of which waterlogging occurs during the monsoon season. Mishra directed that a joint inspection be immediately undertaken by the concerned officers of both departments and ensure that the drains are connected to facilitate proper discharge of stormwater and keep the city roads free of waterlogging. Additionally, the issue related to the dumping of garbage into the drains along the National Highway was also touched upon by NHAI officials. "Instructions were issued to MCG officials to augment the manpower and resources deployed by the department to tackle the menace of illegal waste dumping and ensure that the garbage removal activities are executed on a daily basis to keep the drains free from clogging," Mishra said. GMDA officers submitted that to further strengthen the temporary waterlogging relief measures being undertaken at Narsinghpur.



Advantage Assam: CM Sarma meets Union Home Minister Amit Shah

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Wednesday met Union Home Minister Amit Shah in the national capital regarding the upcoming investment summit -- Advantage Assam. Taking to social media platform X, CM Sarma wrote, "Today in New Delhi, I had the honour of meeting Home Minister @amitshah Ji to seek his guidance for #AdvantageAssam2." Earlier in the day, the Chief Minister asserted that the state government has been pushing for investor-friendly policies to attract investments, adding that Assam has the best semiconductor

policy in the country. He said, "Assam is aggressively pushing for investor-friendly policies. Our Semiconductor policy is the best in the country -- Over and above the Centre's incentives to semiconductor industries, we are providing 50 per cent additional PLI and all related infrastructure and policy support." The Chief Minister has been eyeing investments through the upcoming summit -- 'Advantage Assam' that is scheduled to take place on February 25 and 26. CM Sarma said that this summit is set to bring more investments to the state. He added that more government jobs and entrepreneur

ship support will be provided to the people of the state. The CM has visited South Korea, Japan, and Singapore and he met with top industry players and invited them to invest in Assam. According to Chief Minister Sarma, the event would highlight the traditional Jhumur dance of the tea tribe clans. CM Sarma said, "This summit is a platform to showcase Assam's rich traditions to a global audience in addition to attracting investors." A spectacular Jhumur dance performance with more than 7,500 dancers and artists will be part of the event. It will be an extraordinary show, he added.

Tejashwi Yadav criticises Centre over new CEC's appointment

Patna, Feb 19 (IANS) : After Gyanesh Kumar, a 1988-batch IAS officer, was appointed as the Chief Election Commissioner (CEC), Tejashwi Yadav, Leader of the Opposition in the Bihar Assembly, attacked the Union government over his appointment. "When two teams play a match, the umpire should be neutral. But now, the umpire (Election Commission) has become a cheerleader for the ruling party," he alleged

Tejashwi Yadav recalled the 2020 Bihar Assembly Elections, alleging that the Election Commission delayed vote counting to manipulate results. "We were winning, but the counting was stopped and delayed. The final results were announced late at night, leading to many of our candidates narrowly losing. Many candidates went to court challenging the decision but the election commission was unaffected.



No favouritism, only merit to work during appointments in party organisation: Maha Cong chief

Mumbai, Feb 19 (IANS) : Newly appointed Maharashtra Congress President Harshwardhan Sapkal in his maiden speech after taking over the charge on Wednesday declared that merit and performance will be the sole criteria during the

appointments in the party organisation, saying that "favouritism, factionalism, and casteism will not be tolerated". He told the party leaders and cadres that it was time to fight and not to cry and collectively focus on further strengthening the party organisation in the state.



People have high expectation from MP's Global Investment Summit: Kamal Nath

Bhopal, Feb 19 (IANS) : Former Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister and senior Congress leader Kamal Nath said on Wednesday that people have high expectations from the upcoming Global Investment Summit scheduled to be held in Bhopal. Nath, who has vast experience heading several Ministries such as Commerce, Industry, and Textiles during the previous Congress-led UPA government, said that people of the state will be hopeful that the investment will bring employment to them. Meanwhile, he also highlighted that the people of Madhya Pradesh will be mainly concerned about whether the Global Investment Summit will create job opportunities for them or not and not more about the numbers presented by the BJP-led state government. Nath, who had organised the Global Investment Summit during the previous Congress

government in Madhya Pradesh in 2019, said previous investor summits did not give the state much, except photo-ops between top industry leaders and politicians. The Congress leader also said that more than 33 lakh youths are registered unemployed in Madhya Pradesh, including those who have completed degrees from top universities and educational institutions. "People of Madhya Pradesh are more concerned about employment opportunities and they have high hopes for the upcoming Global Investment Summit. Therefore, I would request to tell you how many jobs and employment targets they (BJP government) have set for the summit?" he added. "The upcoming summit will be considered successful, only if it brings meaningful results in the direction of providing jobs for youths in Madhya Pradesh.



MP sets new policies to boost MSMEs, Start-ups and more

Bhopal, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Madhya Pradesh government has rolled out a series of innovative policies aimed at promoting Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and invigorating other key sectors. Among the highlights is a new policy for undeveloped land allocation, designed to support eligible projects with government guidance and assistance. This initiative includes provisions for flats if land is unavailable, and stresses a transparent online application process with land allotment through e-bidding. To stimulate the energy sector, the state has announced ambitious targets and subsidies. Investors committing over Rs 10 crore will receive a 40 per cent subsidy, with even higher benefits for specific groups; 48 per cent for

scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and women industries, and 52 per cent for women. The goal is to integrate these groups into MSME industries and foster development in regions where industrial establishments are currently lacking, Kailash Vijayvargiya, Spokesperson and Minister for Urban Development and Housing said after the Cabinet meeting on Wednesday. The Cabinet has also approved a start-up policy with the objective of doubling the number of startups from the current 5,000 to 10,000. Mega incubation centres will be established to provide loan assistance, market access, and other support to encourage innovation and growth. Additionally, a Start-up advisory council will be formed to oversee these initiatives, the minister said.



PM Modi applauds inauguration of Inland Waterways Terminal at Assam's Jogighopa

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Prime Minister Narendra Modi lauded the inauguration of the Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) Terminal at Jogighopa in Assam. The state-of-the-art terminal, connected to the Multi-Modal Logistics Park and strategically located in Jogighopa will be an international port of call for Bhutan.

of Finance, Lyonpo Namgyal Dorji, inaugurated the Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) Terminal at Jogighopa in Assam. The state-of-the-art terminal, connected to the Multi-Modal Logistics Park and strategically located in Jogighopa will be an international port of call for Bhutan.



Labour participation rate rises in urban areas, reflecting higher employment : Centre

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Labour Force Participation Rate (LFPR) in India's urban areas among persons of age 15 years and above has risen to 50.4 per cent in the October-December quarter in 2024 -- from 49.9 per cent in the same quarter of the previous year, reflecting an increase in employment in the country, according to data released by the Ministry of Statistics on Tuesday.

LFPR for males of age 15 years

and above in urban areas increased to 75.4 per cent during October-December period, from 74.1 per cent during the same quarter in 2023, reflecting overall increasing trend in male LFPR.

LFPR among females of age 15 years and above for urban areas increased to 25.2 per cent during the quarter from 25 per cent in the same period of the preceding year.

The Worker Population Ratio (WPR), which is another indicator of employment, also went up in urban areas among persons of age 15 years to 47.2 per cent in Oct-Dec, 2024 from 46.6 period in the same quarter of 2023, according to the government data.



TN Samsung factory strike : Conciliatory talks between management and union

Chennai, Feb 19 (IANS) : With protests continuing at Samsung India's Sriperumbudur plant, the Tamil Nadu Labour Department has facilitated a meeting between the workers' union and management, scheduled for Wednesday.

The strike, led by the CPI(M)-affiliated Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), is in response to the suspension of three workers, who are also office-bearers of the Samsung India Workers Union (SIWU).

CITU has warned that if the talks fail, they will escalate protests by staging demonstrations outside Samsung showrooms across Tamil Nadu on February 21 (Friday). Additionally, the union plans large-scale protests outside the office of the Deputy Labour Commissioner in Kancheepuram following these demonstrations.

A Tamil Nadu Labour Department official told IANS that at least three rounds of conciliation talks have taken place since January 31. However, the situation escalated further after fresh protests erupted over the workers' suspensions.



Signature Global's shares drop nearly 15 pc in a week, stock down 19 pc in 1 year

Mumbai, Feb 19 (IANS) : The shares of Signature Global India Limited on Wednesday further declined by 2.03 per cent at Rs 1,102.40 during the intra-day trading session, as investors remain cautious about the company's financial health. The stock is on a downward spree over the past week. It has fallen by 14.52 per cent and 13.84 per cent in the last two weeks.

Over the past month, Signature Global's share price has dropped by 2.32 per cent on the Bombay Stock Exchange (BSE).

The decline extends further over longer periods, with the stock down 14.58 per cent in the last three months and 27.89 per cent in the past six months.

Year to date, the stock has fallen by 18.62 per cent while over the past year, it has registered a 19.1 per cent decline.

Centre to host roadshow in Kolkata on coal mine auctions

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Ministry of Coal will host a roadshow on Coal Mine Auctions and Opportunities in the Coal Sector on Wednesday in Kolkata, according to an official statement issued on Tuesday. The roadshow aims at highlighting the wide array of opportunities available in the coal sector, driven by significant government reforms aimed at streamlining processes, enhancing transparency, and creating a level playing field for all stakeholders, the statement said.

The event will provide in-depth details into the upcoming Commercial Coal Mine auctions, discuss the investment potential, and showcase the long-term benefits of participating in India's growing coal sector.

"This roadshow is a valuable platform for stakeholders to learn about the regulatory framework, streamlined clearance processes, and the ministry's efforts to foster an investor-friendly environment in the coal sector. The Ministry is committed to ensuring that the coal industry remains globally competitive, offering a win-win scenario for both domestic and international investors looking to capitalise on the opportunities in India's energy landscape," the statement said.

The event also provides an exclusive opportunity for participants to connect with key decision-makers, gain valuable insights into future coal sector trends, and explore collaborative ventures that can shape the future of India's energy and mining sectors. The key reforms that have been



introduced in commercial coal mine auctions include a reduction in the upfront amount and bid security amount making participation more financially accessible. Investors are also allowed to relinquish part of the coal mine for partially explored blocks, providing greater operational flexibility. Besides, rebate in performance security for underground coal mines to encourage investment and a more inclusive auction pro-

cess has been introduced by facilitating ease of participation with no entry barriers. Full flexibility in coal utilisation, enabling companies to use coal for any purpose as per their business needs is another incentive that forms part of the reforms. Optimised payment structures and incentives for early production have also been introduced.

Punjab adds 46,338

GST taxpayers: Finance Minister Cheema

Chandigarh, Feb 19 (IANS) : Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema on Wednesday said the Excise and Taxation Department has conducted targeted GST registration drives to broaden the tax base, resulting in the addition of 46,338 taxpayers in 2023-24 and approximately 33,000 new taxpayers up to December 2024. He said a statewide cam-

paign has also been launched to educate taxpayers on filing procedures, ITC claims, and compliance benefits. The Finance Minister, in a press statement, said that the state GST Department initiated another GSTR registration drive in January, visiting approximately 48,000 new dealers and registering around 10,500 dealers across the state.



100 pc FDI to help Indian insurance sector reach \$222 billion by 2026

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Indian insurance sector has witnessed impressive growth over the last two decades and the government's allowance of 100 per cent foreign direct investment (FDI) in the sector would further

accelerate growth, attracting significant foreign capital and boosting innovation, according to a new report.

India's insurance sector has witnessed significant growth and development over the past few years.

The domestic insurance market has grown at a CAGR of 17 per cent over the last two decades and is expected to reach a size of \$222 billion by 2026, according to a TeamLease Regtech report.

A typical single-entity insurance

company with a corporate office in a single state needs to deal with 2,236 unique compliances. The annual compliance obligations rise to 4,638 once the frequency of compliances is factored in.

Earning Indians allocating over

33 pc of income towards paying loan EMIs: Report

Bengaluru, Feb 19 (IANS) : As private consumption surges in India, earning individuals across all city tiers are allocating more than 33 per cent of their income (on average) towards paying loan EMIs, a report showed on Wednesday. People spend the highest amount of money on their obligatory expenditures, which accounts for 39 per cent of their total spending, followed by 32 per cent for necessity expenditures and 29

per cent for discretionary expenditures, according to the report by B2B fintech company Perfios and PwC India. The findings showed that more than 62 per cent of discretionary expenditures are allocated towards lifestyle purchases, which include shopping for fashion and personal care items.

As the salary increases from entry-level earners to high-income earners, both the amount of money spent on food expenditure (ordering or eating out) and the frequency at which it is spent in-



crease. Average total amount spent on house rent is 4.5 per cent higher in tier 2 cities than it is in tier 1 cities, the report found. People in tier 2 cities spend the

most on medical expenses, averaging 20 per cent more per month than those in tier 1 cities.

A person in a tier 1 city spends nearly Rs 2,450 per month on

medical expenses on average, while metro residents have the lowest average expenditure at Rs 2,048 per month, said the report.



Udaan's financial woes continue despite new fundraising, revenue stagnates

Bengaluru, Feb 19 (IANS) : B2B e-commerce platform Udaan is facing serious financial challenges despite securing fresh funds as the company's revenue remained almost flat in FY24.



Karnataka govt playing games with teachers who shape children's future: BJP

Bengaluru, Feb 19 (IANS): The Karnataka BJP on Wednesday hit out at the Congress-led state government, which is responsible for shaping children's future, is instead playing games with the teachers who educate them. State BJP President and MLA, B.Y. Vijayendra, made the statement after paying a visit to the protesting guest teachers at the Freedom Park. He described it as an unpardonable offence on the part of the government not to reciprocate to the teaching fraternity. Speaking on the demands of the teachers, Vijayendra emphasised that the state government should have acted humanely towards guest teachers. Express-

ing his support for the protest by teachers, the State BJP President assured that he and the Leader of the Opposition in the Legislative Council, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy, were present to stand in solidarity with them. He also vowed to raise their voices against the Congress government and hold them accountable. The BJP government had previously increased the guest teachers' honorarium from Rs 5,000 to Rs 7,500 and later to Rs 10,000, as mentioned in their manifesto. Vijayendra stressed that guest teachers play a crucial role in shaping the state's future and that the state government must at least address their minimum demands.

He also highlighted the need for paid maternity leave for pregnant female teachers, questioning how a pregnant teacher could be expected to work without leave. Vijayendra said that universities established during the previous BJP government's tenure require funding between Rs 300 crore and Rs 400 crore, but the Congress government is making excuses about the lack of funds while attempting to shut down these educational institutions by blaming them. Speaking at the event, Chalavadi Narayanaswamy said that the demand for a salary increase for guest teachers is justified, and he fully supports their demands.

UP quack, two aides held for murdering medical equipment dealer in Delhi

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : After analysing around 300 CCTV cameras' footage, three murderers, including a quack from Uttar Pradesh, were arrested for killing a medical equipment seller in North Delhi's Sarai Rohilla earlier this month, said a police official on Wednesday. Ranbir Singh, 68, resident of East Moti Bagh, Sarai Rohilla, Delhi, was stabbed to death on February 1 and robbed of an ultrasound machine, laptop and other articles, police said.

The quack and his associates killed the victim as they wanted to rob his ultrasound machine and use it at his outlet, police said. Deputy Commissioner of Police Raja Banthia identified the accused as Md. Parvez Alam, 27, resident of district Muzaffarnagar.



Jharkhand govt imposes complete ban on Gutkha and Paan Masala containing tobacco-nicotine

Ranchi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Jharkhand government has announced a complete ban on the production, distribution, sale, and storage of gutkha and paan masala containing nicotine and tobacco within the state. The state's health department has issued a notification that this ban will be effective for the next year, starting from the notification date. The authorities have stated that the ban period may be extended further based on a review of the situation.

In 2020, Jharkhand banned 11 brands of gutkha and paan masala, effective until June 2023. The ban lapsed for about one and a half years. This time, all types of paan masala contain-

ing nicotine and tobacco, in addition to gutkha, have been prohibited in the state.

According to the notification signed by Additional Chief Secretary of the Health Department and State Food Safety Commissioner Ajay Kumar Singh, this ban is imposed under Section 30(2)(A) of the Food Safety and Standards Act, 2006, and Regulations 2, 3, and 4 of the Food Safety and Standards (Prohibition and Restriction on Sales) Regulation, 2011.

The government has directed the concerned department to disseminate this information through the media.

It has said that strict action will be taken against anyone found selling gutkha and paan masala containing tobacco or nicotine.



Postpone Maha Kumbh visit for few days if journey is inconvenient: MP CM

Bhopal, Feb 19 (IANS) : Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Mohan Yadav on Wednesday urged people from the state to keep a close vigil on the traffic congestion before leaving for the Maha Kumbh in Uttar Pradesh's Prayagraj.

After reviewing the traffic jams on different roads occurring due to thousands of pilgrims visiting Prayagraj from Madhya Pradesh, Chief Minister Yadav advised people to gather information about the transportation routes in advance.

The Chief Minister said that although the state government is making all the required arrangements for the devotees, the devotees should also carry some essential items with them so that if they have to stop somewhere on the way, they do not have to face any problem.

'Re-exam only solution', says Khan Sir as BPSC protests intensify in Patna

Patna, Feb 19 (IANS) : Aspirants and educators protesting to demand the re-examination of the 70th Bihar Public Service Commission (BPSC) Combined Competitive Examination (CCE) have intensified in Patna. Prominent educator Faizal Khan, popularly known as Khan Sir, has been at the forefront of these demonstrations, emphasising that a re-examination is the only solution to address the alleged irregularities. Talking to the IANS, Khan Sir highlighted evidence suggesting misconduct during the examinations held on January 4, 2025, at various

centres across Bihar. Khan Sir pointed out the non-political nature of the movement and called for Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and Principal Secretary Deepak Kumar to consider their demands for a re-examination. "We only have one demand, re-exam, nothing short of that will be acceptable," he said. The protests have seen significant participation from aspirants and educators alike.

On February 17, demonstrators marched from Mullsllahpur to Gardani Bagh in Patna, carrying placards and demanding the cancellation of the examination.



Pralhad Joshi takes holy dip at Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj

Prayagraj, Feb 19 (IANS) : Union Minister for Food, Public Distribution and Consumer Affairs Pralhad Joshi and his family took a dip at the Triveni Sangam in Prayagraj on Wednesday.

Immersing himself in the sacred waters of the Triveni Sangam, the minister performed the ritual bath while chanting mantras and offering prayers for global prosperity. Later, along with his family, he visited the revered Bhagwan Hanuman temple and Akshayavat, offering special

prayers. The minister was accompanied by his wife, Jyoti Joshi, daughters Arpita, Ananya, and Anusha Joshi, his brother Govind Joshi, and his wife Kamala Joshi, as well as children and grandchildren.

Talking to IANS in Prayagraj, Minister Pralhad Joshi shared his unique experience of the Maha Kumbh. Expressing joy, he said, "The Prayagraj Maha Kumbh Mela is a grand collective pilgrimage of Hinduism, successfully conducted with great devotion. It is our great fortune to have had

the golden opportunity to take a sacred dip with our family at the Triveni Sangam. This is a deeply significant and divine moment of devotion for us." He added that the Maha Kumbh provides a profound spiritual experience, where taking a holy dip symbolises immense success, faith, and cultural heritage. Minister Joshi also praised the excellent arrangements at Prayagraj's Maha Kumbh, crediting Prime Minister Modi's leadership and Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's "meticulous" planning.

Maha govt sets up enforcement cell to curb illegal fishing, increase maritime safety

Mumbai, February 19 (IANS): The Maharashtra Fisheries Department has set up an enforcement cell to take strict action against unauthorised fishing boats and thereby ensure sustainable fishing and maritime security in the maritime areas, officials said.

State Fisheries and Ports Minister Nitesh Rane on Wednesday said that the department's

move to launch drone patrolling in coastal areas for maritime security is showing good results. The enforcement cell will be headed by the Commissioner of Fisheries Department.



Virendra Sachdeva meets L-G on eve of Delhi BJP legislature party meeting

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Ahead of the BJP legislature party's meeting, Delhi BJP chief Virendra Sachdeva and National BJP General Secretary Vinod Tavde called on Lieutenant Governor (L-G) V.K. Saxena on Wednesday, adding to the suspense of the name of the new Chief Minister.

The BJP legislature party's meeting is likely to take place around 7 pm on Wednesday, said a Delhi BJP leader, adding that soon after the meeting a signed letter of support from all the MLAs in favour of the new Chief Minister and Leader of the House will be presented to Saxena.

The leader said the formality of giving the letter of support to the L-G must be completed on the eve of the swearing-in ceremony of the new Chief Minister and the Cabinet scheduled for February 20 at the historic Ram Lila Maidan. The swearing-in is expected to take place around 11.30 am,



said a BJP functionary who accompanied Sachdeva and BJP spokesperson Tarun Chugh to the Ram Lila Maidan to take stock of the arrangement for the grand ceremony to be addressed by Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

Australian PM says interest rate cut will not impact general election timing

Canberra, Feb 19 (IANS) : A long-awaited decision by Australia's central bank to cut interest rates will not influence the timing of the upcoming general election, Prime Minister Anthony Albanese has said. Albanese on Wednesday night said that the call by the Reserve Bank of Australia (RBA) to cut rates will not affect the date he sets the elec-

tion. "This won't have an impact on the timing of the election," he told Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) radio. The board of governors of the RBA on Tuesday announced a decision to lower the cash rate target by 25 basis points to 4.1 per cent -- marking the first cut to the key interest rate since November 2020. Speculation from local media has been mounting that a cut would prompt Albanese to call the

election for April 5 or 12. The election must be held by May 17 and, as prime minister, Albanese could at any moment visit the governor-general to dissolve parliament and formally initiate the process, Xinhua news agency reported. A minimum of 33 days -- and a maximum of 58 -- must elapse between the governor-general directing the electoral commissioner to conduct an election and the



election date. An election in April would mean that Albanese's governing Labor Party would not hand down the federal budget for 2025-26 as planned on March 25 because parliament would have al-

ready been dissolved. The prime minister told ABC radio that the government has been "working hard" preparing the budget. Speaking on Wednesday morning, Treasurer Jim Chalmers told ABC television that the government is still making decisions about cost-of-living relief measures that will be included in the budget. Opinion polls have indicated that the election is set to be a tight contest between Labor, which has held power since 2022, and the opposition Coalition of the Liberal and National parties.



Europe should continue supporting Ukraine, reject peace of dictate, says Scholz

Paris, Feb 19 (IANS) : German Chancellor Olaf Scholz said that Europe should continue to support Ukraine, emphasising that no peace of dictate can be imposed on the country. "Ukraine should have confidence in us. It is clear that we should continue to support Ukraine," Scholz said on Wednesday after attending an emergency meeting convened by French President Emmanuel Macron on the eve of the Russian-US talks set to take place Tuesday in Riyadh. "No peace of dictate can be imposed on Ukraine... Ukraine cannot accept everything that is presented to it under any conditions," he added. The German chancellor urged Europe and the United States to act together for collective security. "There must be no division of security and responsibility between Europe and the US," he said. "NATO is based on the fact that we always act together and share

the risks... This must not be called into question." Regarding reports on the possibility of European countries sending ground troops to Ukraine as part of a "peacekeeping" mission, Scholz dismissed these discussions as "totally premature." However, he stated that European nations are prepared to "spend at least two per cent" of their gross domestic product on strengthening Europe's defence. "If European states spend more, Germany supports ensuring that this expenditure is not factored into European budget deficits calculations," he added. Monday's gathering brought together leaders of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Commission, along with representatives from European countries including France, Germany, Britain, Poland, Spain, Italy, Denmark and the Netherlands.

Nepali general injured in UN peacekeeping operation in Lebanon back home

United Nations, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Nepali general who was wounded in an attack on peacekeepers in Lebanon has returned home after he was released from hospital, according to Secretary-General Antonio Guterres's Spokesperson Stephane Dujarric. He said on Wednesday that Major General Chok Dhakal, who completed his term as the deputy force commander of the UN Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), went back to Nepal on Wednesday. Dhakal, who was wrapping up his assignment, was injured on the way to Beirut airport in an attack on his convoy on the way to Beirut airport on Friday. He was taken to a hospital along with a Nepali peacekeeper and released after treatment. The attack took place where supporters of the militant group Hezbollah were holding a protest against the Lebanon government.



Humanitarian needs in Gaza overwhelming : UN

United Nations, Feb 19 (IANS) : The needs in Gaza, where the ceasefire is holding, are overwhelming, humanitarians said, adding that continuing Israeli operations in the West Bank are still producing casualties. "As the UN and its humanitarian partners continue to deliver life-saving assistance across the Gaza Strip, the scale of needs remains overwhelming, requiring urgent and sustained support," the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) said. OCHA said the Palestinian Ministry of Health reported that oxygen supplies are critically needed to keep emergency, surgical and intensive care services running at hospitals throughout Gaza, including Al Shifa and Al Rantisi in Gaza City. Health partners are

engaging with the authorities to bring in generators, spare parts and equipment required to produce oxygen locally, Xinhua news agency reported. The office said that shelter partners distributed tarpaulins to more than 11,000 families in northern Gaza over the weekend. In Khan Younis, some 450 families received sealing-off kits, kitchen sets and hygiene kits at a displacement site in Al Mawasi. OCHA said education activities are expanding, with its partners reporting that more than 250,000 people are enrolled in a distance learning program produced by the UN's relief agency for Palestinian refugees. Humanitarian partners reported that 95 per cent of school buildings were damaged during the hostilities, forcing many students into makeshift tents and

open spaces in winter temperatures. In the West Bank, OCHA said that since the Israeli military operations began on January 21, the most extensive in two decades, 36 Palestinians reportedly were killed, 25 in Jenin and nearly a dozen in Tulkarm. The operation is causing high casualties and significant displacement, especially in refugee camps. Critical infrastructure has also been severely damaged, driving humanitarian needs even higher. The office repeated that the use of lethal, war-like tactics during these operations raises concerns over the use of force that exceeds law enforcement standards. OCHA also said that over the weekend, Israeli settlers attacked Palestinian residents in several villages in the West Bank's Nablus governorates.

South Korea needs to accept more foreigners in tackling population crisis : Presidential committee official

Seoul, Feb 19 (IANS) : South Korea needs to accept more foreigners and seek other comprehensive measures to tackle problems in connection with its ultra-low birth rate and rapid ageing, a senior presidential committee official said on Wednesday. "Rather than putting policy focus only on how to boost birth rates, we now need to have more comprehensive perspectives and devise solutions, such as attracting more foreigners," said Joo Hyung-hwan, vice chairman of the Presidential Committee on Ageing Society and Population Policy, during a forum in Seoul. The country is experiencing grim demographic changes, as many young people opt to postpone or give up on getting married or having babies in line with changing social norms and lifestyles, as well as amid a tough job market

and high home prices. The total fertility rate, which means the average number of expected births from a woman in her lifetime, is forecast to come to 0.75 in 2024, which is far below the 2.1 births per woman needed to maintain a stable population without immigration. "We should create decent environments that attract foreign talent, particularly in advanced industries and young workforce, and come up with innovative measures for social integration," Joo said. The number of foreigners staying in South Korea came to around 2.65 million in 2024, accounting for about 5 per cent of the total population, according to government data, Yonhap news agency reported. South Korea's declining birth rate is driven by several factors, including skyrocketing housing costs, demanding work cultures, gender inequality, and the high cost of raising children. Many couples delay or decide against having children due to financial



pressures and a lack of sufficient support systems, which further worsens the population decline. In response to this crisis, the South Korean government has implemented a range of policies designed to alleviate the financial burden of child-rearing. Generous financial support: Parents receive a monthly cash allowance of 700,000 Won (approximately \$520) for each child under one year old and 350,000 Won (\$260) for children aged one to two. This allowance is set to increase to 1 million Won (\$740) per month in the near future. Housing assistance: Special housing programs provide subsidised loans and affordable rental options for young couples and families with children. The government also prioritises public housing access for families with multiple children. Workplace reforms: Paid parental leave policies have been expanded, allowing up to 18 months of leave per parent.



Yunus govt turning Bangladesh into terrorism hub: Sheikh Hasina

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The ousted Prime Minister of Bangladesh accused the Mohammed Yunus-led interim government of turning the nation into a hub of terrorism and lawlessness. She also vowed to return home assuring help to families suffering and delivering them justice. She said that Yunus himself has said that he has no experience in running a nation, then he should refrain from doing so, accusing him of remaining silent as dozens of police officers were killed last year during student-led riots against her quota reforms and allowing lawlessness to take over. "Yunus has no experience of running a government. He dissolved all inquiry committees and unleashed the terrorists to butcher people.

Iran's supreme leader says US 'foolish' plans for Gaza to lead nowhere

Tehran, Feb 19 (IANS) : Iran's Supreme Leader Ali Khamenei said that US "foolish" plans for Gaza and Palestine "will lead nowhere." "Those who claimed that they would destroy resistance in a short period of time are now receiving their prisoners from the resistance fighters in small groups and releasing a large number of Palestinian captives in return," Khamenei said when meeting with visiting Secretary-General of the Palestinian Islamic Jihad movement Ziad al-Nakhalah, Xinhua news agency reported quoting a statement by Khamenei's website. As "global public opinion is now in favour of Palestine."





Top strategic experts, diplomats discuss changing world order at Maharana Pratap Geopolitics Dialogue

Jaipur, Feb 19 (IANS) : Minister of State for External Affairs Kirti Vardhan Singh, Israel's Ambassador to India Reuven Azar, Armenian Ambassador to India Vahagn Afyan, top leaders and diplomats shed their insights on the transitional phase of the changing world order at the fourth edition of the Maharana Pratap Annual Geopolitics Dialogue (MPAGD) 2025 held in Jaipur.

The two-day dialogue,

organised by the Usanas Foundation and co-hosted by the Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) under the theme of 'Building Tomorrow: Shaping the Future', saw participation of several distinguished speakers from across the globe. The keynote address of the conference was delivered by Minister of State for External Affairs and Environment Kirti Vardhan Singh who, while paying tribute to Maharana Pratap, highlighted his diplomacy and commitment in maintaining the sovereignty of the

state. He also shared insights on technology, multipolarity, mutual respect and the role of ancient civilizations in the modern world system. In his address, Israel's Ambassador to India Reuven Azar described terrorism as one of the most serious issues in the world right now and also emphasised the importance of strengthening bilateral relations between India and Israel.

Armenian Ambassador to India, Vahagn Afyan, discussed India's relations with Armenia across various areas, including defence, technology, trade, and education, particularly regarding student exchange programmes. He also spoke about the need for a balanced foreign policy to help nations reach their full potential. Usanas Foundation founder Abhinav Pandya facilitated discussions on pressing global issues, including terrorism, instability in Europe, cyber diplomacy, and intensive climate change consultations. He also addressed the benefits and emerging challenges of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Pandya also discussed the Deobandi movement, tracing the

linked Taliban group. He then examined the history of militancy in Kashmir, providing details on how it has evolved over time. He highlighted the critical role of Jamaat-e-Islami in radicalising sections of the population and fostering insurgency. Furthermore, he touched upon the challenges posed by Islamic extremism in Bangladesh and being a route, facilitating the propagating of extremist ideologies in the region. He also stated that West Asian extremists are joining hands with South Asian groups. During the session titled, 'Making sense of the transitional world order', Andrey Kortunov, Academic Director of the Russian International Affairs Council, argued that a new world order typically emerges after major wars. He also highlighted crucial challenges in the contemporary global landscape, particularly issues of legitimacy and the growing influence of non-state actors.



South Korean prosecutors reject third request to arrest acting presidential security chief

Seoul, Feb 19 (IANS) : South Korean prosecutors on Wednesday rejected for the third time a police request to arrest the acting chief of the Presidential Security Service (PSS) over his alleged attempt to block South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol's detention. The Seoul Western District Prosecutors Office dismissed the request to file for an arrest warrant for acting PSS chief Kim Seong-hoon, saying the listed charges are disputable and the possibility he will destroy evidence or flee is low, given he has voluntarily appeared before investigators for questioning, according to

legal sources. A police request to arrest Lee Kwang-woo, head of the PSS bodyguard division, was also rejected for the second time for similar reasons. The arrests were sought on charges of obstructing official duties and abuse of power after the PSS successfully stopped investigators from detaining Yoon in January over his failed martial law bid the previous month, Yonhap news agency reported. Earlier in the day, supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol had been holding a series of protest rallies in front of an alleged residence of the Constitutional Court's Acting Chief Justice.



All 80 onboard have miraculous escape as jet crashes, flips over in Toronto

Toronto, Feb 19 (IANS) : Eighty passengers had a miraculous escape when their jet crashed here and flipped while landing in heavy wind in a snowed-in airport. The Delta flight flying in from Minneapolis in the US lost one wing when it hit the runway, turned over on Wednesday afternoon, and lay on its back as the crew helped the passengers safely off the plane.

Officials said that 18 people, including a child, were taken to hospitals and two were in a critical, but not life-threatening, condition. Videos of the crash showed crew members shepherding passengers out of the plane on a snow-swept airfield while firefighters rushed to coat the plane and the surrounding area with foam to prevent a

fire outbreak. The Canadian-made Embraer CRJ-900 jet was operated by Delta subsidiary Endeavor Air. Canadian Transportation Safety Board will conduct an investigation into the unusual accident where a large passenger jet flipped over. It will be assisted by the US Federal Aviation Administration and the National Transportation Safety Board. Delta CEO Ed Bastian said in a statement. "We are working to confirm the details and will share the most current information on news.delta.com as soon as it becomes available". Canada's weather service that there were wind gusts of 61 kilometres per hour when the plane was trying to land.

Pak is global epicentre of terrorism, harbouring UN-listed terrorist entities : India in UN Security Council

United Nations, Feb 19 (IANS) : India has denounced Pakistan as "a global epicentre of terrorism" and called it an irony that Islamabad claims to be at the forefront of fighting terror. "Pakistan is a global epicentre of terrorism, harbouring more than 20 UN-listed terrorist entities and providing state support to cross-border terrorism," India's Permanent Representative Parvathaneni Harish said on Wednesday at the Security Council. "Hence it is a supreme irony when Pakistan pats itself on the back as being at the fore-

front of the fight against terrorism," he said. "India," he added, "has been a victim of acts of terror perpetrated by this country through terror groups such as Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) and Harkat ul Mujahidin (HuM), among dozens of others." Responding to Pakistan's Deputy Prime Minister Ishaq Dar raising Kashmir, Harish said, "In fact, it is Pakistan that is in illegal occupation of parts of Jammu and Kashmir." He pointed out that the people of Jammu and Kashmir region again in last year's election made their adherence to India clear. "The people of Jammu and Kashmir have only last year taken part in a successful election and



have voted in large numbers to choose their government," he said. "The choice of the people of Jammu and Kashmir was loud and clear," he said. "Democracy in Jammu and Kashmir is vibrant and strong unlike in Pakistan," he said. He added, "Pakistan's campaigns of misinformation and disinformation, of lies and falsehoods, do not change facts on the ground." "As is Pakistan's prac-

tice of bringing up Kashmir during any meeting at the UN without any relevance, this time it was during a Council session on multilateralism and reforming global governance. Dar claimed that the people of Pakistan had been denied their right to self-determination and the Security Council has a responsibility to ensure that its resolutions are implemented.

UN says 106.6 million USD urgently needed for Sudanese refugees in Libya

Tripoli, Feb 19 (IANS) : The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) announced that \$106.6 million are needed urgently to assist Sudanese refugees in Libya. In a press release, the UN refugee agency says the funds will be used to support 375,000 Sudanese refugees, 70,000 people in host communities, and 1,000 third-country nationals.

The funds aim to "provide essential assistance, from emergency relief to longer-term solutions," according to the UNHCR.

"This plan is a crucial step to ensure that refugees have access to protection, healthcare, and basic dignity," Aeneas Chuma.



Bihar: Nitish Kumar lays foundation for Rs 345.50 crore projects in Kaimur

Patna, Feb 19 (IANS) : As part of his Pragati Yatra, Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for 169 developmental projects worth Rs 345.50 crore in Kaimur district on Wednesday.

Nitish Kumar laid the foundation stone for 79 schemes having a total cost of Rs 233.29 crore. He also inaugurated 90 schemes worth Rs 112.20 crore.

The Chief Minister also inaugurated a degree college in Adhaura block during the Pragati Yatra which will benefit students in the Adhaura Hill area. He further inspected the Son

River-Kohira River link project. This project will enhance irrigation facilities in the region.

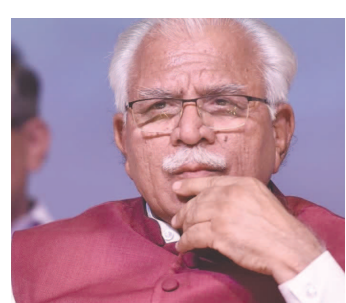
He also inspected the site proposed for a new bypass road in Mohaniya to improve transportation and connectivity on busy National Highway number 19 which is connecting Delhi to Kolkata. Nitish Kumar also advocated for the expansion of tourist facilities at Karakatgarh, Telharkund, and Vanshikhod to develop them as tourist destinations.

The Chief Minister also directed the officials to facilitate drinking water from the Son River, covering villages in Adhaura block and construction of a sports complex

to boost sports infrastructure in Kaimur, Jamani Ganga Jal Lift Scheme. This project will be executed with the help of the Uttar Pradesh government. He also laid the foundation of new block-cum-Anchal office buildings in the Mohaniya, Adhaura, Chainpur, Rampur, Chand, Kudra, Bhagwanpur, and Noaon blocks. The Chief Minister assured that work on a Medical College & Hospital in Kaimur will begin soon. This has been a long-standing demand of locals and will significantly improve healthcare facilities in the region. The event was attended by Deputy CM Samrat Choudhary.

Metro rails leading shift towards greener future: Manohar Lal

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Energy efficiency and clean power are the need of the hour and transitioning from thermal to renewable energy, utilising solar rooftops, and implementing regenerative braking in Metros exemplify the shift towards a greener future, said Union Minister of Housing and Urban Affairs and Power Manohar Lal on Wednesday. While participating in the 5th International Conference on Green Metro Systems – The Future of Urban Mobility in New Delhi, Manohar Lal inaugurated India's first vertical bi-facial solar plant installa-



tion on the Delhi Metro Viaduct at Okhla Vihar Metro station and 1MW rooftop solar power plant installed at Khyber Pass depot. The bi-facial panels are designed to capture sunlight from both sides. The Delhi Metro's bi-facial solar plant will take advantage.

Flu cases on the rise in Kyrgyzstan; health ministry monitors attendance in schools

Bishkek, Feb 19 (IANS) : The incidence of acute respiratory viral infections (ARVI) and influenza has been rising in Kyrgyzstan, the press service of the country's Ministry of Health said and added that it has initiated monitoring of children's attendance in schools. From February 10 to 16 as many as 10,796 cases of ARVI and 73 cases of influenza were reported, marking a 3 per cent increase compared to the previous week. Approximately 4.4 per cent of those infected

required hospitalisation. The report indicated that since mid-December 2024, the flu season has been characterised by the presence of Influenza A/H1N1/2009, Influenza B, and COVID-19. To effectively implement anti-epidemic measures and prevent outbreaks, the health ministry has initiated monitoring of children's attendance in schools, Xinhua news agency reported. According to the World Health Organisation, the flu is an acute respiratory infection caused by influenza viruses. It is common in all parts of the world. Most people

recover without treatment. Influenza spreads easily between people when they cough or sneeze. Vaccination is the best way to prevent the disease. Symptoms of influenza include acute onset of fever, cough, sore throat, body aches and fatigue. Treatment should aim to relieve symptoms. People with the flu should rest and drink plenty of liquids. Most people will recover on their own within a week. Medical care may be needed in severe cases and for people with risk factors. The cough can be severe and can last two weeks or more.



Most people recover from fever and other symptoms within a week without requiring medical attention. However, influenza can cause severe illness or death, especially in people at high risk. Influenza can worsen symptoms of other chronic diseases. In severe cases influenza can lead to pneumonia and sepsis. People with other medical issues or who have severe symptoms should seek medical care.



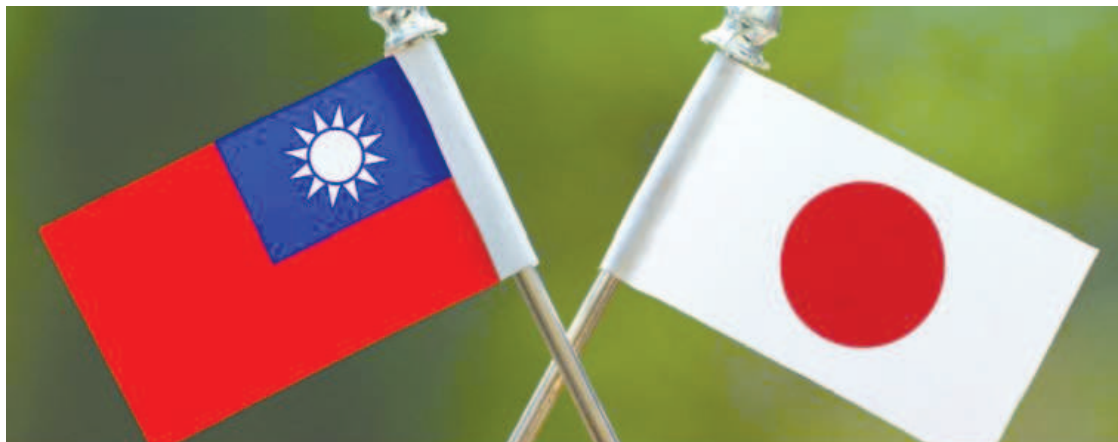
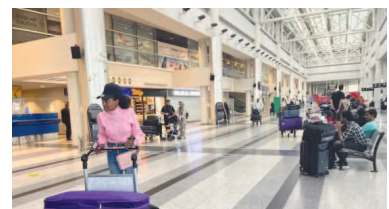
Strengthening energy security ties further, India-funded petroleum depot opened in Bhutan

Thimphu, Feb 19 (IANS) : Bhutan's Minister for Industry, Commerce, and Employment Lyonpo Namgyal Dorji on Wednesday inaugurated a project funded by India that will further strengthen energy security and distribution in the landlocked country. The development of Garmani Eastern Petroleum Oil Lubricants Depot (POL) in Monggar, which was inaugurated by Dorji, was taken up as an India-Bhutan friendship project under Trade Facility Support (TFS), the India Embassy in Thimphu posted on X. The milestone project, which cost 324.684 million Bhutanese Ngultrum, reflects meticulous planning, dedicated efforts, and a significant step forward in ensuring reliable fuel supply to

Bhutan. The newly-built residential and emergency infrastructure will significantly improve the capacity to storage and distribution of fuel and LPG, ensuring preparedness for natural disasters and emergencies, detailed Bhutan's Ministry of Industry, Commerce and Employment. "This facility stands as a testament to progress, resilience, and a collective commitment to the well-being of communities in the region and neighbouring Dzongkhags," the ministry stated. The Indian Cabinet gave its approval for the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Government of Bhutan on the general supply of Petroleum, Oil, Lubricants (POL) and related products from India to Bhutan ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Bhutan in 2024.

Lebanon extends suspension of flights to and from Iran

Beirut, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Lebanese government decided to extend the suspension of flights to and from Iran, without clarifying the duration of the extension. According to a statement from Lebanon's presidency, the decision was made during a ministerial meeting chaired by President Joseph Aoun, with the participation of the prime minister and ministers of defence, foreign affairs, interior, and transport. The discussions centered on security developments at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport and measures to enhance safety in the surrounding area, Xinhua news agency reported. The Lebanese government also reaffirmed that all existing security procedures for aircraft inspections would remain in place, instructing airport security to ensure full compliance with the necessary protocols.



Japan to recognise Taiwan as place of origin for naturalised citizens

Tokyo, Feb 19 (IANS) : In a clear indication of policy shift and snub to China, Taiwan-origin naturalized citizens of Japan will now be able to list their country of origin as Taiwan in their family register from May 26, the Japanese government announced on Wednesday. Japan's Minister of Justice revised an ordinance allowing people to list regions, not just countries, a move that has been welcomed by Taiwan but triggered a sharp reaction from China. The Japanese government will allow the names of both countries and regions to be listed in the na-

tionality column of family registries. This would also allow people from Taiwan married to Japanese nationals to list Taiwan in the registry in place of China. The Japanese ministry decided to change an ordinance to add 'region' to the current 'nationality' entry of the family registry, in a sign of greater consideration for identity, the country's media reported. Earlier, the only option in the family registry for Chinese and Taiwanese individuals was China. When a person from Taiwan registered for naturalized Japanese citizenship, his or her country of origin was registered as China. Following the revised system that will be introduced in May, this

provision will also be changed, and Taiwanese people's country of origin will be registered as Taiwan. This will also apply to cases before the implementation of the ordinance revision if requests are submitted, it was reported. Taiwan's Foreign Minister Lin Chia-lung expressed gratitude for what he called "the long-term efforts made by various actors in Japan". In a statement, Lin said "Taiwan" believes that the rights and interests of overseas Taiwanese in Japan will be further protected through the correct descriptions on Japanese family registers".

Sudanese army reports advancements in fight against paramilitary forces

Khartoum, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Sudanese Armed Forces (SAF) announced that its forces had made advancements in their fight against the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) on different fronts. In the fight in Bahri city, north of the capital Khartoum, the SAF has taken full control of the Kafouri area, the last stronghold of the RSF in the city. "The SAF special forces at Al-Markhiat Military Base are advancing steadily ... in the

Kafouri neighbourhood after successful, intense operations, cleaning the area of the militia forces," the SAF said in a statement on its Facebook page. The capture of the Kafouri area marks a significant milestone in the army's military campaign across the major cities of Khartoum, Omdurman, and Bahri. Previously, Kafouri served as a key stronghold for the RSF and a platform for launching artillery attacks on army-held areas in Omdurman.



South Korea: Yoon supporters hold protest rallies outside judge's alleged home

Seoul, Feb 19 (IANS) : Supporters of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol have been holding a string of protest rallies in front of an alleged residence of the Constitutional Court's Acting Chief Justice, Moon Hyung-bae, for days, in an apparent attempt to influence the court's ongoing trials on Yoon's impeachment. On Wednesday morning, about 30 supporters of the impeached President gathered outside an apartment complex in the central Seoul district of Jongno, shouting out slogans denouncing Moon and calling for his resignation and the nullification of Yoon's impeachment. Some of the protesters waved a picket sign that reads, "Porn judge Moon Hyung-bae," amid allegations that he turned a blind eye to the sharing of pornography in an Internet cafe for his high school alumni. Police are reportedly investigating the allegations.



Top South Korean expert calls for creation of Asian NATO to enhance regional peace

Seoul, Feb 19 (IANS) : Chung Mong-Joon, founder and honorary chair of the Asian Institute for Policy Studies and former politician in South Korea, has advocated for an Asian NATO, also suggesting redeploying tactical nuclear weapons in South Korea to enhance regional peace and security. "The United States and its allies and partners also need to show credible resolve to deter North Korean, Chinese and Russian military adventurism. We need an Asian version of NATO. We may call it the Indo-Pacific Treaty Organisation (IPTO)," leading South Korean daily 'The Korean Herald' quoted Chung Mong-Joon as saying at an event at the Johns Hopkins University School of Advanced International Studies

in Washington. Chung further suggested that the US and its allies South Korea, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines and Thailand along with partners like India and Indonesia should strengthen security cooperation, and ensure the sovereignty of all countries in the Indo-Pacific, the report detailed. South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol had joined the NATO summit in Washington for the third time in July 2024 along with other allies of the Indo-Pacific region.

HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Senegal stands at 0.3 pc

Dakar, Feb 19 (IANS) : The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate in Senegal stands at just 0.3 per cent, Executive Secretary of the National Council for the Fight Against AIDS Safietou Thiam said. The low prevalence is attributed to the 70 per cent access to antiretroviral therapy

(ARV) for people living with the disease, as well as a collective commitment from the population, particularly Senegalese youth, and the efforts of the Senegalese government, Thiam said during the launch ceremony of the Youth Mobilisation Week Against AIDS held in Dakar.





WTA bans 'fixated' man who targeted Emma Raducanu in Dubai

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : Women's Tennis Association (WTA) has imposed a ban on a man who approached former US Open champion Emma Raducanu, displaying "fixated behaviour," during her second-round loss to Karolina Muchova at the Dubai Tennis Championships. The 22-year-old Brit was left terrified when the man, who had approached her in public on Monday, was spotted at her match against Karolina Muchova on Tuesday. She was seen hiding behind the umpire's chair two games into the match.

The Briton alerted the chair umpire to the situation, and the individual was removed from court three.

"On Monday, February 17, Emma Raducanu was approached in a public area by a man who exhibited fixated behaviour. This same individual was identified in the first few rows during Emma's match on Tuesday at the Dubai Duty Free Tennis Championships and subsequently ejected. He will be banned from all WTA events pending a threat assessment," WTA said in a statement.

Gill pips Babar to reclaim top spot in ODI batting rankings; Theekshana becomes no.1 bowler

Dubai, Feb 19 (IANS) : India batter Shubman Gill leaptfrogged former Pakistan captain Babar Azam to claim the No.1 spot on the latest ICC men's ODI player rankings released on Wednesday. Gill is sitting on top of the batting chart with 796 rating points. Babar drops to second place and 23 rating points behind the new No.1.

This is the second time Gill has held the No.1 ranking in ODI cricket, with the India

batter having also gone past Babar to claim the top spot midway through the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup in 2023.

Gill has been in excellent form of late, with his century against England in Ahmedabad during the third ODI of the recently concluded series enough to catapult the 25-year-old to the top of the rankings.

Meanwhile, India skipper Rohit Sharma remained in the third spot and 45 rating points behind his fellow Indian opener. South Afri-



can Heinrich Klaasen (756) and New Zealand's Daryl Mitchell (740) round off the top five in fourth and fifth place, respectively.

Sri Lanka dasher Charith Asalanka (up eight spots to eighth) also makes ground inside the top 10, while Pakistan captain

Mohammad Rizwan climbs six places to 15th with a new career-high rating. Things are just as tight in the latest bowling rankings, with Sri Lanka off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana gaining the top spot from Afghanistan tweaker Rashid Khan.

WPL: Powerplay didn't go as per plan, tactical strategy can be better next time, says GG coach Klinger

Vadodara, Feb 19 (IANS) : Gujarat Giants head coach Michael Klinger admitted that tactical errors led his side to lose against Mumbai Indians in the WPL 2025. However, he commended the bowlers for keeping the team in the game for as long as possible.

The Harmanpreet Kaur-led MI showcased a dominant performance in the field to complete a comfortable five-wicket win on Tuesday, helping them maintain their unbeaten run against Gujarat Giants (GG) with five wins out of five.

The trio of Hayley Matthews (3-16), Amelia Kerr (2-22), and Natalie Sciver-Brunt (2-

26) ensured Mumbai only had to get 121 for victory. MI bowler's superb display left GG with their backs firmly against the wall at 28/4 at the end of the powerplay.

"The powerplay didn't go according to plan, did it? Losing four wickets.



India gear up for Pink Ladies Cup clash vs Jordan

New Delhi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The senior India women's national football team are back in action in the FIFA International Window, and are gearing up to face Jordan in the first match of the Pink Ladies Cup 2025 in Sharjah.

India head coach Crispin Chettri feels his side is currently in a transitional team and are breaking barriers by participating in the tournament as they strive to get better. "It's a transitional

phase for the team, where we have brought in a lot of new players. We are all willing to suffer for the overall good of the team. I think it's important to support and encourage these girls because most of them are breaking a lot of barriers just by being here. We must focus on the positives right now," said Chettri. The Indian team landed in Sharjah on Tuesday. The match will kick off at the Al Hamriya Sports Club Stadium. India will play two more matches against Russia and the Korea Republic on February 23 and 26, respectively. "Jordan have progressed in a good way over the last few years, but I think these are matches that we have to win if we want to progress."

Qatar Open 2025: Italian Berrettini stuns Djokovic in first round at Doha

Doha, Feb 19 (IANS) Matteo Berrettini of Italy caused a huge upset in the Qatar Open 2025, beating former World No.1 Novak Djokovic in straight sets in a first-round match at the ATP 500 series event being played on the hard courts here on Tuesday. This is Berrettini's first top-10 win since 2023.

Berrettini, who is currently ranked 35th in the ATP Rankings and had a career-high rank of 6 in January 2022, survived a few anxious moments, including a couple of break points in the sixth game of the first set, before winning the match 7-6(4), 6-2 in one hour and 33 minutes. While Berrettini is unseeded here, Djokovic is the third seed and was expected to go all the way after retiring from his Australian Open semi-final.



WPL: As the tournament progresses, MI's batting unit will fully hit its stride, opines Mithali

Vadodara, Feb 19 (IANS) : Former India skipper Mithali Raj has praised Mumbai Indians' outstanding performance in the comfortable five-wicket win over Gujarat Giants in the Women's Premier League (WPL) match and said it was a "comprehensive and commanding" victory for inaugural season champions.

A combined bowling effort helped Mumbai Indians finally get on the board with a convincing five-wicket win over Gujarat Giants in Vadodara on Wednesday.

The trio of Hayley Matthews (3-16), Amelia Kerr (2-22), and Natalie Sciver-Brunt (2-26) ensured Gujarat only had to get 121 for victory. Mumbai's chase was led by Nat Sciver-Brunt, who fol-

lowed up her game-changing PowerPlay spell with a half-century to cap off a special all-round effort that secured the win with 23 balls to spare. "Mumbai Indians started strong by winning the toss and then maintained control by consistently taking crucial wickets against Gujarat Giants. They bowled in the right areas, picking up key dismissals,

particularly of the overseas players, restricting Gujarat Giants to just 121 runs. The chase was executed efficiently, finishing in just over 16 overs. Overall, it was a comprehensive and commanding victory for Mumbai Indians," Mithali said on JioHotstar.

MI captain Harmanpreet Kaur won the toss and elected to field.



Champions League: Davies' last-gasp equaliser sends Bayern to last-16

Munich, Feb 19 (IANS) : Bayern Munich a 3-2 aggregate last-minute equalizer earned

Bayern Munich a 3-2 aggregate victory over Celtic in Champions League playoff.

FC Bayern drew 1-1 against Celtic in the playoffs second leg to advance to the Champions League last 16. Nicolas Kuhn handed Celtic the lead in the second half, but Alphonso Davies scored deep into added time to make it 3-2 on aggregate and send Bayern into the next round. After a minute's silence to commemorate the victims of last week's attack in Munich, Bayern got off to the better start. Gnabry had a header thwarted by a last-ditch block. Callum McGregor then fired over before Kasper Schmeichel parried a Kane shot.

Bayern were reeling for a short spell as Kuhn beat Neuer, with Guerreiro clearing the ball. A Kuhn cross then only just evaded Daizen Maeda before the fired wide from 20 yards.

Champions Trophy: Fakhar Zaman is being assessed and examined for a muscular sprain, says PCB

Karachi, Feb 19 (IANS) : The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) has confirmed that opener Fakhar Zaman is being assessed for a muscular sprain after he walked off the field just two deliveries into Pakistan's Champions Trophy opener against New Zealand at the National Stadium.

"Fakhar Zaman is being assessed and examined for a muscular sprain, and further updates will be provided in due course," the PCB said in a statement.

