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Trinamul Congress MP Nusrat Jahan at the Parliament House complex during the Budget Session in New Delhi on

#### **'Poaching': Notice** has no mention of FIR, says Delhi CM

New Delhi: Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the Delhi police crime branch's notice to him over his allegations that the BJP was attempting to "poach" AAP MLAs has no mention of any FIR and asserted that the country will not progress by such "theatrics". Talking to reporters, Mr Kejriwal said that the Delhi police officers were made to indulge in "theatrics" by their "politi-cal bosses". "I pity those officers. They never think that they will be made to indulge in theatrics. Is that why they joined the police? The officer must have been feeling bad," he said.
Full report on Page 2

#### **Didi to skip meet** on '1 nation, 1 poll'

Kolkata: West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee Monday said she would skip the meeting of the "one nation one election" committee in New Delhi on Tuesday citing engagements related to the upcoming state budget Full report on Page 3

#### **Indian band Shakti**

wins Grammy award

New Delhi: Indian musicians Shankar Mahadevan and Zakir Hussain's fusion band "Shakti" bagged the Grammy's award for "Best Global Music Album" on Monday. The award was for their latest album "This Moment".

Full report on Page 9

COUNTERPOINT



What next after winning the trust vote? We'll get ready for future ones!



Max: 17°C Min: 9°C **RH:** 65% **Rain:** 0%

Forecast: Sunnv

#### ASTROGUIDE

Shubhakrut: Uttarayana Tithi: Pushya Bahula Ekadasi

Star: Jyeshta till 7.32 am Varjyam: 4.54 am to 6.25 am Durmuhurtam: 9.06 am to 9.51 am; 11.14 pm to 12.05 am Rahukalam: 3 pm to 4.30 pm

SUNSET TODAY 6.04 PM **SUNRISE TOMORROW 7.06 AM MOONRISE TOMORROW 4.53 AM** 

**MOONSET TODAY 1.58 PM** 

■ Targets Rahul, dynasty; says Opp. has 'resolved to remain in Opp'

# **PM tears into Congress; says** NDA will win 400+, BJP 370+

NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Expressing confidence that the NDA will get more than 400 seats and the BJP will win at least 370 seats in the Lok Sabha elections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday that he was conthat Opposition parties have lost the courage to contest the elections and have resolved to stay on the Opposition benches for a long time.

Replying to the debate in the Lok Sabha on the motion of thanks on the President's address, he said: "I can gauge the mood of the nation, it will definitely give the NDA more than 400 seats and the BJP at least 370 seats." Mr Modi asserted that the government's third term was not too far. "At

**Funds are not** 

being withheld

from non-BJP

state govts: FM

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Strongly refuting allega-

tions that the Centre was withholding funds meant for non-BJP governed states, finance minister Nirmala

Monday it was a politi-

cally-vitiated narrative

that vested interests are

happy to go about say-

Chowdhury in the Lok Sabha on the Karnataka

government's claim that

the Centre wasn't releas-

ing funds, Ms Sitharaman said this

cannot happen as the system is well placed

and the Centre works

according to recommen-

dations of the Finance

"This apprehension that some states are being discriminated

against is a politically-

which, I am sorry to say,

vested interests are

happy to go about saying," Ms Sitharaman

said. She added that no

Union finance minister

can play with the Finance Commission's

"This is just not a pos-

sibility that any finance

minister can intervene

to say that 'I don't like

this state, stop payment'. No way. It can't

happen that way. The system is well placed."

recommendations.

narrative

Commission.

vitiated

Replying to a question

Congress leader ir Ranjan

NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Sitharaman

Adhir



Prime Minister Narendra Modi replies to the Motion of Thanks on the President's address in Lok Sabha during the Budget session in New Delhi on Monday.

**REFERRING TO** Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remark in the Rajya Sabha, the Prime Minister said: "Even Kharge ji is saying the same thing."

most 100-125 days are remaining," the PM said, referring to the coming Lok Sabha elections.

"Abki baar (this time)", Mr Modi said, and the BJP members joined him in unison to say "400 paar" (over 400).

Referring to Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge's remark in the Rajya Sabha, the PM said: "Even Kharge ji is saying the same thing.'

Mr Modi noted that the third term of the NDA

government would be the one that would see big decisions and lay the foundation for the next

1,000 years. The PM tore into the Congress, attacking it on the issue of dynastic politics and saying it had a good opportunity to play a good Opposition but had failed in that role.

Taking a dig at the Opposition leaders, he said some leaders were keen to change their parliamentary seats, while some others were planning to move to the Rajya Sabha.

In a jibe at the Opposition, the PM said: "I appreciate the resolution the Opposition has taken. Every word of their speeches has confirmed my confidence and that of have resolved to stay

# SC: Won't allow 'murder of democracy' in Chandigarh

Pulls up returning officer, summons him Feb. 19

**RAKESH K. SINGH** NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Dubbing the alleged defacement of ballot papers in the recently-held Chandigarh mayoral polls as the "murder" and "mockery of democracy", the Supreme Court on Monday said it was "appalled" at the behaviour of the returning officer, and directed his personal appearance at the

THE CJI-led bench also ordered the preservation of ballots and video recordings of the electoral proceedings, besides calling for the entire records

February 19 to explain his conduct

The CJI-led bench also ordered the preservation of ballots and video recordings of the electoral next date of hearing on proceedings, besides calling for the entire records and full videos of the incident on the next date of hearing.

The top court further ordered deferment of the presentation of the Chandigarh Corporation budget, which was scheduled for February 7.

Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud, who tive seats. watched the video of the poll proceedings, told solicitor-general Tushar

Turn to Page 4



Former Jharkhand chief minister and JMM leader Hemant Soren arrives to take part in the trust vote of the Champai Soren-led government in Ranchi on Monday.

Hemant Soren casts his vote in floor test. says Raj Bhavan to blame for arrest by ED

# J'khand CM Champai wins trust vote 47-29

**NAYYAR AZAD** PATNA, FEB. 5

The Jharkhand govern-ment led by Champai Soren won the floor test in the state Assembly Monday. In the 81-member House, 47 MLAs voted for the motion of confidence while 29 voted against it.

Champai Soren moved the confidence motion in the House. He formed the government with the support of the JMM, the Congress, RJD and Congress, CPI(M-L).

During the voting, Assembly Speaker Rabindra Nath Mahto asked the MLAs who were in support of the motion or opposed it to stand one by one near their respec-

Starting the debate in the Assembly, Jharkhand Champai Soren accused the Centre of mis-



Jharkhand CM Champai Soren after his government won the floor test in the state Assembly in Ranchi on Monday. -PTI

CHAMPAI SOREN moved the confidence motion in the House. He formed the government with the support of the JMM, the Congress, RJD and CPI(M-L)

using the investigative agencies to topple state governments being led by the Opposition parties. "Hemant Hai to Himmat

Hai (Hemant is our strength). The Central government has been misusing the agencies to destabilise the state governments. The Hemant Soren government was formed in 2019 but a chief minister like him was arrested in the land scam", Jharkhand CM Champai Soren said in the Assembly.

■ Turn to Page 2

# Indian troops will be out of Maldives by May 10: Muizzu

SRIDHAR KUMARASWAMI with agency inputs NEW DELHI/MALE, FEB. 5

Maldives President Mohamed Muizzu said in his maiden address to his country's Parliament that Indian troops in his country (carrying out medical evacuations) would leave the tiny archipelago nation in two phases by May 10 this year.

The first group of Indian military personnel will go back by March 10 and the remaining personnel at two aviation platforms will be withdrawn before May 10. Mr Muizzu, widely seen

as a pro-China leader, said a large majority of



Mohamed Muizzu

Maldivian citizens supported his administration due to its "pledge to with-draw foreign military troops from the country' He said he will not renew the hydrography pact with India signed earlier. In a speech boycotted by the main Opposition parties, Mr Muizzu also vowed not to ompromise his country's sovereignty and claimed he would "recover the lost soverterritory strengthening nation's armed forces. The "replacement" of the Indian troop contingent in two phases had been announced last week by the Maldives foreign ministry after the second meeting of the India-Maldives high-level core croup in New Delhi, with Indian civilian staff expected to replace the armed forces personnel and operate the two helicopters and a Dornier aircraft in the Maldives. "When I assumed the

prestigious responsibility Turn to Page 4

### EC tells parties: Don't use kids in campaign

**AGE CORRESPONDENT** NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Election Commission asked all political parties refrain from using children in campaigning "in any form", including distribution of posters, pamphlets, sloganeering and in gatherings like rallies. In a directive to all parties, the poll panel said there is "zero tolerance" towards the use of children in any manner during the electoral process by parties and candidates. In the "strict directive", ahead of the Lok Sabha polls,

candidates were also asked not to carry children in their arms or in a vehicle while cam-

paigning. However, the mere presence of a child accompanied by their parent/ guardian in proximity to a political leader and who is not involved in any campaigning activity by the political party, will not be construed as a violation of these guidelines. The EC directive said this prohibition extends to the use of children to

a campaign in any manner ■ More on Page 4

create the semblance of



Rahul Gandhi

#### **INDIA bloc will** lift 50% quota cap if it comes to power: Rahul

NAYYAR AZAD with agency inputs PATNA/RANCHI, FEB. 5

Congress leader Rahul promised a nationwide caste census and removal of the 50 per cent cap on reservations if the INDIA bloc forms the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha polls.

He also alleged that the BJP tried to topple the Jharkhand government as the chief minister was a tribal. "Want to con-gratulate all alliance MLAs, (Champai) Soren ji as they stopped the BJP-RSS conspiracy and protected the government of the poor," Mr Gandhi said at a rally at Ranchi's historic Shaheed Maidan in the HEC complex.

Before the rally, Mr Gandhi met former Jharkhand CM Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren. AICC general secretary Jairam Ramesh said "the meeting took place a few minutes ahead of the public

More on Page 3

### **India win Vizag Test, level series 1-1**



Indian players celebrate the wicket of England's captain Ben Stokes during the fourth day of the second Test in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Indian bowlers won an engrossing battle against England's firebrand batting for a series-levelling 106-run victory in the Test. Report on Page 8

# Sunak & Varadkar in Belfast as crisis ends in Northern Ireland

London, Feb. 5: The leaders of the UK and Ireland went to Belfast Monday to meet Northern Ireland's newly revived governyears of political crisis.

ment and bask in a goodnews moment after two British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and Irish counterpart

Varadkar were visiting the new administration at Belfast's Stormont Castle as its ministers met for the first time. The ministers wasted no time before pressing London for more to patch up





Northern Ireland's creak-

Ireland Assembly appointed a power-sharing government on Saturday after a two-year hiatus sparked when the main British unionist party walked out



Rishi Sunak Leo Varadkar

ing public services. Members of the Northern

in February 2022. The Democratic Unionist Party

boycotted the administration to protest post-Brexit arrangements that it said undermined Northern Ireland's place in the United Kingdom. The party was coaxed into returning last week after the UK promised to eliminate most checks on goods Northern moving to Ireland.

Under rules established, the administration in Belfast must include both British unionists and Irish nationalists.



#### SHORT TAKES

35-yr-old woman raped in Naraina

New Delhi: A 35-year-old woman has been allegedly sexually assaulted by her neighbour in west Delhi's Naraina area, officials said on Monday. The accused has been arrested and is in judicial custody, they said. The police said an FIR was registered on a complaint from the woman on January 28 alleging rape. Her statement was registered under section 164 of the CrPC on January 31, they said. "On February 2, based on information from a hospital confirming sexual assault and the statement of the victim another FIR was registered as the date of the incident mentioned was different from what was mentioned in the previous FIR," a senior police officer said. The police said the accused was arrested on January 28 on the basis of the woman's complaint. The matter is being investigated, they

#### **Drunk man crashes**

car into police booth

New Delhi: An inebriated nan crashed his car into an integrated police booth and collided with an electricity pole near Delhi's Jantar Mantar area, the police said on Monday. On February 1, constable Ramveer Singh, posted at Parliament Street police station, was on patrolling duty on Tolstoy Road when around 6.30 am saw a recklessly-driven car hit a footpath, then an electricity pole and later crashed into the integrated police booth, an FIR lodged into the matter said. The impact caused the footpath to break, the electricity pole to collapse, and a part of the police booth was damaged, it said. The car driver was taken to the hospital for a medical examination, where he refused for a blood test, the FIR said.

#### **Criminal arrested**

According to a senior police

officer, a breath test of the man was conducted.

after brief dun fire

New Delhi: After a brief encounter, one sharpshooter of the infamous Neeraj Bawania gang was arrested from southeast Delhi's Karni Singh Shooting Range area, an official said on Monday. The accused was identified as Aehsaan Ali a.k.a Usman alias Lal Singh, a resident of Ambedkar Nagar while his associate Neeraj, a resident of Pul Prahaladpur area managed to escape from the spot. The DCP Rajesh Deo said that on February 2, at 6 p.m., specific input was received that two sharpshooters of Neeraj Bawania gang, carrying firearms would come to southeast District on a bike, from Faridabad via Karni Singh Shooting Range road to MB road for committing any crime.

#### **NORMAL TIMING FOR CITY SCHOOL FROM TODAY**

New Delhi: Schools in Delhi have been directed to resume normal timings from Tuesday following an improvement in the national capital's weather conditions, according to an official order. Delhi schools were commencing classes from 9 am due to cold weather conditions, following a circular from the Delhi government's Directorate of Education (DoE) last month. The DoE had also directed the schools not to hold classes beyond 5 pm. In an order issued on Monday, the DoE said, "In view of the improved weather conditions in Delhi, all government,

government-aided and recognised private schools of Delhi shall resume their full normal timings with effect from Tuesday." The order directed the heads of schools to inform students. parents and staff about the change in timings well in time through suitable means of communication. Earlier, winter vacations in city schools were extended from January 6 to 12 for primary students due to the coldwave conditions. Delhi on Monday recorded a minimum temperature of 11.9°C. three notches above the season's average. The maximum temperature was recorded at 20.3°C, two notches above normal. The weather office has forecast dense fog on

Tuesday with the maximum

and minimum temperatures

■ Delhi police officers insulted by their political masters, says Kejriwal

# Poaching allegations: 'Notice has no mention of FIR, theatrics not good'

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday said the Delhi police crime branch's notice to him over his allegations that the BJP was attempting to "poach" AAP MLAs has no mention of any FIR and asserted that the country will not progress by such "theatrics'

The city BJP however hitting back challenged Mr Kejriwal to either show the recording of those luring MLAs or apologise to the people of Delhi and BJP workers.

Talking to media on the sidelines of an event, Mr Kejriwal said that the Delhi police officers were made to indulge in "theatrics" by their "political bosses", which was quite

"insulting" for them.

"I pity those officers.
Young officers join police with a lot of idealism that they will protect women and reduce crime. They never think that they will be made to indulge in theatrics. Is that why they joined the police? The officer must have been feeling bad. This insult was caused by their political

bosses," he said. A team of the Delhi police's crime branch also visited Delhi minister Atishi's home over the MLA poaching allegations and served her a notice on Sunday. Mr Kejriwal received the notice on Saturday.

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Delhi's air quality on

Monday improved from

"poor" to "moderate"

and the maximum tem-

perature settled at 21°C, two notches below the

season's average. The

24-hour air quality

index (AQI) read 180.

On Sunday, the AQI was

recorded at 282, accord-

ing to Central Pollution

(CPCB) data. The 24

hour AQI on Saturday

An AQI between zero and 50 is considered "good", 51 and 100 "satisfactory", 101 and 200 "moderate", 201 and 300

"poor", 301 and 400

"very poor", and 401 and 500 "severe".

The humidity levels

fluctuated between 98

per cent and 61 per cent

during the day, according to the India Meteorological Department (IMD).

It has forecast mainly

clear sky for Tuesday with moderate fog in the

morning, while the min-

imum and maximum

expected to settle at

around 9 and 20°C,

February has seen four days of rainfall while last year, there

was no rainfall recorded

The capital received

29.9 mm rainfall in the

first four days, according to IMD offi-

■ Continued From Page 1

During his speech, Mr

Champai Soren said his

government in Jharkhand

was "Part 2" of former chief minister Hemant

Soren's administration and would continue to

work for the development of the state. "The country is aware of how Hemant

Soren is facing injustice. If

you visit villages, you will

schemes in every house.

People take his name

because he has worked for

their welfare. This was

also seen during the Covid-

19 period", the Jharkhand

He said that "in Jharkhand's history.

whenever tribals tried to

increase their capacity,

attempts were made to sup-

Hemant

temperatures

respectively.

in this month.

Board

Control

NEW DELHI, FEB. 5



Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal with finance minister Atishi participates in a programme under the 'Chief Minister Pilgrimage Scheme' at the Thyagraj Stadium in New Delhi on Monday.

"They are asking who tried to poach AAP MLAs. The very people who are sending Crime Branch officers are those who tried to poach our MLAs,"

he added. Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva howev-er said that under the AAP rule Delhi is far behind other metros of the country in providing public facilities to the citizens like education and health services, accessible public transport, cleanliness but ahead of all in government corruption.

Speaking about the political situation in Jharkhand, Mr Kejriwal said that the arrest of a sitting chief minister was not right".

#### **Defamation case: HC refuses** to quash summons against CM

AGE CORRESPONDENT with agency inputs NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Delhi high court on Monday upheld summons issued to chief minister Arvind Kejriwal as an accused in a criminal defamation case for retweeting an allegedly defamatory video circulated by YouTuber Dhruv Rathee in May 2018.

Retweeting a social carrying media post defamatory content will amount to defamation under Section 499 of the

Justice Swarana Kanta Sharma said while refusing to quash the trial court's 2019 order summoning Mr Kejriwal. The court also said that some sense of responsibility must be attached while retweeting content on social media about which a person does not have knowledge.

The AAP leader had challenged two orders of the trial court on the refusal to quash the summons. The high court had earlier stayed trial court

#### **Keiriwal meets** pilgrims leaving for Teerth yarta

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Monday met the pilgrims leaving for Tirupti under the Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana and urge them to pray for the country and the people of Delhi. He participated in a Bhajan Sandhya and interacted with senior citizens departing for Tirupati.

"I am very happy that you all are going to Tirupati today, You should pray for your families, the people of Delhi and for the peace and prosperity of

the country," he said.

Mr Kejriwal said they draw inspiration from Shravan Kumar to run the

pilgrimage scheme. Tam a son of Delhi and the people of Delhi are my family. My duty is to take senior citizens for pil-

grimage," he added. Kejriwal said the Mukhyamantri Teerth Yatra Yojana is facing a Mukhyamantri shortage of trains to take elderly pilgrims to pilgrimage sites across the country. The pilgrims can choose any of the sites based on their faith and embark on a pilgrimage. The train to Tirupati on Monday marks the 89th departure of pilgrims from Delhi.

# Delhi govt to offer free travel to third gender in city buses

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Delhi government will offer free travel to people belonging to the third gender in DTC and cluster buses, chief min-ister Arvind Kejriwal announced on Monday. He said a proposal for this will soon be passed by the Cabinet and the

scheme implemented.
"In our society, people belonging to the third gender are subjected to humiliation. This should not happen as they too are human beings and have the right to equalithe chief minister said in a post in Hindi on

X.
"The Delhi government has decided that they will get to travel for free in state-run buses. Soon, this will be passed by the Cabinet and implemented. I have full faith that people of the transgender community will be greatly benefitted by move," he added.

Women are already provided free travel on these buses in the national cap-The free travel scheme for women began

in October 2019. Earlier in the day, a senior Delhi transport department official said, "Women are already provided free travel in Delhi Transport Corporation (DTC) and cluster buses operated by the Delhi Integrated Multi-Modal Transit System Limited extend the facility of free

THE OFFICIAL said that the social welfare department of the Delhi government has data on people belonging to the third gender in Delhi which will prove helpful for the scheme

travel to people from the

third gender too."
The official said that the social welfare department of the Delhi government has data on people belonging to the third gender in Delhi which will prove helpful for the scheme.

Those looking to avail the benefit of this scheme will have to furnish certificates issued by the revenue department, the senior official added.

In April last year, the Delhi high court asked the city government to decide on a representation to legally recognise the transgender community as the third gender in bus tickets issued by the DTC.

The Delhi government's women and child development department had approved various measures for transgender people, including the addition of a "third gender" category in job application forms and the setting up of monitoring cells to protect them from abuse. The measures were

approved following an advisory by the National Human Commission to ensure

#### **Delhi's AQI** Neighbour slits throat of teen improves girl, hides her body in his house from poor in a building in Indira Colony, Silokhra village to moderate Gurgaon, Feb. 5: A 14saw the accused Bahadur

year-old girl was alleged-ly killed here by her neighbour who slit her throat and hid the body in his house before fleeing, the police said on Monday According to a preliminary investigation, the accused, the next-door neigbour of the family, killed the minor to avenge his enmity with them, they said.

The victim resided with her family in a one-room rented accommodation here. The building has several such rooms and a few common washrooms, the police said.

The incident took place at around 9 pm on Sunday when the girl's mother sent her to one of the common washrooms to fetch a soap. After the girl did not return for a long time, her family members started looking for her,

they said, they said. Her father Gyani Thapa police said.

standing outside his room and asked him if he saw his daughter, to which the latter said she had gone out to buy food, they added.

Thapa, however, got suspicious and asked Bahadur to open his room but he did not allow. He then forcibly opened the door and found his daughter's blood-soaked body wrapped in a blanket in the room, the

#### Mayor finalised MCD budget without discussion: Congress Civic Centre.

New Delhi, Feb. 5: The Congress on Monday alleged Delhi mayor Shelly Oberoi finalised the MCD Budget 2024-25 without holding any discussion in the House. Opposition leader Nazia Danish, while presenting suggestions on the budget to the House, said the budget has already been signed and sent for publishing.

Addressing the mayor during a special House meeting held to discuss the budget estimates for mates 2024-25 here at the

2024-25, Danish said, "We have heard that you have already signed the budget and sent it for publishing. If that's true, why are we holding these discussions? There is no point in holding these hoax discussions and fooling us."

The municipal secretary denied the allegation saying that he has not received any budget document for finalisation.

A special House meeting of the corporation dis-

The meeting witnessed auggestions from the suggestions councillors of the Opposition parties along with AAP leaders.

Various issues such as the piled-up landfill sites salaries of the MCD workers, alleged lack of amenities in hospitals and schools, poor conditions of public toilets, pollution, stray animal menace, and absence of standing committee were raised in the House.

#### **SC** postpones plea in power transfer case

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Supreme Court on Monday adjourned hearing on a plea by Delhi mayor Shelly Oberoi seeking a direction to allow the functions of the Standing Committee be exercised by the MCD till the panel is constituted. A bench of CJI D.Y. Chandrachud, Justice J.B. Pardiwala and Justice Manoj Misra deferred the hearing by two weeks on the plea against the L-G office after senior advocate Abhishek Singhvi, appea-ring for the AAP leader, said judgment on an earlier separate petition was reserved in May last year.

"Then, we will stand this over for two weeks. Let us see what happens,"

reply at the right time".

Former Jharkhand CM

Hemant Soren was also

present in the House dur-

ing the trust vote. A special court had allowed him to

participate in the floor test.

He was arrested by the

J'khand CM Champai wins trust vote 47-29

### Court extends Sisodia's custody, allowed to visit wife once a week

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

A court here on Monday allowed senior AAP leader Manish Sisodia, arrested in a Delhi excise policy case, to visit his ailing wife once a week while in custody. Special judge M.K. Nagpal also extended the judicial custody of Mr Sisodia till February 22 after he was produced before the court on the expiry of his remand granted earlier.

The judge passed the while adjourning his bail application in excise policy-related cases filed by the CBI and the

Mr Sisodia had sought custody parole to visit his ailing wife twice a week. The judge, meanwhile, directed the CBI to file a detailed status report about its further investigation in connection with the alleged excise policy case by February 22, the

next date of hearing. The judge passed the direction to the CBI after the defence counsel objected to "non-full disclosure" about the status of the investigation.

During the proceedings, the CBI filed a report stating that the investigation is ongoing and at a crucial stage, adding that the probe regarding the 16 charge-sheeted accused has been completed.

Further investigation is ongoing against the other accused and suspects in the case, the probe agency said, submitting that the court may fix the matter for arguments on the

#### **SC defers hearing** on Singh's plea against his arrest

New Delhi, Feb. 5: The Supreme Court on Monday deferred till March 5 the hearing on AAP leader Sanjay Singh's plea challenging his arrest and remand in a money laundering case related to the alleged Delhi excise policy scam. A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna Dipankar Datta adjourned the matter after it was informed by addisolicitor-general tional S.V. Raju, appearing for the ED, that the order on Singh's regular bail plea had been reserved by the Delhi High Court on January 31. — PTI

### **'Man assaulted** thrown into

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

A 23-year-old man, who missing January 28, was allegedly thrown into a canal at Gautam Buddh Nagar and a search operation to recover the body is going on, a Delhi police official

The officials said that they have arrested three accused, identified as Sonu Saini, Vinod alias Sheru, and Virender. Meanwhile, a manhunt has been initiated to nab another accused. The official said that information about the disappearance of Malik was registered by his relative.

# Noida canal<sup>3</sup>

said on Monday.

# **HC** furious over 'shortcomings' in Delhi govt hosps

high court on Monday expressed anguish that there are only six CT scan allegations. machines in all Delhi government hospitals for three crore citizens and stressed the need to ramp up infrastructure and fill vacancies in the health sector. The high court pointed out that people are losing lives because they

and staff. A bench of acting Chief Justice Manmohan and Justice Manmeet P.S. Arora noted that health minister Saurabh Bharadwai. in a status report, has admitted that there are a lot of shortcomings, including shortage of doctors, paramedics and medicines, and also given his suggestions.

are not being attended to at

government hospitals due

to a shortage of facilities

Mr Bharadwaj, who inspected several government hospitals, claimed that whenever he convened meetings with hospital staff, Delhi health secretary S.B. Deepak Kumar

Mr Kumar, who was present in the court, denied the

"I have accompanied the minister in various hospitals and, wherever I have not been able to go, I informed him and sent my OSD or some other officials with him. I have always been there in the meetings and the minister's minutes of meetings will show my presence," Mr Kumar submitted. Mr Bharadwaj, in the sta-

tus report filed through Santosh Kumar Tripathi the Delhi government's standing counsel - said the existing hospitals, which have been functional for decades, have vacancies of more than 33 per cent of total sanctioned strength for doctors (more than 75 per cent sanctioned posts are vacant in some specialties) and more than 20 per cent of the total sanctioned strength of paramedics, leading to under-utilisation of the existing infrastructure.

## ANDHRA PRADESH STATE CIVIL SUPPLIES CORPORATION LIMITED Head Office: 10-152/1, Ashoknagar, Bandar Road, Vijayawada-520 007

Lr.No: PDS.3/18/2755/(02)/2023-25 2<sup>nd</sup> Call Short Tender Notice

APSCSCL desires to recall District wise tenders for appointment of stage I transport contractors in fourteen (14) districts i.e., Srikakulam, Vizianagaram, Manyam, East Godavari, Konaseema, Kakinada, Eluru, Krishna, Palnadu, Bapatla, Prakasam, Nellore, Tirupathi and Kadapa for transportation of food grains/food products from the designated buffer godowns to the MLS Points/other godowns within the district or any other work as entrusted by the Corporation form time to time, for the period upto 31.03.2025 under Public Distribution System. Applications are invited from the interested transport contractors for registration as tenderers to participate in the e-reverse auction to be conducted through NCD€X e-markets limited (NeML) platform.

All the interested transport contractors in All Over India may visit <a href="https://www.apscscl.in.as/www.neml.in">www.apscscl.in</a> & <a href="https://www.neml.in">www.apscscl.in</a> & <a href="https://www.apscscl.in.as/www.neml.in">www.apscscl.in</a> & <a href="https://www.apscscl.in.as/www.neml.in">www.apscscl.in</a> & <a href="https://www.neml.in">www.apscscl.in</a> & <a href="https://www.neml.in">www.neml.in</a> to start the first transfer of cost. In the rest transfer of cost. In the

Last date for registration and completion of formalities for the e-auction shall be up to 14.02.2024 upto 5.00 p.m and the tentative date of online e-reverse auction through NCDEX e-MARKETS LIMITED ( NEML) platform would be on 19.02.2024.

VC & MANAGING DIRECTOR



CM said.

**Enforcement Directorate** officials on Wednesday (January 31) in a moneylaundering case linked to an alleged land fraud scam. He was remanded to ED custody for five days by the PMLA court on Friday.

Addressing the Assembly, Mr Hemant Soren alleged that Raj Bhavan played a role in his arrest. He said: "January 31 will be regarded as a black day in history. For the first time in history, a chief minister was arrested and I feel Raj Bhavan had a role in this'

He also challenged the

BJP to bring documents to prove the charges against him. He said: "I challenge the BJP to bring documents to prove that I have 8.5 acres of illegal land in my name. If they do it, then I will not only quit politics but will also leave Jharkhand".

During his speech in the Assembly, Hemant Soren launched a scathing attack on the BJP for conspiring to involve him in a scam case. He said "the conspiracy had started a few years back but the conclusion

came on January 31". defeat. If they (BJP) think that by putting me behind bars they have succeeded, then they are wrong. This is Jharkhand, in every corner of this state you will find tribals and Dalits who

have laid down their lives",

ernment at the Centre Mr Soren said: "They don't want any tribal leader to complete their full term. When I formed the government I knew that I would also end with the same fate. The people of Jharkhand will give a befitting reply at the right Meanwhile,

Mounting further attacks

on the BJP-led NDA gov-

Jharkhand high court on Monday refused to grant any relief to Mr Hemant Soren. He had filed a petition in the court challenging the ED action against him.
The court has sought a

reply from the ED on the by February 9. Lawyers said the court has fixed February 12 for the next hearing.

#### SHORT TAKES

**Amit Shah to visit** 

Karnataka Feb. 10

Bengaluru: Karnataka BJP President B.Y. Vijayendra on Monday said Union home minister Amit Shah would be visiting Karnataka on February 10, during which he would participate in party and official events in Bengaluru and Mysuru. Speaking to reporters here, he said that Shah is also likely to hold a meeting with the state BJP core committee members. "Amit Shah ji is coming to Karnataka, to Bengaluru on February 10. We will be having a Lok Sabha cluster leaders meeting in Bengaluru. Four Lok Sabha segments will come under one cluster," Mr Vijayendra said. "There is information about him attending a government event too, we have not yet got any official information, but he is coming on February 10. — PTI

#### **AIMIM will contest 5 LS seats in Maha**

Mumbai: The AIMIM, which is often dubbed the BJP "B team" by other Opposition parties, has decided to go solo in Maharashtra and contest at least five Lok Sabha seats in the state. The party's Maharashtra working president Abdul Gaffar Quadri said it is contemplating to field candidates in North Mumbai, Dhule, Nanded, Bhiwandi and Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar seats in the state. Mr Quadri said his party was conducting surveys in the five Lok Sabha seats in order to decide their election strategy. He also hit out at the Congress and the Sharad Pawar faction for treating the AIMIM as the "untouchable". Mr Quadri said, "The AIMIM is not part of the INDIA bloc because of the treatment given to it by the so-called secular parties." The AIMIM leader also criticised Bihar chief minister Nitish Kumar who recently ditched "Mahagathbandhan' and formed a new govern-

#### **India 'upfront' over Nijjar matter: EAM**

New Delhi: Canada has a "long record of interfering in Indian politics", external affairs minister (EAM) S. Jaishankar told a TV channel on Monday. Asked about Canada last year alleging India's involvement in the killing of Canadian citizen and pro-Khalistan extremist Hardeep Singh Nijjar, the EAM retorted that there is a recognition that a lot of it has to do with Canadian politics". Stating that India has been "upfront" about the matter, he said that as per the Indian view, the killing was related to the "transnational criminal organisations involved in a whole series of activities". He said both Canada and India needed to investigate the matter and are doing so.

#### **MAKE DASH CAMS A MUST: SAYS NCP MP**

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Rajya Sabha NCP MP Fauzia Khan on Monday said installation of dash cams in vehicles should be made mandatory to address accidentrelated issues and promote responsible driving practices. Raising the issue during the Zero Hour in the Rajya Sabha, Ms Khan said there had been instances of protests against the strict provisions regarding hit-andrun case in the Bharativa Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) that has replaced the colonial-era Indian Penal code (IPC). "One key aspect that deserves attention in the wake of these stringent measures is the promotion of dash cams. Dash cams have emerged as a valuable tool that can provide concrete evidence in the event of a road accident," she said. The NCP lawmaker further said most countries in the world have adopted dash cams on a large scale. Making the use of dash cams mandatory for manufacturers aligns with the objective of collecting reliable evidence, ensuring transparency, and facilitating a fair legal process. The Nationalist Congress Party MP said dash cams might also be made mandatory like

seat belts, seat belt peeps,

etc. are mandatory today.

■ Would carry out census procedure across country, says Rahul

# 'If voted to power, INDIA bloc to remove 50% cap on quota'

**NAYYAR AZAD** 

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Monday promised a nationwide caste census and removal of the 50 per cent cap on reservation if the INDIA bloc forms the government at the Centre after the Lok Sabha polls. He also alleged that the BJP tried to topple the JMM-Congress-RJD govern-ment in Jharkhand as the CM was a tribal.

Mr Gandhi also met former Jharkhand chief minister Hemant Soren's wife Kalpana Soren. The development took place ahead of his public rally in

Congress general secretary for communication Jairam Ramesh in a statement said the meeting took place few minutes



Congress MP Rahul Gandhi with party leaders at a public meeting during the "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra" in Ranchi on Monday.

ahead of the public rally at the historic Shaheed Maidan in the HEC complex Ranchi, and few minutes later, the JMM-led government defeated the BJP and its allies in the

Gandhi addressed a rally at a ground in the HEC complex in Ranchi on Monday. In the rally, Mr Gandhi launched a scathing attack on the BJP-led NDA government at the Centre,

saying attempts were

Minister Narendra Modi and his government to finish the public sector undertakings (PSUs).

During his speech, Mr. Gandhi said, "If the INDIA bloc comes to power, it will ensure that Dalite tribals and OPCs.

Dalits, tribals, and OBCs get their rights". He added, "I guarantee that reservation of Dalits

and tribals will not be reduced, and the backward sections will also get their rights. To progress we also need social justice and economic justice." Reiterating his earlier stand on caste-based cen-

sus, Mr Gandhi said that INDIA bloc, if voted to power, would carry out census procedure across

Chief minister Champai Soren extended full support to Mr Gandhi's yatra.

# Mamata will skip meet on 1 nation, 1 election in Delhi

CM says had to cancel visit due to WB Budget Feb. 8

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, FEB. 5

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee has cancelled her New Delhi visit during which she was scheduled to attend "One Nation, One Election" meeting to be convened by former President Ramnath

Kovind on Tuesday.
The Trinamul Congress supremo announced that she would attend the meeting and was supposed to fly to the mational capital on Monday evening. She, however, changed her decision at the

eleventh hour over her preoccupation with the Budget Session that has got underway in the state Assembly without the governor's address for the first time in a departure from tradition.

The CM said at the state



Mamata Banerjee

secretariat, Nabanna, after chairing a Cabinet meeting, "I have cancelled my New Delhi tour because the state Budget is on February 8. We discussed the drafts of the Budget at the Cabinet meeting. Since I have two days time in hand, I cancelled my visit due to an emergency situation." She elaborated, "Mr Kovind, who is chairman

of 'One Nation, One Election' committee, is a thorough gentleman. I rang him many times before cancelling my tour.

He was, however, out of station. So I could not talk to him then. Before talking to you, I had a word with him and explained the issue. He told me: Mamataji, no problem."
Ms Banerjee also informed that she nomi-

nated two of her party Bandopadhyay TMC parliamentary party leader in Lok Sabha and Kalyan Banerjee to represent her at the meeting. She added, "When I shared my wish with Mr Kovind to send two MPs on behalf of my party to

Ms Banerjee's move came hours after Leader the Opposition Suvendu reached New Delhi and met Union home minister Amit Shah and Union finance minister Nirmala

**Opp. stages walkout during** 

**Budget Session in Assam** 

the meeting, he accepted

# Kiran Bedi Punjab new gov? Buzz in political circles

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The name of former IPS officer Kiran Bedi was doing the rounds for the post of Punjab governor, following a social media post from a state BJP leader.

The spokesperson of Punjab BJP Kamal Soi on Sunday claimed that Ms Kiran Bedi would be the next governor of Punjab in a social media post on X, which he deleted later.

So far, no official announcement has been made by the government for the appointment of new Punjab governor; however, the Modi government is known to spring surprises in the matter of important appointments.

Ms Bedi was the 24th lieutenant-governor of Puducherry from 28th May 2016 to 16th February

The incumbent governor Banwarilal Purohit on Saturday resigned from the post of governor as well as administrator the Union territory of Chandigarh, citing personal reasons. In a brief letter to President Droupadi Murmu, he



Kiran Bedi

MS BEDI was the 24th lieutenant-governor of Puducherry from 28th May 2016 to 16th February 2021

cited personal reasons behind tendering his resignation. "Due to personreasons and certain other commitments, I tender my resignation from the post of governor and administrator of Union territory of Chandigarh. Please accept the same and oblige," Mr Purohit had said in a letter. He had held the office since August 2021.

This development came a day after he met Union home minister Amit Shah in New Delhi.

A three-time MP, twice from the Congr and once from the BJP, from Nagpur, Mr Purohit was earlier the Governor of Tamil Nadu and Assam.



Prime Minister Narendra Modi meets with a delegation of religious leaders in

MANOJ ANAND

Amid shouting slogans in the Assam Assembly, the Opposition on Monday staged a walkout during governor Gulab Chand Kataria speech on the opening day of the Budget Session.

governor forced to conclude his speech within three minas leaders of Opposition parties raised the issue of faulty sound system and non-supply of copies of the governor's

The chaos and slogan shouting continued even Speaker Biswajit Daimary requested the legislators not to shout slogans or show placards during the speech.

The MLAs showed placards and raised issues like Citizenship Amendment Act, reintroducing Old Pension Scheme, stopping eviction drives, and resignation of home minister for failing to nab the culprits who attacked Congress state chief Bhupen Kumar Borah during "Bl Nyay Yatra".

■ Modi will address massive rally on Feb. 25 in Tamil Nadu, says state BJP chief

# PM to open India Energy Week in Goa Feb. 6

Panaji, Feb. 5: Prime state BJP chief Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate India Energy Week 2024 in Goa on Tuesday and also dedicate to the nation the permanent campus of the National Institute of Technology apart from laying foundation stones for various projects costing more than ₹1,330

The PM will also address massive rally on in Tamil Palladam in Tiruppur district, where

Annamalai's "En Mann En Makkal" (My Land, My People) yatra will conclude.

The PM will inaugurate the ONGC Sea Survival Centre at Betul village in South Goa at 10:30 am and inaugurate India Energy Week. He will participate in the Viksit Bharat, Viksit Goa 2047 programme at Fatorda in the afternoon, as per a release Minister's Office.

The Energy Week will be

► MODI WILL participate in the "Viksit Bharat, Viksit Goa 2047 programme" at Fatorda in the afternoon, as per a release issued by the Prime Minister's Office

India's largest and only all-encompassing energy exhibition and conference expected to be attended by around 17 energy ministers from different coun-

"Achieving 'aatmanirb-

harta' (self-reliance) in energy requirements has been a key focus area of the prime minister. In yet another step in this direction, India Energy Week 2024 will be held from February 6 to 9 in Goa," the PMO said.

It will be India's largest and only all-encompassing energy exhibition and conference, together the entire energy value chain, and will serve as a catalyst for India's energy transition goals. The Tamil Nadu BJP

ensure that Modiji returns as Prime Minister for the third straight time." He added that people in Tamil Nadu, irrespective of their party allegiance, had realised that the upcoming elections would

chief K. Annamalai said,

Tamil Nadu will con-

tribute in a big way to

be about making a choice for India's growth, and that this would to votes for the BJP. "So, you will see a lot of voting in favour of Modiji from TN," he said. — PTI

Bill in LS to

check paper

leaks, use of

unfair means

AGE CORRESPONDENT

The Union government

on Monday introduced a

bill in the Lok Sabha to

check malpractices in

ment exams such as

paper leaks and fake

websites, with strict penalties including a

minimum jail term of

three years and a fine up

Examinations

(Prevention of Unfair Means) Bill, 2024, intro-

duced by Union minister

of state for personnel Jitendra Singh, mentions leakage of ques-

tion paper or answer key

date in any manner

unauthorisedly in the

public examination and

tampering with the com-

puter network or a com-

puter resource or a com-

puter system as offences

done by a person, group

of persons or institu-

directly or indirectly

assisting the candi-

recruit-

NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

government

to ₹1 crore.

#### **States & UTs** empowered to declare Simi banned group

**AMRESH SRIVASTAVA** NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Centre on Monday delegated powers to all states and Union territories to declare the terrorist group Students Islamic Movement of India (SIMI) a banned organisation under the anti-terror law UAPA.

Union home ministry on Monday announced delegating the powers under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act to the state and the Union territory governments regarding the ban extension for another five years on SIMI.

On January 29, Union home ministry had extended the ban imposed on the SIMI for five more years, saying the group had been involved in fomenting terrorism and disturbing peace and communal harmony in the country.

"In exercise of the powers conferred by section 42 of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, the Central Government hereby directs that all powers exercisable by it under section 7 and section 8 of the said Act shall also be exercised by the state governments and the UT administration in relation to the above said unlawful association,' the notification reads.

As many as 10 state governments have recommended the declaration of SIMI as an "unlawful association"

# BJP may field fresh faces in at least dozen LS seats

RABINDRA NATH CHOUDHURY

BJP is planning to field new faces in at least a dozen out of total 29 Lok Sabha constituencies in Madhya Pradesh in the upcoming polls, due in April-May this year.

The party is seriously considering replacing some sitting MPs with fresh faces to beat the anti-incumbency factor working against them in their respective constituencies, a senior BJP functionary told this newspaper on Monday, unwilling to be quoted.

'The internal survey by the party has indicated that an anti-incumbency factor is working against at least seven sitting MPs in their respective constituencies. The party

#### **MADHYA PRADESH**

THE PARTY is seriously considering replacing some sitting MPs with fresh faces to beat the anti-incumbency factor working against them in their respective constituencies

to replace these sitting MPs with new faces to win these seats", the BJP leader said. This apart, five sitting MPs in Madhya Pradesh

leadership is most likely

had resigned from the Lok Sabha following their elections to the state Assembly in November polls. New faces are going to be fielded in these parlia-

the BJP leader said.

constituencies,

The five sitting MPs who got elected to the state Assembly are former Narendra Singh Tomar and Prallhad Patel, Rithi Pathak, Rakesh Singh, and Uday Pratap Singh.

Two other sitting MPs who were fielded in the Assembly polls but lost the elections are Union minister Faggan Singh Kulaste and Ganesh Singh.

Party sources said a decision was yet to be taken by the BJP leadership whether they would be retained in their respective constituencies in the upcoming LS polls. The in-charges of clusters comprising three-four Lok Sabha constituencies each have submitted their feedback on the ground situation to the party,



AAP MP Raghav Chadha with party MP Sanjay Singh's wife Anita Singh at the Parliament House complex during the Budget session on Monday.

# 'Cong must look outside Gandhi family for leadership'

Jaipur, Feb. 5: Congress leader and former president Pranab Mukherjee's daughter Sharmistha Mukherjee on Monday said the time has come that the party should look outside the Nehru-Gandhi family for its leadership.

Speaking to PTI on the sidelines of the 17th Jaipur Literature Festival here, she said the number of Congress' seats in the Lok Sabha has reduced, but the party still has a very strong presence in national politics.

'The Congress is still the

main Opposition party. Its place is undisputed. But how to strengthen this presence? This is the question. It is the job of party leaders to consider this,' Ms Mukherjee said. She said that there is a

need to involve grassroots workers at every level in the process of restoration of democracy in the party, membership campaign, organisational elections within the party and policy decisions, as former President Pranab Mukherjee has also written in his "There is no magic



wand," she said. On former party president Rahul Gandhi as leader, Ms Mukherjee said, "It is not my job to define Rahul Gandhi. It is

not possible to define any individual. If someone asks me to define my father, I cannot even explain my father."
On the issue of leader-

ship, she said that the Congress leaders have to answer this. "But as a Congress supporter and a responsible citizen, I am worried about the party. And certainly the time has come to look outside the Nehru-Gandhi family for leadership,'

She also said that she is a die-hard Congressperson

Mukherjee added.

whether people believe it or not. 'The Congress should introspect whether it is truly upholding its ideolo-

gy forward today. Are pluralism, secularism, tolerance, inclusivity, freedom of expression, which have been at the core of Congress," she asked.

"Freedom of speech does not only mean that you praise your leader. And the moment you criticize the party leadership, the entire ecosystem puts you Mukherjee added.

tions. Creation of fake website to cheat or for monetary gain, conduct of fake examination, issuance of fake admit cards or offer letters to cheat or for monetary gain and manipulation in seating arrangements, allocation of dates and shifts for the candidates to facilitate adopting unfair means in examinations are also among the offences punishable under the pro-



In C'garh, 45 IPS

officers transferred

Raipur: In the first major reshuffle in the police administration after chief minister Vishnu Deo Sai assumed office in December last year, 46 IPS officers, including 25 district superintendents of police (SPs) have been transferred. An official notification in this regard was issued here on Monday. The 1997-batch IPS officer Dipansu Kabra who was posted as transport commissioner, has been transferred as additional director general of police at PHQ, Nava Raipur. Sheikh Arif Hussain, who was post-

police (IGP) Raipur range. has been transferred as IGF (North Region) of the Chhattisgarh Armed Force, Surguja. IPS officer Amresh Mishra has been appointed as IGP Raipur range, after he completed his deputation at the Centre. IGP (intelligence) Anand Chabra, IGP Bilaspur range Ajey Yadav and IGP Durg range B.N. Meena have been posted as IGPs at the PHQ, Nava Raipur.

ed as inspector general of

#### 3 labourers killed in Maha crane mishap

Nashik: Three labourers hired for silt removal work were killed when the wire rope of a crane they were using snapped, and they fell into a well in a village in Maharashtra's Nashik district,

the police said on Monday. The incident occurred in Mulane village of Satana taluka around 4 pm on Sunday, an official said. A crane was being used to lower and bring out labourers hired to remove silt from a well, he said. The labourers were coming out for lunch break when the wire rope of the crane snapped, causing

The trio sustained injuries, and during the second attempt to bring them out by crane, the rope snapped again, he said. The men died by the time the locals managed to get them out of the well, the official added. -PTI

them to fall into the 50-feet

deep well, the official said.

#### 6 of family killed in Kanpur road mishap

Kanpur: Six people of a family were killed after their car went out of control and fell into a drain here on Monday, the police said. The incident happened in the early hours of the day near Jagannathpur village in Kanpur Dehat district when the family was returning from Madhya

"tilak ceremony", it said. Virat (15) and Vaishnavi (19), who were among the eight people travelling in the illfated vehicle, were saved by police, superintendent of police (Kanpur Dehat)

B.B.G.T.S. Murthy said. Those killed have been identified as Vikas (40), his elder brother Sanju (45), Khushbu (17), Golu (16), Prachi (12) and Prateek (10). They were taken to Sikandra Community Health Centre, where the doctors declared them ■ Candidates also asked not to carry children in arms, vehicle

# **EC** cautions all parties against use of kids in poll campaigning

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Election Commission has asked political parties to refrain from using children in campaigning "in any form", including distribution of posters, pamphlets, sloganeering and in gatherings like rallies.

In a directive sent to parties, the poll panel said there is "zero tolerance" towards use of children in any manner during the electoral process by par-ties and candidates. In the "strict directive", that comes ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, candidates have also been asked not to carry children in their

arms while campaigning.
"In continuation of its earlier directives to parties and candidates to address plummeting levels of campaign discourse of a child accompanied by their parent or guardian in proximity of a political leader and who is not involved in any poll campaigning activity, will not be construed as a violation

in their arms, carrying a

child in a vehicle or in ral-

However, the mere pres-

ence of a child accompa-

lies," the EC order said.

Commission has also unequivocally directed all election officials and machinery to refrain from involving children in any capacity during election-related work or activities

and to maintain respectful nied by their parent or guardian in proximity of discourse towards persons with disabilities, the EC political leader and who has issued strict directives is not involved in any elecregarding use of children in any election-related activities. Political leaders tion campaigning activity by the political party, will not be construed as a vioand candidates should not lation of the guidelines. use children for campaign The EC directive further activities in any manner including holding a child

said, this prohibition extends to the use of children to create the semblance of a political campaign in any manner, including use through

songs,

of political party/candidate, exhibiting ideology of political party, promoting achievements of a political party or criticising the opponent political parties or candidates. Quoting legal provisions

in this regard, the EC highlighted the Bombay high court order dated August 4, 2014 on a PIL — Chetan Ramlal Bhutada vs state of Maharashtra and others, which had stressed the need to ensure that political parties do not participation of allow minor children in any election related activities.

"The commission has unequivocally directed all election officials and machinery to refrain from involving children in any capacity during electionrelated work or activities," the EC said.

# Want friendly ties, but won't compromise on border: Shah

'Govt has acted not only on terror but its ecosystem too'

AMRESH SRIVASTAVA NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Union home minister Amit Shah on Monday said that the government, under leadership of the Prime Minister Narendra Modi, has successfully tackled the three internal security hotspots - "J&K, the Northeast and the Left-wing Left-wing extremism affected areas" — in its 10 years of rule.

"These three hotspots were successfully brought under control by the Modi government and the areas were now part of India's development journey," he

The government wants friendly relations with all countries but it will not compromise with India's border security and the safety of its people, the

Dishing out the data, Mr

Amit Shah

Shah said there were over 2,600 organised stone-pelting incidents in J&K prior to the Modi government coming to power and over 110 people lost their lives and more than 6,000 people were injured due to these incidents.

"Now there is not a single incident of stone pelting in Jammu and Kashmir. There is zero stone pelting," he said. The minister said terror-

ism and insurgency have left many dead and

injured, and the govern-ment has taken action not only on terrorism but its ecosystem too.

"Our external and internal policy is clear. We want friendly relations with other countries. But there will be no compromise on the country's border security and the security of its people," Mr Shah said in his address to the deliberation on the subject "Security Beyond Tomorrow: India's Resilient Future'

He added that other countries have respected this policy of the govern-ment, adding that due to the appeasement policy, the previous governments have created many internal security problems.
The implementation of

the newly enacted three criminal justice laws, these will be the most modern laws, he said.

**SC** notice to

**Centre over** 

Haryana job

quota issue

### **Farmers to march** to Delhi on Feb. 13

Demand legal guarantee for MSP

Chandigarh, Feb. 5: mum support price (MSP) Farmers will march to Delhi on February 13 to press the Centre for accepting several demands, including enactment of a law to guaran-tee MSP for crops, a top farm leader said on Monday Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) leader Jagjit Singh Dallewal claimed more than 200 farmers' unions from across the country will participate in the "Delhi Chalo" march.

These unions are part of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) and the Kisan Mazdoor Morcha. The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (Non-Political) is a breakaway faction of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha.

Mr Dallewal alleged that the Centre had made a legal guarantee to miniwhen the farmers protested against the three nowrepealed farm laws.

But the government is not fulfilling its promise because of pressure from the corporate sector, Mr Dallewal claimed.

He said preparations for the march have been going on with farmers taking out tractor rallies at many places. Sarwan Singh Pandher,

general secretary of the Kisan Mazdoor Sangharsh Committee, said besides legal guarantee for MSP, the farmers are also demanding implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations, pension for farmers and farm labourers, farm debt waiver, withdrawal of police cases and "justice" for vic-

#### AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5 from the Centre on a

The Supreme Court on Monday sought response

plea filed by the Haryana government against the Punjab and Haryana high court order scrapping its law providing 75 per cent reservation in private sector jobs to the residents of the State. A bench of Justices Narasimha and

Aravind Kumar issued notice to the Centre and the Faridabad Industries Association on the appeal filed by the Haryana government. Solicitor-general Tushar Mehta, appearing for the Haryana government, submitted that

the high court verdict was devoid of reasoning. The Haryana govern-

ment has moved the top court against the high court order of November 17, 2023 that declared the law as unconstitutional. The high court had also held the Haryana

State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020 "ultra vires" and said it will become "ineffective from the date it came into force"

In its 83-page judgment, the high court had said, "We are of the considered opinion that the writ petitions are liable to be allowed and the Haryana Employment of Local Candidates Act, 2020 is held to be unconstitutional and violative of Part III of the Constitution of India."

#### **Snow, rains** continue in **HP**; over 640 roads closed

Shimla, Feb. 5: Snowfall and rains continued across Himachal Pradesh, affecting normal life as 645 roads, including four national highways, were closed for vehicles on Monday, the state emergency operation centre said.

In the state capital Shimla, 242 roads have been closed, 157 in Lahaul and Spiti, 93 in Kullu, 61 in Chamba and 51 in Mandi in Mandi district, it said.

According to the centre, 1,416 transformers and 52 water supply schemes have been disrupted in Himachal. In the past 24 hours,

Chirgaon received 35 cm of snow, Khadrala 30 cm, Manali 23.6 cm, Narkanda 20 cm, Gondla 16.5 cm, Keylong 15.2 cm, Shilaroo 15 cm, Sangla 8.2 cm, Kukumseri 7.1 cm Kalpa 7 cm and Shimla 2 cm, the local MeT office said.

Widespread rains were also witnessed in the

There was no significant change in the minitemperatures, however, maximum tem peratures were marked below normal following an appreciable dip, the

weather office said. Lahaul and Spiti's Kukumseri was coldest at night with a minimum temperature of minus 6.8 degrees C while Dehra Gopipur in Kangra was hottest during the day at 14 degrees C.

The local MeT office has predicted dry weather in the state for the next six days. — PTI next six days.



People do shopping at a market after fresh snowfall in Manali on Monday. In the past

### ■ Even today, we haven't left Hindutva: Ex-CM Udhhav springs a surprise, says was never Modi, BJP's 'enemy'

**BHAGWAN PARAB** MUMBAI, FEB. 5

Shiv Sena UBT chief Uddhay Thackeray has sprang a surprise saying that Prime Minister Narendra Modi was not his enemy. Mr Thackeray said he has no ill feelings about the PM and wondered why the BJP considers him as their enemy.

Addressing a rally in Sawantwadi in Maharashtra's Sindhudurg dis-trict, the former CM said that his side was never the "enemies" of the saffron party. "Even today, we are not your enemy. It was you (Modi), who decided to snap ties with the Shiv Sena," he added.

Ever since the fall of this Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) government, Thackeray has always been critical of Mr Modi. Last



ish off his the Sena Uddhav chief said they Thackeray that

PM of try-

ing to fin-

"I want to tell Modiji that we were never your enemy. Even today, we are not enemies. We were with you. The Shiv Sena was with you. We campaigned for our alliance last time. You became PM because our MPs like Vinayak Raut were elected. But later you distanced us from yourself,"

said Mr Thackeray. Even today, we haven't left Hindutva. We can't do

fron flag is with us. But today, the BJP is trying to tear that saffron flag, he added. The Sena chief accused

the PM of misusing the central probe agencies to split the Opposition parties. "If you would have done something for the country, then you wouldn't have needed to spli other political parties. All central agencies such as the ED, CBI and police are working for it. Please move around the country like us and you will under-

stand," he added. The former CM said that he was not opposed to any individual but was against lies and dictatorship. He added that India does not need a government with an absolute majority but a regime of the INDIA bloc will take

### **Dhoni's contempt plea: SC** stays ex-officer's sentence

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

The Supreme Court on Monday granted an interim stay on the 15-day simple imprisonment awarded by the Madras high court to retired IPS officer G. Sampath Kumar in a contempt of court case moved by former Indian cricket team captain

Mahendra Singh Dhoni.
A bench of Justices A.S. Oka and Ujjal Bhuyan issued notice on the former IPS officer's plea against the high court order and posted the matfor next hearing on March 8.

On December 15 last year, the high court had found Mr Kumar guilty of committing criminal contempt and sentenced him to 15-day simple imprisonment.

In its order, the high court had said Mr Kumar, by his specific words, has attacked the judiciary indecently with an intention to scandalise and undermine the dignity and majesty of this court as well as the apex court.

#### dead, the SP said. — PTI that. Today also, the safeveryone along **Modi tears into Cong**; SC: Won't allow 'murder of says NDA to win 400+

■ Continued from Page 1

there (in the Opposition) for a long time." For several decades you were

sitting here (in the treasury benches), but now you have resolved to stay there (Opposition benches) for several decades. The people will bless you and keep you there. You will achieve greater heights and will be soon seen in the public galleries (of the House)," he said.

The PM further noted that the Budget Session was a good opportunity to make some constructive suggestions, but the Opposition members have let go of a good chance. He said: "You have left the country disillusioned. Leaders have changed but the same tune continues. The Opposition could have given some message to the peo-

ple in an election year. 'The Congress had a good opportunity to play a good Opposition but failed in that role. There are other young people in the Opposition, but they were not allowed to speak out of fear that it may overshadow a particular person," Mr Modi said, in an apparent reference to

Rahul Gandhi. The PM said the Congress may soon have to "shut shop" due to its attempt to launch the same product time and again.

It's election time, and you should have worked a bit harder, brought something new and

sent a message to the people. However, you failed miserably. Let me teach you this very thing. The Congress Party is responsible for the current condition of the Opposition. The Congress got an opportunity to become a good Opposition. However, they failed to fulfil their responsibility in the last 10 years," he said.

Mr Modi also hit out at former Prime Ministers, and said former PM Jawaharlal Nehru had called Indians "lazy" and that Indira Gandhi was no different

The PM listed the achievements of his government since 2014 in different sectors and also highlighted that the NDA government has managed to keep inflation in check despite the Covid-19 pandemic and the war between Ukraine and Russia.

Referring to the Opposition's allegations of misuse of Central probe agencies, the PM asserted that investigative agencies are independent and working as per the Constitution.

He informed the Lok Sabha that under the PMLA, the government has registered twice the cases than earlier. "During the tenure of the Congress, the ED had confiscated properties of ₹5,000 crore. While in our tenure, the ED has confiscated properties worth ₹1 lakh crore,

democracy' in Chandigarh ■ Continued from Page 1 by what has happened. We

Mehta: "It is obvious that he (returning officer) has defaced the ballot papers, he needs to be prosecuted. Why is he looking at the camera and running like a fugitive? Mr Solicitor, this is a mockery of democracy and murdering democracy. We are appalled.'

"Is this the behaviour of returning officer? Wherever there is a cross at the bottom (of the ballot paper), he puts it into the tray. The moment there is a cross at the top, the man defaces the ballot and looks at the camera. Tell him that the Supreme Court is watching him. We will not allow democracy to be murdered like this. The great stabilising force in the country is the purity of the election process," the CJI added.

After watching the video of the electoral proceedings, a bench of Chief Justice India Chandrachud and Justices J.B. Pardiwala and Manoj Misra expressed annoyance and said that, prima facie, the returning officer was "defacing" the ballot

"This is a mockery of democracy. We are appalled

will not allow democracy to be murdered like this," the

The court directed the entire record of the elecprocess sequestered and be kept with the Punjab and Haryana high court tegistrar-general.

The deputy commissioner of Chandigarh, who has possession of the records at present, should hand over them to the HC registrar-general of the high court by 5 pm on Monday (February 5).

AAP councilor Kuldeep Kumar had moved the top court challenging a Punjab and Haryana high court order that refused to grant any interim relief to the party seeking fresh polls Chandigarh.

During the hearing, senior advocate Abhishek "Manu" Singhvi, representing the petitioner, submitted that a BJP candidate was chosen as the presiding officer and he acted in a partisan manner by deliberately defacing eight ballot papers of Congress-AAP councillors and rendering their votes

The S-G contended that the video only showed a one-sided picture and urged that the court take a comprehensive view after seeing the entire records. The CJI said: "An appro-

priate interim order was warranted which HC has failed to do." On January 30, the BJP swept the Chandigarh mayoral polls against the Congress-AAP alliance. Manoj Sonkar of the BJP had defeated Mr Kumar for the mayor's post, polling 16 votes against 12 votes of

his rival. Eight votes were declared

On Wednesday, a division bench of Justices Sudhir Singh and Harsh Bunger of the high court denied interim relief to the Aam Aadmi Party, which alleged that ballot papers had been tampered with and sought fresh polls under the supervision of a retired judge of the court.

The high court issued notices to the Chandigarh administration, the municipal corporation, presiding officer Anil Masih and the newly-elected among others, asking then to file their replies within three weeks.

## Indian troops will be out of Maldives by May 10: Muizzu

of the President of the Republic of Maldives on 17 November 2023, nearly two months and a fortnight ago, my main promise to the people of Maldives was to protect the freedom and sovereignty of the people of Maldives. The support of a large majority of Maldivian citizens for our government was the pledge to withdraw foreign military troops from the country, to recover the lost area of Maldivian territory, and terminate any agreement made by the state that might undermine the country's sovereignty," President Muizzu said, in thinly-veiled barbs at India.

further Furnishing proof of his anti-India and hostility, President Muizzu said: "Discussions with this foreign nation are through underway diplomatic channels. We have requested to withdraw the foreign military personnel in the Maldives. These discussions are still ongoing. As agreed in the latest negotiations, the military personnel in one of

■ Continued from Page 1 the three aviation platforms will be withdrawn before 10 March 2024. And the military personnel on the remaining two platforms will be withdrawn before 10 May 2024. We have officially communicated that the Maldivian government will not renew the agreement which gives a foreign nation the power to measure and map the Maldivian oceans and coastlines. We will not give in to any pressure that can quiver the sovereign state of the country." He added: "A team of

experts are now working strenuously to find ways, in accordance with international law, to advocate and recover lost sovereign territory. I believe that the modern military capability to defend the country by road, sea and air should be strengthened in the Maldives... Defence

Maldivian Force will soon be able to conduct the surveil-lance of the 900,000 sq km Exclusive Economic Zone of the Maldives, 24 hours a day.

Once again hailing the Chinese assistance his

government is getting President Muizzu furplete water and sewerage services in all the remaining islands during this term, and I will build harbours in all the islands as well. As I have promised, we will make good quality roads in all the cities and build major roads in other islands. The work of improving the roads in the Male city will start this year. Most of the cost of these projects will be covered by grants provided by the People's Republic of China." It may also be noted that the Maldives had apparently asked India

last week to explain allegations that the Indian Coast Guard boarded three Maldivian fishing vessels "against all international laws" consulting without Maldivian authorities a few days ago that were operating Exclusive Maldivian Economic Zone (EEZ), according to news agency reports and other media reports from Maldives' capital



## THE ASIAN AGE

6 FEBRUARY 2024

# Slick management enables JMM triumph in Jharkhand

The confidence vote won by the Champai Soren ministry in the Jharkhand Assembly was a crucial test not only for his party, the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, and the alliance it leads in the state but also for the larger INDIA bloc of opposition parties ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. The vote has given the opposition a reason to claim that it has frustrated the attempts by the BJP to use law enforcement agencies of the Union government to effect regime change in states which are ruled by

parties opposed to the NDA alliance.

The vote was conducted in a background that would give a party no reason to be proud of in normal circumstances. Its chief minister Hemant Soren had to resign after he was taken into custody by the Enforcement Directorate in a case registered under the Prevention of Money Laundering Act, 2002 (PMLA). However, one must not lose sight of the factor that Mr Soren is one of the dozens of the opposition leaders being investigated by the agency with a dubious history of prosecution. Given the wide powers the Act bestows on the agency and the tough and impossible conditions it imposes on the courts to grant bail to the accused, the ED has become the choicest tool of the BJP government to hunt down opposition

The JMM has conducted itself adroitly in the face of unprecedented uncertainties. It has managed a leadership change forced on it by external factors with relative ease, given its potential to create divisions within.

leaders. It may be recalled that the agency successfully vitiated the political scene barely weeks before the Assembly elections in Chhattisgarh, putting then chief minister Bhupesh Baghel in the shadow of suspicions. That the agency has not yet named Mr Baghel as an accused in the case gives away the plot it was acting on.

The JMM has conducted itself adroitly in the

face of unprecedented uncertainties. It has managed a leadership change forced on it by external factors with relative ease, given its potential to create divisions within. By choosing a person not related to the outgoing leader, the party also managed to escape the NDA charge that another of the INDIA bloc party is sold to dynastic politics. It is not that there was no voice of dissent against the party leadership

but it gained very little traction.

It is a matter of shame that the JMM and its allies had to take the MLAs to another state to avoid poaching by the opponents. While the ruling alliance has little faith in its own members, the BJP, which has tasted blood with its infamous 'operation lotus' in several states, is waiting in the wings ready to pounce on the MLAs at the opportune time. Both the players have reduced the popular mandate into a charade of dishonest politics.

The reality of India is that the opposition parties have not only to fight their political rival if it is BJP; they have to be prepared with a plan 'B' to follow as and when the central agencies descend on them. The INDIA bloc has escaped the Jharkhand challenge by a whisker; a loss there, coming close on the heels of the Congress defeat in the Assembly elections in the Hindi heartland, would have shaken the foundations of the coalition. It must now get its act together for taking on bigger tasks ahead.

### PM's emphasis on heritage apt

mphasising on the need for balancing between a quest for modernity and development on the one hand, and an equal stress on conserving one's past culture and heritage, Prime Minister Narendra Modi aptly spoke on the need to understand the significance of one's past in the present time as a necessary precursor to building a great future.

Castigating the previous governments and leaders, who he alleged were "ashamed of their own culture", Mr Modi said those in power after India Often, Indian politics

has been split between those who preached modernity and secularism.

which were but often merely euphemisms for a collective legiect our own culture and to

became an independent nation could not appreciate or understand the significance of our own places of worship and therefore started a "trend of being ashamed" of their own rich culture and

Besides the lack of pride in one's own culture being a hangover of colonialism and lack of confidence characteristic of the conquered race, the Prime Minister also laid bare and exposed the politicisation of colonialism of those who linked it to their electoral fortunes and, in turn, shame, to obliterate created an atmosphere where it would feel wrong to take pride in one's own pas

Often, Indian politics has been split between those who preached modernity and secularism, "correct" memories. which were but often merely euphemisms for a which were but often merely euphemisms for a

collective shame, to obliterate and neglect our own culture and to "correct" memories through the alteration of narratives of history through controlled selective narrations of history through our education and all popular channels of discourse dissemination.

No country can progress by neglecting its history, Mr Modi expounded, which he linked to the change during the last decade, in which, the BJP government led by him ensured the country could rediscover its own past and understand and take pride in its glorious ancient and medieval histo-

Our double engine governments, he said in Assam, have been focusing equally on "development and protection of heritage". In the context of the euphoria across the country over the grand consecration ceremony at Ayodhya, most Indians would agree. And with pride.

#### THE ASIAN AGE

KAUSHIK MITTER

K. Sudhakar

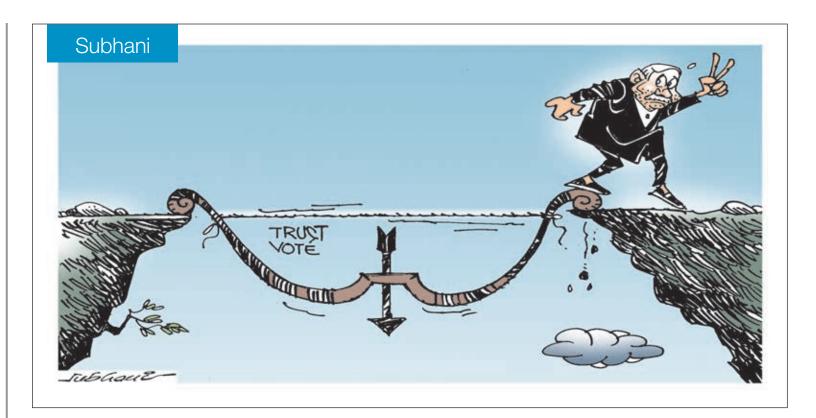
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# Cynicism versus principles: Will voters reward venality?



Shikha Mukerjee

he high probabili-ty of the Nare-ndra Modi-led Bharatiya Janata Party sweeping the forthcoming Lok Sabha elections in 2024 would be an extraordinary endorsement of the victory of cynicism and the defeat of the politics of principle. Bihar's permanent chief minister Nitish Kumar's decision to break with the Rashtriya Janata Dal and the Congress and return to the alliance with the BJP was a measure of the confidence the partnership exuded that venality would be rewarded by the voters with depressingly low expectations.

Ĥaving sworn tremendous oaths of the "over my dead body" variety when parting company in 2022, the mutual decision to join forces by the BJP and the Janata Dal (United) makes complete nonsense of principles in Indian politics. thought about principles as each pursued an agenda of holding on to power.

On the contrary, both are confident that public perception will not reject the reversal and it may even reward the partnership with a higher number of seats for the BJP in the 2024 general election, that is, up from its current level of 17 Members of Parliament from Bihar. The likely increase in the BJP's seat haul would be probably at the JD(U)'s expense. In choosing to switch back, Nitish Kumar's goal is to remain as chief minister in Bihar and vent his peeve against the Lalu Prasad Yadav-led RJD by creating obstacles to its future expansion. As an experienced politician, Nitish Kumar has clearly calculated that his loss would be the BJP's gain and he seems thrilled with the idea that at some point the JD(U)

may dwindle to a dusty signboard in the not-too-distant future in Patna.

Political calculation is not the same as the extreme cynicism of the parties and leaders of the new Bihar alliance. That move does, sadly, reflect a profound contempt for public opinion, which is not the same as voter preference. Voters may and probably will vote for Narendra Modi and his proxies across North and East India. The BJP's vote share, however, will not reflect public opinion; it will merely underscore the absence of a viable alternative, with voters stuck in a trap between the formidable force of the BJP on the one hand and regionalsmaller parties fighting it alone on the other, because the INDIA bloc has turned out to be a non-starter.

The three separate decisions in Bihar, in West Bengal and in Punjab cannot be compared. The outthough not fatally, damaged the INDIA bloc. The bloc looks more unviable as the allies, for reasons specific to the ruling parties in West Bengal and Puniab. rejected the Congress as a liability rather than an asset in the fiercely competitive elections against the BJP's planned incursions.

The difference between Mamata Banerjee's decision for going it alone in West Bengal because the Trinamul Congress, the Aam Admi Partv's decision in Puniab and the revision of the Samajwadi Party's decision in joining forces with the Congress in Uttar Pradesh is none of them have announced their exit from the INDIA bloc as an anti-BJP platform. Unlike Nitish Kumar, the AAP, Trinamul Congress and the Samajwadi Party consider the BJP as the enemy.

willingness The Mamata Banerjee, for

The discourse on the demise of the opposition and the invincibility of the **BJP** does not hold as true for states across the Vindhyas, as it does for the Gangetic plains.

instance, to risk West Bengal sinking deeper into debt is illustrative of how hard the Opposition is pre-pared to fight. West Bengal's announcement that it would pay out the Rs 3,181 crores outstanding dues to 21 lakh MGNREGA workers by February 21 is calling Prime Minister Modi's bluff of dedicated service to women, poor, farmers and youth, iterated as recently as February 1. Her promise to pay 11 lakh listed beneficiaries of the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana who have not received any money is the difference between fighting the BJP and torpedoing the idea of a determined opposition to Mr Modi.

The decisions erase the difference that Mr Modi has talked up between social security schemes by he christened as "revdi" or sops and his own programmes for "labharthis", or beneficiaries. The message which it conveys to the poor and voters is that the Trinamul Congress is pro-people, whereas Mr Modi uses poverty as a pawn in the political war he is waging to establish total dominance of the BJP in India after the 2024 Lok Sabha

elections. The parties that are in opposition to the BJP will remain so, because they were so even before the INDIA bloc came into existence, and even as it is on the verge of disintegrating. Oracular pronouncements about the 2024 general election as a critical and defining moment, perhaps an election that will signal a rupture with the idea of a democratic, secular India may all turn out to be more or less correct. Regardless of whatever transforma-

tions await the polity, the Opposition will have a life and a role and a responsibility that it is obviously prepared to fulfil, as Mamata Banerjee's decision indicates.
All punditry about the saffron tsunami that will

deliver 400 Lok Sabha seats to the BJP are framed within the geographical north of the Vindhyas. The bastions of the Opposition in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, and less firmly embedded but alive in Karnataka and Telangana, are not part of the calcula-

The discourse on the demise of the opposition and the invincibility of the BJP does not hold as true for states across the Vindhyas, as it does for the Gangetic plains. The visions of Viksit Bharat that offer hope and raise expectations in the states that export labour to the southern states of India does not work as well in those southern states. This is not to argue that social and economic inequities that are so all pervasive in the North are not equally pervasive in the South. They are; but there is a difference. The baseline of deprivation, poverty, discrimination and despair is different in the South from

If that points to the alarmscenario of unbridgeable divide, that is one of the many serious problems for which Mr Modi and the BJP he leads must take responsibility. As they, Mr Modi and the BJP, must take responsibility for the hard-right majoritarianism and its concomitant anti-minority swing in Indian politics that transforms critics into anti-nationals. Any acceleration of more exclusion via the Uniform Civil Code, Citizenship Amend-ment Act, challenges to the minority status of Aligarh Muslim University, and Hindu rituals inside the Gyanvapi Masjid basement has the potential of trigger ing the Newtonian law that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reac-

Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in Kolkata

#### **NOT FREEBIES**

In a modern welfare state, citizens who are poor are considered to be as important as stakeholders as the rich are and they are thus entitled to social security. But in a monarchy, they are regarded as beggars who live on charity. In a monarchy, the King gives alms to his subjects in his name as if from his own pocket. The idea behind tagging those who are getting welfare benefits as "labharthi" and what they are getting as "freebies" and "revdis" is absolutely monarchical in nature. Amenities are the government's duty to provide and the right of the citizen. The subsidy-giving AAP government has still managed a surplus budget.

> Sujit De Kolkata

#### SHINDE VS BJP?

MUCH HAS been reported about the divisions and fissures within the INDIA alliance. But the same has been glossed over within the ruling NDA. The shooting of a Shiv Sena leader of the Eknath Shinde faction by a BJP MLA in Maharashtra clearly demonstrates that all is not well between the two alliance partners. The deputy CM is there to inquire about? This happened inside a police station in full view of the police. It is strange that nobody from the police attempted to stop the shooting. Isn't this a dereliction of duty? The rank and file of the party are never consulted on alliances. Such is the truth of our democracy. **Anthony Henriques** 

#### NO PANHANDLERS

HAVING ALREADY attained the status of cleanest city for seven straight years, Indore is now poised to become a beggar-free city in 15 days. The district collector, Ashish Singh, has chalked out a three-phase plan which deserves all credit. He did a marvellous job. Let's wish the authorities success and spread the story so that every bureaucrat across India gets motivated to launch such initiatives. Let's follow the example of Indore.

C.K. Subramaniam

Every Monday the best letter of the week wins ₹500. Email: asianage.letters@gmail.com.



How the BJP has changed basics of where it stands over the decades

n its website, the BJP says: "The philosophy of Integral Humanism looks at the individual not merely as a material object but one who has a spiritual dimension. It talks of integral approach to economic development that has the individual at its core, linked to the family, the society and the nation.

What do these words mean? What does a government and political party have to do with the spiritual dimension, and even if this is possible how can this spiritual dimension be tapped with the usual levers available to the State? How are these words reflected in the BJP's manifesto or in the BJP's Budgets through actionable policies? If they are, in what way are they missing from the policies of other parties?

Let us have a look at the manifestoes of the BJP/Jan Sangh, which were published by the party a few years ago. It may surprise readers to know that there is little or no continuity in the way that the party thinks and on critical issues it has reversed its position with no

explanation for why.
In its 1954 manifesto, and again in 1971, the
Jan Sangh resolved to limit the maximum income of all Indian citizens to Rs 2,000 per month and the minimum to Rs 100, maintaining a 20:1 ratio. It would continue working on reducing this gap till it reached 10:1, which was the ideal gap and all Indians could only have incomes inside this range based on their position. Additional income earned by individuals

over this limit would be appropriated by the State for development needs "through contribution, taxation, compulsory loans and invest-

The party would also limit the size of residential houses in cities and not allow plots of more than 1,000 square yards (someone should tell the Ambanis and Adanis this).

In 1954, it said that "tractors will be used only to break virgin soil. Their use for normal ploughing purposes will be discouraged". This was of course because it was trying to protect the bull and ox from slaughter. In 1951, prohibition of cow slaughter was explained as something needed "to make the cow an economic unit of agricultural life". In 1954, the text was more religious and called cow protection a pious duty"

Though it says it is today a champion of a uniform civil code, the party consistently opposed divorce and nuclear families. Its old manifestoes (1957 and 1958) say that the "joint family and indissoluble marriage have been the basis of Hindu society. Laws that alter this basis will ultimately lead to the disintegration of society. The Jan Sangh will therefore repeal the Hindu Marriage and Hindu Succession

The Jan Sangh's 1973 analysis of caste violence "reveals that in most cases the conflict is not between Harijans and caste Hindus as such, but it is between Harijans and a set of people who are in power and who also happen to belong to the upper castes". Meaning that caste itself was not the source of the conflict. Culturally, the party stood firmly against alcohol and sought nationwide prohibition. And it wanted English to be replaced in all

spheres by local languages, and especially

Most interestingly, the Jan Sangh said it would also repeal preventive detention laws like UAPA which it said were absolutely in contradiction to individual liberty. This promise was made repeatedly in the 1950s. However, by 1967, it began to qualify the demand and said that "care will be taken to ensure that fifth columnists and disruptionist elements are not allowed to exploit the fundamental rights". In time, the Jan Sangh and BJP became one of the most enthusiastic champions of preventive detention.

In 1954, the party said it would repeal the first amendment to the Constitution that curbed freedom of speech by imposing "reasonable restrictions". This amendment essentially took away freedom of expression because the list of what is seen as a reasonable restriction was far too wide and broad. The Jan Sangh sensed that it was not something that could be allowed to go unchallenged. However, after 1954, this demand that the first amendment be repealed and complete freedom of speech, association and assembly be restored to Indians disappeared from the Jan Sangh manifestos without

"Integral Humanism" is, according to the BJP constitution, the party's "basic philosophy". It opposes the idea of linguistic states by saying (in Lecture 3, April 24, 1965): "The first para of the Constitution 'India that is Bharat will be a Federation of States", i.e. Bihar Mata, Banga Mata, Punjab Mata, Kannada Mata, Tamil Mata, are all put together to make Bharat Mata. This is ridiculous. We have thought of the provinces as limbs of Bharat Mata and not as individual mothers. Therefore, our Constitution should be unitary instead of federal." When was the last time we heard the

BJP push for this? The Jan Sangh was unable to express its majoritarianism as clearly and in as fullthroated a fashion as the BJP was later able to. This was because it lacked a specific programme on the back of which to mobilise anti-Muslim sentiment, such as the campaign against the Babri Masjid. Even though the idols were smuggled into the mosque a few months before the Jan Sangh was formed, there was no reference to Ayodhya or a Ram temple there in any of the Jan Sangh manifestos from 1951 to 1980.

Once power was secured, all the things that the Jan Sangh claimed it stood for over the decades, including its manifestoes and its "basic philosophy", have been cast aside.

The writer is the chair of Amnesty International India. Twitter: @aakar\_patel















SHORT

TAKES

#### **40 KILLED IN SUDAN-S. SUDAN BORDER VIOLENCE**

Juba, Feb. 5: About 40 people, many of them civilians, have been killed in violence in a disputed area on South Sudan's border with Sudan over the weekend and hundreds have sought refuge in a United Nations peacekeepers' compound, a government official said on Monday.

Frequent clashes have taken place in Abyei region between rival factions of the Dinka ethnic group because of a dispute over the location of an administrative boundary where significant tax revenue is collected from cross-border trade

#### **SUSPENDED DEATH SENTENCE TO OZ WRITER: CHINA**

Beijing, Feb. 5: Chinese-Australian dissident writer Yang Jun was Monday handed a suspended death sentence for espionage in China, Beijing said five years after he was detained

on a rare visit to his homeland. The Chinese-born Australian citizen has been in jail since 2019 on spying allegations and is said to be in ill health. The writer, whose pen name is Yang Hengiun, has denied the allegations, telling supporters he was tortured at a secret detention site and that he feared forced confessions may be used against him. His sentencing is one of China's heaviest

#### **23 INDIANS HELD** FOR POACHING IN **LANKA WATERS**

Colombo, Feb. 5: The Sri Lankan Navy has arrested 23 Indian fishermen and seized two trawlers for allegedly poaching in the island nation's waters, according to an official statement here.

The fishermen were arrested, and their two trawlers were seized on Saturday north of the Delft Island, Jaffna, the Sri Lanka Navy said in a press release on Sunday. The 23 apprehended fishermen and their two trawlers were escorted to the Kankesanthurai Harbour and will be handed over to the Mailadi Fisheries

#### **MORTAR SHELLS** FROM MYANMAR **KILL 2 IN B'DESH**

Dhaka, Feb. 5: At least two people were killed when mortar shells from the Myanmar side landed across the border in a Bangladeshi village while 95 Burmese paramilitary border guards fled their posts and took refuge in this country in the past two days, officials said on Monday.

"One of the two slain people is a Bangladeshi woman while the other is a Rohingva man. They were killed on Sunday in the Japaitali area that lies near the border," informed Shah Mujahid Uddin, Bandarban deputy commissioner and administrative chief.

#### REFORMIST THAI **MP PITA GETS SUSPENDED TERM**

Bangkok, Feb. 5: A Thai court handed down two-year suspended jail sentences to ex-prime minister candidate Pita Limia reont and seven others over their involvement in a 2019 protest, their lawyer said Monday, the latest hurdle thrown agai nst the progressive lawmaker.

Five years ago demonstrations mushroomed across the capital, led by the hugely popular Future Forward Party, urging reform and calling on ex-PM Prayut Chan-O-Cha to quit.

The case concerns one December 14 protest held for 40 minutes at a key Bangkok intersection.

#### CHILE WILDFIRES **RAGE ON, DEATH TOLL RISES TO 112**

**Santiago, Feb. 5:** Firefighters wrestled with massive forest fires that broke out in central Chile two days earlier, as officials extended curfews in cities most heavily affected by the blazes and said at least 112 people had been killed.

The fires burned with the highest intensity around the city of Viña del Mar, where a famous botanical garden founded in 1931 was destroyed by the flames. At least 1,600 people were left without homes. Several neighbourhoods on the eastern edge of Viña del Mar were devoured by flames.

# 7 Kurdish-led fighters Trump heads to SC killed in Syria attack

Drone strike targeted US base; Blinken on tour for truce

Seven fighters from the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces were killed in an attack on an American base in eastern Syria overnight, a war monitor said on Monday.

US secretary of state Antony Blinken arrived in Saudi Arabia on Monday for another Middle East crisis tour, hoping to secure a new truce in the Israel-Hamas war as Gaza saw no let-up in fighting.

On his fifth trip to the region since Hamas's October 7 attack that triggered the war, Blinken landed in Riyadh and was later expected to visit Israel,

Egypt and Qatar.
Ahead of the trip he stressed the need for "urgently addressing humanitarian needs in Gaza", after aid groups repeatedly sounding the alarm over the devastating impact nearly four months of war have had on the besieged area.

Seven SDF special forces "commandos" were killed and 18 others wounded in "a drone attack after midnight" on the Al-Omar oil field, the largest US-led coalition base in the country, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, updating an earlier toll.

The US-backed SDF, which spearheaded the fight against the Islamic State group jihadists in Syria, instead said "six of our fighters were martyred due to a terrorist attack' with a one-way drone, targeting a "training academy in the Al-Omar oil field" around midnight.

The force condemned the attack in a statement and said the force reserved the right to respond.



People walk amid the rubble of buildings, destroyed during Israreli bombardment in

### Senators release a \$118-bn package with aid for Ukraine and Israel

Washington, Feb. 5: Senators on Sunday released a highly anticipated \$118 billion package that pairs border enforcement policy with wartime aid for Ukraine, Israel and other US allies, setting off a long-shot effort to push the bill through heavy skepticism from Republicans, including House Speaker Mike Johnson.

The proposal is the best chance for President Joe

The Islamic Resistance

in Iraq, a loose alliance of

pro-Iran fighters opposed

to US support for Israel in

Gaza, claimed a drone

Dera Ismail Khan, Feb. 5:

At least 10 police personnel were killed and six

others injured in a pre-da-

wn attack on Monday by

militants on a police stati-

on in northwest Pakistan,

police said, as violence

escalated ahead of gener-

time (2200 GMT Sunday)

militants attacked the po-

lice station with sniper

fire and then entered the

building, said police officers in Pakistan's Draban

region in Khyber-Pakhtu-

"After entering the buil-

ding, the terrorists used

hand grenades which cau-

sed more casualties to the

police," said Malik Anees

ul Hassan, the deputy superintendent of police

It was not immediately

clear who was behind the

attack and whether it was

A national assembly ca-

ndidate was shot dead on

Wednesday elsewhere in

Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa. On

the same day, another pol-

itical leader was shot dead

in his party's election offi-

ce in Balochistan provin-

ce. On Tuesday, a bomb

attack following an electi-

on rally killed four people

related to the election.

am local

al elections this week

At around

nkhwa province.

in Drahan

Biden to resupply Ukraine with wartime aid — a major foreign policy goal that is shared with both the Senate's top Democrat, Chuck Schumer, and top Republican, Mitch McConnell. The Senate was expected

this week to hold a key test vote on the legislation, but it faces opposition from conservatives. With Congress stalled on approving \$60 billion in Ukr aine aid, the US has halted

attack on Sunday "against the US occupation base in the Al-Omar oil field". head of the UK-based Obs- ainst US bases.

ervatory, said the strike hit an SDF section inside the base, in "the first att-Rami Abdel Rahman, ack by pro-Iran groups ag-

shipments of weapons to

Kyiv, leaving Ukrainian

soldiers outgunned as

they try to beat back Rus-

The new bill would also invest in US defence man-

ufacturing, send \$14 billi-

on in military aid to Isr-

ael, steer nearly \$5 billion

to allies in the Asia-Paci-

fic, and provide humanita-

rian assistance to civilia-

ns caught in Ukraine and

sia's invasion

Gaza conflicts.

# 10 killed in attack on Pakistan police station

**ZELENSKYY MAY CHANGE KYIV'S MILITARY HEAD** 

Kyiv, Feb. 5: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy said ne is tnink ing about dismissing the country's top military officer as part of a broader leadership shakeup, a possibility that has shocked the nation fighting a war to end Russia's invasion and also worried its Western allies.

Meanwhile, four peop-le were killed and at least one was injured in a Monday strike over the city of Kherson in southern Ukraine, the head of the local military administration said.

Zelenskyy confirmed in an interview with Italian broadcaster RAI TV that he was thinking about removing Gen. Valerii Zaluzhnyi, the popular commander-inchief of Ukraine's armed forces. He said he was contemplating the move to ensure individuals who are "convinced of victory" against Russia lead the country.

#### **IMRAN, SMQ TO PERFORM LABOUR**

**BALOCHISTAN POLLING STATIONS 'SENSITIVE' O** % of the polling stations established for Thursday's general elections in Pak's Balochistan province have been declared "sensitive" or "highly sensitive" by the authorities.

AHEAD OF FEB. 8 ELECTION, IMRAN AND QURESHI ECP BEGINS DELIVERY OF **BALLOT PAPERS** 

With the general election in Pakistan just days away, the delivery of 260 million ballot papers across 859 National Assembly and provincial assembly constituencies has started after taking into account some last-minute candidacyrelated petitions, according to a spokesperson of the

election commission.

GET HIGH-PROFILE PRISONER STATUS Pakistan's ex-PM **Imran Khan** and ex-

foreign minister Shah Mahmood Oureshi despite being high-profile prisoners will have to perform their prison labour inside the compound, according to a media report.

**PAKISTAN ELECTION PANEL PAUSES NATIONAL AIRLINE SALE:** Pakistan's election commission has asked the caretaker government to "refrain' from finalising a deal to privatise flag carrier Pakistan International Airlines PIAa.PSX pending a review, a letter from the poll panel seen on Monday said.

in Balochistan, Islamic State claimed responsibility. Draban lies in an area considered a stronghold of the Jamiat Ulema-e-Islam party. The conservative religious party's leader, Ma-

ulana Fazal Ur Rehman had a meeting with the Taliban's supreme spiritual leader, local media reported, one of his few known meetings with foreign dig-

# with immunity claim

**Washington, Feb. 5:** Donald Trump will try to persuade the US Supreme Court this week to reverse a judicial decision to kick him off the ballot in Colorado over his actions concerning the Jan. 6, 2021, Capitol attack, arguing that the constitutional provision his opponents cite does not apply to him as a former president.

It may not be the only time Trump makes this type of according to the in

type of assertion to the justices. As he fights four criminal cases and civil litigation in lower courts, he has repeatedly advanced a bold argument: That he is formally immune or otherwise not subject to these legal challenges.

Trump appears obsessed with trying to place himself above the law. The theme running throughout these claims is that he cannot be held liable at law for anything he has done," said constitutional law expert Michael Gerhardt, a University of North Carolina law professor. "No president or former president has made such outlandish, self-serving claims.

The Supreme Court, whose 6-3 conservative majority includes three Trump appointees, on Thursday is scheduled to hear Trump's appeal of a ruling by Colorado's top court that disqualified him from the state's Republican primary ballot under the United States Constitution's Amendment for engaging in insurrection. He is the frontrunner for his party's nomination to challenge Democratic President Joe Biden in the

WHILE TRUMP has not asserted sweeping presidential immunity as a defence in that case, the Supreme Court still may have to confront the issue, including in criminal and civil actions over his attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss and defamation claims by a woman who accused him of rape.



#### **NIKKI HALEY RAISES \$16.5 MN IN** JANUARY FOR HER POLL CAMPAIGN

Washington, Feb. 5: Republican presidential can-didate Nikki Haley, the only challenger left against ex-president Donald Trump, has raised a massive \$16.5 million in January, despite the Indian-American politician coming third and second in the

two primaries so far. The \$16.5 million in Jan. includes \$11.7 million from grassroots supporters, which added 69,274 new donors. This is Haley's best fundraising month and more than she raised in the first, second, and third quarters of '23, a campaign release said.

"While Donald Trump blows \$50 million of his

has been focused on talking to voters and saving our country," said Haley national spokesperson Olivia Perez-Cubas. "Hundreds of thousands

donors' money on his

legal cases, Nikki Haley

of Americans are supporting Nikki's campaign because they don't want two grumpy old men and all their chaos, confusion, and grievances. They want a strong, conservative leader who will save

this country," she said. Haley, the 52-year-old former two-term Governor of South Carolina, has refused to quit the race for the 2024 White House.

Nov. 5 US election.

While Trump has not asserted sweeping presidential immunity as a defence in that case, the Supreme Court still may have to confront the issue, including in criminal and civil actions over his attempts to overturn his 2020 election loss and defamation claims by a

woman who accused him

Trump in the past has shown contempt for constraints on his actions. He famously said during his successful 2016 presidential campaign that he "could stand in the middle of Fifth Avenue and shoot somebody, and I wouldn't

#### **100K JOBS FOR** SPOUSE, KIDS **OF H-1B PEOPLE**

Washington, Feb. 5: In a huge relief for H-1B visa holders, a White House-backed bipartisan deal has been unveiled under which automatic work authorisation would be granted to about 1,00,000 H-4 visa holders, who are spouses and kids of a certain category of H-

1B visa holders. The National Security Agreement that was announced on Sunday after long negotiations betwe en the Republican and the Democratic leadership in the US Senate also provides a solution to about 2,50,000 agedout children of H-1B visa holders.

The move comes as good news for thousands of Indian technology professionals who are wai ting in a painstakingly long wait for a Green Card, in the absence of which their spouses cannot work and their aged out children face the threat of deportation.

A Green Card, known officially as a Permanent Resident Card, is a document issued to immigrants to the US as evidence that the bearer has been granted the privilege of residing permanently. The per-country caps are numerical limits on the issuance of green cards to individu-

# Sunak family link: UK Oppn attacks Infosys VIP access

Opposition Labour Party has claimed Infosys was effectively granted VIP access after a media report alleged the software services major was promised help to grow in UK due to PM Rishi Sunak's familial connection with co-founder Narayana Murthy

A Sunday Mirror report based on a freedom of information (FOI) request said trade minister Lord Dominic Johnson discussed the UK operations of Infosys during a meeting at the company's offices in Bengaluru during a visit last April.

A readout of the meeting reportedly said Lord Johnson made clear that he was keen to see a bigger Infosys presence in the UK and would be happy to do what he could to facilitate that.

After the Tories handed billions in taxpayers' cash to cronies for duff PPE (personal protective equipment), the public will wonder why an outfit so personally close to Rishi Sunak appears to have been granted this VIP access. "There are serious ques-

London, Feb. 5: The UK's tions to answer," Labour's shadow minister Jonathan Ashworth told the newspaper.

Sunak's wife, Akshata Murty, has a 0.91 per cent stake valued at around £500 million in the IT business co-founded by her father and received millions in dividends in the past financial year.

A steering brief for the meeting is reported to have said that it would be good to reassure them on the prospects for the UK economy and remind them of the support that we can provide through DBT (department for business and trade).

Lord Johnson is said to have outlined to the Infosys executives, whose names were redacted in the FOI documents, the advantages for the multinational as a result of the UK's high-potential individual visa scheme.

The investment minister regularly meets businesses and international investors, including a range of Indian businesses, to champion the United Kingdom as an investment destination and secure commitments worth billions of pounds.

## MUSIC I HONOURS Musicians, producers, others who make up the Recording Academy chose winners

# Taylor Swift makes Grammys history as women rule

Los Angeles, Feb. 4: Pop superstar Taylor Swift set another record on Sunday, winning the Grammy award for album of the year for an unprecedented fourth time as women dominated the music industry's

top honours. Swift also announced from the Grammys stage that she would release a new album in April.

The 34-year-old won album of the year for "Midnights," eclipsing music legends Frank Sinatra, Paul Simon and Stevie Wonder, who each claimed the prize three times.

Swift said she was thrilled by the honour and gushed about the fulfillment she feels from writing and singing songs. "It makes me so happy," she said. "All I want to do is keep

#### **INDIANS SHINE**

Los Angeles, Feb. 4: Indian music struck a chord at the Grammy Awards. Tabla maestro Zakir Hussain won three Grammys, flautist Rakesh Chaurasia picked up two while singer Shankar Mahadevan, violinist Ganesh Rajagop-alan and percussionist Selvaganesh Vinayakram, Hussain's collaborators in the fusion group Shakti, won one each.

Billie Eilish claimed song of the year for "What Was I Made For?," a ballad written for the "Barbie" movie soundtrack. "As a woman, it feels a lot of the time like you're not being seen," Eilish told reporters backstage

Miley Cyrus, winner of her first two Grammys on Sunday, landed the record of the year honour for her empowerment anthem "Flowers." "This award is amazing but I really hope that it doesn't change anything because my life was beautiful yesterday."

Best new artist went to R&B and pop singer Victoria Monet.

Winners were chosen by the musicians, producers, engineers and others who make up the Recording Academy. SZA, who went into the night as the mostnominated artist, won three trophies including best R&B song for "Snooze." Indie rock band boygenius, a band formed by musicians Phoebe Bridgers, Lucy Dacus and Julien Baker, also claimed three Reuters



BEST ROCK PERFORMANCE: "Not Strong Enough" — boygenius BEST ALTERNATIVE MUSIC ALBUI

"the record" — boygenius

Was I Made For?" - Billie Eilish & Finneas O'Connell **BEST NEW ARTIST:** Victoria Monet **BEST ROCK ALBUM:** 'This Is Why" -Paramore **BEST ROCK SONG:** "Not Strong Enough" — Julien Baker. Phoebe Bridgers & Lucy Dacus **BEST RAP** ALBUM: "Michael" – Killer Mike

**BEST RAP** 

**PERFORMANCE:** 

**BEST RAP** 

**SONG:** 

"Scientists &

Mike

**SONG OF THE YEAR: "What** 

RECORD OF THE YEAR: "Flowers" – Miley Cyrus BEST POP SOLO PERFORMANCE: Engineers" - Killer

Michael Render, Tim Moore and Dion Wilson BEST AFRICAN MUSIC PERFORMANCE: *"Water"* – Tyla **BEST MUSIC VIDEO:** "I'm Only Sleeping" – The Beatles **BEST COMEDY** ALBUM: "What's in a Name?" Dave Chapelle **BEST AUDIOBOOK. NARRATION AND STORYTELLING** 

"Scientists & Engineers" -

Beauregard, James Blake,

Andre Benjamin, Paul

**RECORDING:** Michelle Obama, "The Light We Carry, Overcoming in Uncertain

Miley Cyrus

MPC may hold

say economists

**FALAKNAAZ SYED** 

still near the higher end of

The six member MPC

headed by the RBI gover-

nor will start its three-day

deliberations on February

6, and the decision on rates will be announced

on Thursday February 8.

DK Joshi, chief economist at Crisil said, "We do

not expect any change in rates or stance as inflation continues to remain clos-

India's annual retail

inflation increased to 5.69

per cent in December from 5.55 per cent in November. Although hea-

dline inflation has come

within the 2-6 per cent band, it still remains

above the 4 per cent target for the RBI. The central bank has projected CPI

inflation at 5.4 per cent for

FY24, with Q3 at 5.6 per

cent and Q4 at 5.2 per cent.

The RBI hiked policy rates by 250 basis points between May 2022 and

February 2023, since then

it has kept the repo rate

unchanged at 6.5 per cent.

This will be the sixth con-

secutive time that the repo

rate will remain uncha-

nged. The repo rate is the

rate of interest at which

"With inflation expected

RBI lends to other banks.

to ease down the road and

given the fiscal rectitude, the MPC could be expect-

during April-September 2022 despite accounting

er to the upper band."

its comfort zone.

rates in Feb. policy,

INDICATORS		%
Sensex	71,731.42	-0.49
Nifty 50	21,771.70	-0.38
S&P 500*	4,944.87	0.28
Dollar (₹)	83.06	-0.15
Pound Sterling (₹)	104.66	1.06
Euro (₹)	89.33	1.08
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	62,274 <b>▼</b> 288	0.46
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	77.44	0.14
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.095	0.046
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.091	0.059
* As of 8:30 PM IST		

## Vegh brings new electric scooter at ₹70,000

Vegh Automobiles, an electric 2-wheeler company, has by launching DR!EV scooter. Priced between ₹70,000 and ₹80,000 at the Delhi showroom, the electric scooter will be available for sale from March. The Vegh DR!EV escooter features three riding modes - Eco, Power, and Sport, catering to diverse business



#### Juniper Hotels to raisė ₹1,800 cr through IPO

Juniper Hotels which runs hotels under the "Hyatt" brand, has received Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) nod to raise ₹1,800 crore through an initial public offering (IPO). Juniper Hotels is coowned by Saraf Hotels Limited and Two Seas Holdings Limited, an affiliate of the prominent global hospitality entity, Hyatt Hotels Corporation. Juniper's IPO is entirely a fresh issue of equity shares.

# Arkade gets Sebi nod for raising ₹430 cr in IPO

Mumbai based Arkade Developer has received Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi) nod for its initial public offering. The initial public offering (IPO) comprises a fresh issue of ₹430 crore. Funds raised from the issue will be used for the company's ongoing and upcoming projects and funding the acquisition of future real estate projects and general corporate purposes, the company said.

# Thyrocare plans to acquire Think Health

**Diagnostics firm Thyrocare** Technologies on Monday said it will acquire Chennai-based Think Health Diagnostics and a related entity for an undisclosed amount. The company has entered into a share purchase agreement with Think Health Diagnostics and their existing shareholders for the deal. The strategic acquisition helps Thyrocare provide ECG services at home, it said.

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#### India to remain fastest growing major economy in world, says survey

# New biz keeps services strong

MADHUSUDAN SAHOO

Indicating that India would continue to hold the title of the fastest growing major economy over the coming months, the country's dominant services sector jumped to a six month high of 61.8 in January from December's 59.0 — the fastest pace in these months on robust demand. However, it also showed that it is reducing pressure on the government and allowing it to focus on fiscal consolidation over the coming year, a private survey said on Monday.

As per the survey by HSBC final India Services Managers' Purchasing

Index, compiled by S&P Global, the final reading surpassed the preliminary estimate of 61.2, marking the 30th consecutive and the second secon tive month of expansion above the 50-mark.

The survey also highlighted that output prices increased at the slowest pace since February 2023, and optimism reached a four-month peak. "India is set to retain its position as the fastest growing major economy in the forthcoming months," the survey

According to survey participants, growth was spurred by demand buoyancy, productivity gains and rising intakes of new work. "Now business "New business placed with Indian service



providers in January increased at the fastest rate in six months. Underlying data also showed a notable upturn in new export orders at Indian service providers

vey showed. "Also, business confidence improved further at the start of the final fiscal

in January, the strongest

in three months," the sur-

with service providers in January increased at the fastest rate in six months. UNDERLYING DATA also showed a notable upturn in new export orders at Indian service providers in January.

quarter, with services companies at their most upbeat since last September. Besides demand strength, firms expect investment and productivity gains to induce output growth in the year ahead," the survev noted.

Commenting on the survey, Ines Lam, economist at HSBC, said, "India's

month high in January. New business expanded at a faster pace and managers' expectation for future activity was strong. The new export business index accelerated, signalling that India's services exports remained

survey further noted that overall inflation in the country picked up to a four-month high in December and remained above the Reserve Bank of India's medium-term 4 per cent target. "That, alongside strong economic growth, is expected to prompt the central bank to keep interest rates steady at least for a few months," it said.



 THE RBI hiked policy rates by 250 basis points between May 2022 and Feb. 2023, since then it has kept the repo rate unchanged at 6.5%. This will be sixth consecutive time that the repo rate will remain unchanged.

ed to cut rates from June," added Joshi.

Indranil Pan, chief economist at YES Bank said, "The RBI will continue to be on a pause mode for long, see possibility of rate cut only in August

2024 policy.' The liquidity deficit has increased since the last policy in Dec. 2023. The current system liquidity deficit is at ₹2.3 lakh crore and average is of ₹1.8 lakh crore post Dec 23 policy.

A status quo in repo rate means that all external benchmark lending rates (EBLR) that are linked to the repo rate will remain unchanged providing relief to borrowers.

However, lenders may raise interest rates on loans that are linked to the marginal cost of fundbased lending rate, where the entire transmission of the 250 bps hike in the repo rate has not hap-

# **Higher Central capex to** boost cement demand

**SANGEETHA G** CHENNAI, FEB. 5

A 17 per cent rise in capital expenditure in the interim budget for FY25 is a boost to infrastructure spending and cement consumption. However, the execution of the budgeted capex will be a key monitorable, finds India

The interim budget of FY25 saw a 17 per cent increase in the capital expenditure to Rs11.1 lakh crore over the revised estimate of FY24. This indicates a continuous focus on infrastructure building and creation of cement demand as the infrastructure segment

constitutes around onefourth of the total cement demand in India. The new houses under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojna will support cement demand.

The past two years wit-

nessed a large increase in budgeted capex with the government trying to do the heavy-lifting as pri-vate capex remained sluggish. In comparison, the budgeted capex growth rate in FY25 is lower than that in the past two years. However, FY24 revised estimate indicates completion of 86 per cent of FY24's budgeted capex, which is lower than the

# Nirmala seeks nod for ₹78,678-cr extra spend

FC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, FEB. 5

Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Monday sought Parliament's approval for a second supplementary spending allocation of over ₹78,673 crore for fiscal 2024, including ₹10,798 crore expenditure towards MGNREGA, out of a gross additional spend of over ₹2 lakh crore.

The key areas of spending for which the ministry seeking additional funds include servicing demand under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, outlay towards



Nirmala Sitharaman

Parliament's approval was sought to authorise gross additional expenditure of ₹2 lakh crore, according to the demand for grants statement that was tabled in the Lok Sabha. "Of this, the proposals involving net cash outgo aggregate to ₹78,672.92 crore and gross additional expendiof the ministries/departments or by enhanced receipts/recoveries aggregates ₹1.21 lakh crore," it However, the second

batch of supplementary demands for grants for 2023-24 was tabled in Parliament by the minister also provides for additional spending of ₹9,231 crore and ₹3,000 crore towards food and fertiliser subsidy, respectively. "The supplementary demands for grants include a gross additional spending of over ₹2 lakh crore, which would be matched by savings of over ₹1.21 lakh crore," said the document

PSU oil market firms post

#### **HYUNDAI MULLS** \$3-BILLION IPO **FOR INDIA UNIT**

Mumbai, Feb. 5: Hyun-dai Motor is planning to list least \$3 billion in what would be the country's biggest IPO, two people said, as the South Korean tirm doubles down in the key growth market ahead a widely expected

entry by Tesla.

Hyundai Motor India is in early talks for an initial public offering (IPO) and has held discussions with several banks, the two people, who have been briefed on the matter, said.

talisation of \$42 billion in

# completion achieved in the past two years when it

#### **1 LAKH SFT OFFICE SPACE LEASED IN** HYD, NOIDA

New Delhi, Feb. 5: Coworking firm EFC (I) Ltd on Monday said it has taken on lease over one lakh square feet of office space in Hyderabad and Noida to expand its business amid rising demand for flexible workspace.

In a statement, the company said it has taken on lease 60,000 square feet in Hyderabad with a capacity of 1,500 seats and another 40,000 square feet in Sector 62, Noida with a capacity of 750 seats.

Pune-headquartered, EFC has a presence in seven states. It has more than 35 co-working centres totalling 1.5 million sq ft area and close to 35,000 desks. It has given on lease nearly 65 per cent of desks to corporates.

Umesh Sahay, Founder & CEO, EFC (I), said the demand for flexible workspace has been strong in the last few years. "The country's vibrant startup ecosystem supported by a host of measures undertaken by the government will further drive the demand for workspaces,

# India likely to review **GST** on online games

Mumbai, Feb. 5: India will review the Goods and Service Tax for online gaming companies after next month, a top finance ministry official said.

The \$20-billion online aming industry got a jol last year when the GST Counil headed by finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman imposed a 28 per cent tax on a sector which had boomed during the pandemic. The GST Council agreed to review the tax after a six-month peri-

"The whole tax structure would be reviewed for online gaming companies after March," rev-enue secretary Sanjay Malhotra said in an interview on Saturday. Tax income from online gaming companies amounted to ₹3,470 crore since it was implemented on October 1 through January, he said, and the government esti-₹14,000 rupees in 2024-25.

Online gaming companies including Delta Corp. and Tiger Global-backed Dream11 have seen an increase in demands and notices from tax authorities amid a crackdown on alleged tax evasion. Tax authorities have issued as many as 71 notices to online gaming companies for alleged GST evasion totaling more than 1.12 trillion rupees during the 2023 and 2024 fiscal years, the finance ministry told Parliament in December.

Malhotra said some 53 foreign online gaming companies have had their access blocked for not complying with tax rules.

# ₹69,000cr profit in 9 months owned fuel retailers Indian Oil Corporation,

Bharat Petroleum Corporation Ltd and Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Ltd reported bumper profit totalling over ₹69,000 crore in the first nine months of the current fiscal which far exceeded their annual earning in pre-oil crisis years. The combined net profit

of IOC, BPCL and HPCL in April-December in FY24 was better than their annual earning of ₹39,356 crore in pre-oil crisis year, regulatory filings by them showed.

The retailers have resisted calls to revert to daily price revision and pass on softening in rates to consumers on grounds that prices continue to be



extremely volatile - rising on one day and falling on the other - and that their past losses have not been fully recouped.

The three companies, which control roughly 90 per cent of India's fuel market, 'voluntarily' have not changed petrol, diesel and cooking gas prices for almost two years now, resulting in losses when input cost was higher and profits when raw material prices were lower. They posted a combined

for ₹22,000 crore announced but not paid LPG subsidy for the previous two years. Subsequent softening of international prices and government giving out LPG subsidy helped IOC and BPCL post annualised profit for 2022-23 (April

2022 to March 2023) but HPCL was in the red. This fiscal year, things have changed dramatically. The three firms posted record earnings in the first two quarters (April-June and July-September) when international oil - against which prices domestic rates are benchmarked - almost halved to \$72 a barrel from a year

#### The fund raising by Hyundai, the second-biggest automaker in India with a 15 per cent market share, would value its Indian operation at up to \$30 billion, which is more than half its market capi-

# LIC share price crosses ₹1,000 apiece

**RAVI RANJAN PRASAD** MUMBAI, FEB. 5

Life Insurance Corporation (LIC) of India's shares gained more than five per cent and crossed ₹1,000 valuation for the first time on Monday and touched a high of ₹1,028. However, it settled at ₹1,000.35 on BSE and

₹998.85 on BSE later in the day due to profit taking.
With government bond

yields falling after the government announced lower fiscal deficit and borrowing in the interim Budget, the shares of LIC continued its rally.
LIC will be announcing its third quarter earnings

too this week on Friday,

which is said to be another reason for the share price hitting a new high. In May 2022, LIC shares were listed below the fixed

IPO price of ₹949 per share for the institutional and non institutional investors when the ₹21,000 crore mega public issue had hit the primary market. Later LIC shares had

trailed the public issue price and hit a low of ₹530.05. LIC shares have rallied over 20 per cent in the last one month making it the largest government owned company pushing, SBI to number two position. On Monday, LIC's market capitalisation stood at over ₹6.32

### CII seeks backstop for independent directors New Delhi, Feb. 5:

Industry body CII on Monday suggested putting in place "legal and procedural safeguards" related to the personal liability of independent directors, arguing that criminal prosecution should be initiated against them only in exceptional circumstances to keep the risks and rewards of the posi-

tion proportionate.

The Confederation of Indian Industry (CII) launched "Guidelines on Appointment of Independent Directors and Process of Board Evaluation" and made several recommendations pertaining to various aspects.

"The whole idea of decriminalising duties is essential to conserve faith in the institu-tion of Independent tion of Independent Directors. There is a need for the availability of indemnity and/or insurance that may be formalised through appropriate written agreements."

"While directors and officers (D&O) liability insurance is mandatory for the top 1,000 entities by market cap as per the Sebi • THE CII called for safeguards relating to personal liability of independent directors, and "initiation of prosecution itself should be an exception rather than the rule", to keep risk and rewards of being an independent director proportionate.

listing obligations and disclosure requirements (LODR), it may be advisable for all listed entities (to start with) to consider

this protection for their directors," CII stated. The CII guidelines called for legal and procedural safeguards relating to personal liability of independent directors, and initiation of prosecution itself should be an exception rather than the rule" to keep risk and rewards of being an independent

director proportionate. On succession planning, the guidelines explain it may be seen as a continuing process of reviewing identifying needs, rather than an episodic event or exercise. — PTI

TECH ZONE

#### **Troubles of Chinese firm shows impact of US sanctions on China**

# AI chip demand slows down Huawei output

Hong Kong, Feb. 5: Soar ing appetite for Huawei's artificial intelligence (AI) chips coupled with manufacturing constraints has forced the Chinese tech giant to prioritise AI and slow production for its premium Mate 60 phones, people familiar with the matter said.

Huawei uses one facility producing both its Ascend AI chips and the Kirin chips that power its rival to Apple's iPhone, three people said, two of whom said output has been hamstrung by a low yield rate a proxy for production



The situation offers a

prioritised production of Ascend chips over Kirin chips and so has slowed manufacturing for Mate 60 smartphones, the sources said.

But a global race for AI functionality amid a Sino-US technological standoff has left Huawei secondplacing its handsets just as the firm tops Chinese smartphone sales for the first time in more than

rare glimpse of Huawei's challenges as it works to rebuild since US sanctions in 2019 cut access to advanced chipmaking tools on national security grounds and crippled its smartphone unit. Huawei denies t is a security risk.

It also illustrates the

on sales of AI processing chips to China, a market that was 90 per cent controlled by US giant Nvidia before the latest curbs in October pushed Chinese customers to domestic alternatives. The government has launched an initiative to

improve China's position in computing power. That has spurred local authorities to announce data centre projects while bolstering public and private demand for Huawei's Ascend series in particular, according to two of the people and public tenders.

ly considered the most competitive non-Nvidia AI chip available in China. Huawei has prioritised production of Ascend chips over Kirin chips and so has slowed manufactur-

ing for Mate 60 smartphones, the people said, without disclosing when the arrangement began. The Chinese company is

also working to improve its yield rate — the number of usable chips per wafer — so is hoping this production arrangement is short term, the people said, declining to be iden-— Reuters SHORT TAKES

#### **India now second** in WTC rankings

Dubai: India jumped four places to second in the World Test Championships standings after their series-levelling 106-run win over England in the second Test in Visakhapatnam on Monday. Following a remarkable victory, India reclaimed the second position and closed down the gap with table-top-pers Australia in the ICC WTC 2023-25 standings. A rare setback in the opening Test in Hyderabad had previ-

ously seen India slip from second to fifth place. The win in Visakhapatnam pushed India's point percentage to 52.77, as against 55.00 of Australia. The top half of the table

remains highly competitive, with five teams separated by a mere 5% in point percentage. India were briefly on top after drawing the two-match Test series against South Africa before being overtaken by Australia following their victory over Pakistan. — PTI

#### **Lanka celebrate** 10-wicket victory

Colombo, Sri Lanka: Sri Lanka won the one-off Test match against Afghanistan by 10 wickets with a day to spare, with their opening batsmen chasing down an easy target of 56 in

Colombo Monday. Afghanistan were bowled out for 296 in their second innings, setting Sri Lanka the small tar-get, with Dimuth Karunaratne (32 not out) and Nishan Madushka (22 not out) finishing the job within 7.2 overs. Afghanistan were playing catchup after conceding 241 runs in the first innings, but fought back well in their second dig,

Ibrahim Zadran leading the way with a maiden Test hundred. Rahmat Shah backed up the opening batter with a half-century but once the pair were dismissed, Afghanistan folded quickly. Prabath Jayasuriya finished with his seventh five-

wicket haul in Test cricket. They had added 108 runs for the second wicket, and Afghanistan were looking good to stretch the game to the final day when they resumed the innings on day four at 199/1.

Brief scores: Afghanistan 198 & 296 (Ibrahim Zadran 114, Prabath Jayasuriya 5/107, Asitha Fernando 3/63) lost to Sri Lanka 439 & 56/0

#### **Rachin double** ton props up NZ

Mount Maunganui, New Zealand: Rachin Ravindra struck a majestic double century before South Africa's top order collapsed on Monday, leaving New Zealand in command of the first Test in Mount

Maunganui.

240 as the home side were dismissed for 511, before the tourists' inexperience was exposed as they were reduced to 80/4 at stumps on day two. A Proteas team featuring six players new to international cricket will resume on Tuesday facing a deficit of 431 runs, after four wickets tumbled in the space of 14 overs late at

Ravindra crafted a career-best

Bay Oval Seamer Kyle Jamieson took 2/21 and could have had a third if Matt Henry had held a chance in the outfield to remove David Bedingham.

Instead, Bedingham was unbeaten on 29 at stumps, alongside Keegan Petersen on two. — AFP
Brief scores: New Zealand 511

(Rachin Ravindra 240, Kane Williamson 118, Neil Brand 6/119) vs South Africa 80/ 4 (Davis Bedingham 29 batting, Kyle

#### Mixed doubles title for Sathish-Aadya

New Delhi: Sathish Kumar Karunakaran and Aadva Varivath won the mixed doubles title at the 32nd Iran Fajr International Challenge badminton tournament after beating fellow Indian pair of B Sumeeth Reddy and N. Sikki Reddy in the final in Yazd, Iran Sathish and Aadya notched up a 22-20, 21-14 win over Sumeeth and Sikki in the summit clash on Saturday. K. Sai Pratheek and Krishna Prasad Garage claimed the men's doubles title after defeating the Mexican pair of Job Castillo and Luis Armando

Montoya 21-18, 21-19 in the final. Published by K. Sudhakar for and on behalf of Deccan Chronicle Holdings Limited at Jawaharlal Nehru National Youth Centre, 219 Deen Daval Upadhyay Marg, New Delhi 110 002. and Printed by him at BFL Infotech Limited, C - 9, Sector - III, Noida -

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Players of the Indian team celebrate their 106-run win over England on the fourth day of the second Test at the ACA-VDCA Stadium in

# **BAZBALL-BREAKER**

### India bounce back against England's 'Bazballers' to level series

Visakhapatnam, Feb. 5: Indian bowlers won an engrossing battle against England's firebrand batting for a series-levelling 106-run victory in the second Test here on Monday, blunting 'Bazball' with their resilience in a roller-coaster contest.

England began Day Four at 67 for one, chasing a record target of 399. They were bowled out for 292 in the extended afternoon session.

The visiting team's no holds barred approach, which has largely been successful, did not work on this occasion as India picked up nine wickets over the course of two sessions to bounce back in the five-match series. The third Test will be

played in Rajkot from February 15. 'You know winning a

Test in these conditions is not easy. (I) wanted our bowlers to step up and they did that," said an elated India skipper Rohit Sharma.
Only Zak Crawley's (73

off 132 balls) strategy of mixing caution with aggression worked before the collective efforts of Jasprit Bumrah (3/46), R. Ashwin (3/71), Axar Patel (1/75) and Kuldeep Yadav (1/60) yielded the desired results for the hosts who were under pressure going into day four.

Bumrah picked up the Player of the Match honours for his overall haul of nine wickets in the game, ahead of young opener Yashasvi Jaiswal who scored a crucial 209run knock in India's first innings.

"He (Bumrah) is a champion player for us,' reiterated Rohit.

After James Anderson claimed that India were nervous while batting in the second innings and did not know a safe target to counter 'Bazball', England walked the talk on Monday and went bal-

"Coming into this last innings, (we) had full belief in ourselves that we'll chase it down," England skipper Ben Stokes said at the end of the game.

His team would have been better served taking a cue from Crawley, who saw out an intense morning spell from Bumrah before going for his

#### **SCOREBOARD**

England 1st Innings: 253. India 2nd Innings: 255. England 2nd innings (overnight 67/1): Zak Yadav 73, Ben Duckett c Bharat b Ashwin 28 Rehan Ahmed Ibw b Patel 23, Ollie Pope c Sharma b Ashwin 23, Joe Root c Patel b Ashwin 16, Jonny Bairstow Ibw b Bumrah 26, Ben Stokes run out 11, Ben Foakes c & b Bumrah 36, Tom Hartley b Bumrah 36, Shoaib Bashir c Bharat b Mukesh Kumar O, James Anderson not out 5. Extras (b-8, lb-5, nb-2) 15. Total (All out in 69.2 overs) 292.

**FoW:** 1-50, 2-95, 3-132, 4-154, 5-194, 6-194, 7-220, 8-275, 9-281.

Bowling: Jasprit Bumrah Kumar 5-1-26-1, Kuldeep 15-0-60-1 Ravichandran Ashwin 18-2-72-3, Axar Patel 14-1-75-

strokes Night-hawk Rehan Ahmed (23) wanted to smash his first ball of day out of the park while Hyderabad Test hero Ollie Pope (23) and Joe Root (16) were pushing their luck, frequently attempting sweeps and reverse sweeps on a pitch

with variable bounce. The visitors managed to make 127 runs in the opening session but the loss of five wickets effectively sealed their fate.

When skipper Ben Stokes (11 off 29 balls) got run out via a brilliant direct hit from Shreyas Iyer post lunch, there was coming back for

England.
But Ben Foakes (36) and Tom Hartley (36) frustrated the visitors with a 55run partnership for the eighth wicket.

Hartley could have been Ashwin's landmark 500th wicket but the TV umpire overturned the on-field decision of a catch as the ball had ballooned after hitting the batter's arm and not the glove.

However, Rohit and Co. were not convinced with showing umpire's call for LBW. Since the appeal was only for a catch and not LBW, the umpire's call for the latter was not considered.



Ravichandran Ashwin celebrates the wicket of England's Joe Root on the fourth day of the second – K. MURALI KRISHNA

#### **SHUBMAN SAYS HE IS FINE AFTER SCAN ON FINGER**

Visakhapatnam, Feb. 5: Indian batter Shubman Gill on Monday played down the finger injury which kept him off the field on the fourth day of the second Test against England here, revealing that scans have not thrown up anything of concern and he would be fine in the next few days. Though Gill batted on

Day Three, but he did not come out to field on Monday. Sarfaraz Khan substituted for him on the

Gill had hurriedly left the ground at the end of day's play on Sunday after hurting his right index finger and after

the match drew to a close on Monday, he revealed that he had gone for scans. "I had to go for the scans yesterday, so they ushed me off (to know) like how sore is my finger in the evening... to

check that and to know how am I feeling," Gill told the host broadcaster after India's win, adding that he would be fine. Earlier on Monday, the Indian team management said, "Shubman Gill hurt his right index finger while fielding on Day 2. He won't be tak-

ing the field today."

### **ROHIT PROUD OF HIS 'YOUNG SIDE'**

Visakhapatnam, Feb. 5: There were eight players in the starting line-up with a collective experience of only 68 Tests, five of them with match count that was not even in double digits.

wonder skipper Rohit Sharma was proud of his inexperienced bunch pulling off an impressive 106-run victory in the second Test against an aggressive England, where the hosts didn't have the luxury of banking on the seasoned trio of Virat Kohli, Ravindra Jadeja and K. L.

"(I am) very proud of such a young squad, to come up against a team like that. Lot of the guys are quite young in terms of playing this form of the game," Rohit said at the post match presentation ceremony, lauding the likes of double centurion Yashasvi and second innings ton-maker

Shubman Gill. Rohit knows that less experienced players are bound to make mistakes and he wants experts to cut them some slack.

"It'll take some time to be absolutely spot on. (I) want them to play freely

without any pressure,' Rohit said.

'The last couple of years, England have been playing good cricket. I knew it wasn't going to be an easy series. Three more to go. We'll keep our check on it and make sure we do most things right.

No praise was enough for pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah, whose match haul of nine wickets on a sporting deck fetched him the player of the match award. The skipper kept it short and reiterated what has been said several times for his biggest match-winner. — PTI match-winner.

#### U-19 WORLD CUP | SEMIFINAL

# Unbeaten India firm favourites

**Benoni, Feb. 5:** Red-hot India will be firm favourites to book a place in the summit clash of the ongoing U-19 World Cup when they take on hosts South Africa in the first semifinal here on

Defending champions India have marched on into the semifinals on the back of five consecutive wins in the tournament, with their exciting talent putting up a fine allround show to ensure their dominance.

Across departments, it will be tough to point out a singular force behind India's juggernaut, particularly in last few games. If the batters have buried the opponents under a mountain of runs, the bowlers have delivered wins that have exceeded a minimum of 130 runs in terms of mar-

With two centuries and a fifty, the 18-year-old Musheer Khan has lit up the tournament as he sits atop the list of batters with most runs in this edition, amassing 334 runs in five outings at

Hot on his heels is India skipper Uday Saharan, who has led by example to rake up 304 runs with two hand.

Defending champions India have marched on into the semifinals on the back of five consecutive wins in the tournament, with their exciting talent putting up a fine all-round

fifties and a ton while

show to ensure their

dominance.

averaging 61.60. Sachin Dhas has also given a fine example of himself, hitting a 116 in India's last Super Six game against Nepal after his side was put in a spot

of bother at 62 for three. Each of India's opponents have hitherto found it difficult to score runs off India vice-captain and left-arm spinner Saumy Kumar Pandey, whose enviable economy rate of 2.17 have helped him snare 16 wickets with three four-fors, placing him third in the list of most successful bowlers in this World Cup. Pandey's ability to keep

a lid on the opposition batters with suffocating line and lengths in the powerplay have allowed India to dominate the proceedings with the ball in

### **PCB, SLC CLASH OVER ASIA CUP EXPENSES**

Lahore, Feb. 5: The cricket boards of Pakistan and Sri Lanka are locked in a financial dispute over who should bear the additional \$3-4 million burden incurred due to the shifting of the Asia Cup to the island nation last year. With the BCCI unwilling to send its team to Pakistan, the original host, due to geo-political tensions, the Asian Cricket Council (ACC) and the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) decided on a hybrid model and roped in Sri Lanka to host the majority of the matches.

This resulted in extra expenses being incurred on chartered flights, hotel bookings, venue hiring fees

and travel, among others.
Sri Lanka Cricket (SLC) made it clear during the ACC council meeting in Bali last week that it was not willing to take the financial burden as it did not earn extra and was also not the official host of the tournament. The expenses also reportedly soared because the former PCB chairman, Zaka Ashraf, changed the venue of the first match from Lahore to



India's Sahaja Yamalapally plays a shot against top seed Kayla Day of the USA in first round of the Mumbai Open on Monday. Yamalapally won 6-4, 1-6, 6-4.

### RAINA-BHOSALE CRASH **OUT, ADKAR LOSES TOO**

AGE CORRESPONDENT

MUMBAI, FEB. 5 India's Vaishnavi Adkar

put on an impressive show before going down in three sets to South Korea's Sohyun Park while the Indian duo Ankita Raina and Rutuja Bhosale bowed out on Monday in the first round the doubles event of the Mumbai Open.

Adkar. 19-year-old ranked No 841 in the world, was originally scheduled to play qualifier Himeno Sakatsume but the latter was forced to pull out, which put Park into the main draw as a lucky loser. Playing an opponent ranked more than 500 spots above her in the rankings, Adkar took the second set before

2-6, 6-1 in just under two hours In the doubles, the all-

Park came out on top 6-2,

Indian duo of Raina and Bhosale was narrowly defeated by Hungary's Fanny Stollar and Great Britain's Naiktha Bains 6-3, 2-6, 8-10 in the first round.

Elsewhere, 16-year-old Alina Korneeva, who trains at the Rafa Nadal Academy in Spain, defeated Frenchwoman Chloe Paguet 6-1, 6-3 to move into the second round.

Korneeva won the Australian and French Open junior singles titles in 2023, becoming the topranked junior in the world before transitioning to the pro tour where she is already ranked inside the world's top 150.

#### Andhra crush Bihar by innings & 157 runs out for 177. Adding insult to injury, Baroda skipper In Kanpur: Uttar Pradesh 548/8 drew with Assam 316/2.

duced an all-round show to romp home with a massive win by an innings and 157 runs against Bihar and grabbed seven points from their Ranji Trophy Group 'B' elite clash here on

Monday. Bihar, who began the final day at 111/8 with a herculean task of making Andhra bat again with 170 runs in arrears and two wickets in hand, folded for a mere 124 in their second innings to cede their opponents a massive win here at the Moin Ul Haq

Bihar batters flopped col-

they had managed just 182 in the first innings, against which Andhra replied with a massive 463, taking a lead of 281 runs.

Nithish Kumar Reddy was the Player of the Match for his 159, with Andhra also grabbing a bonus point. In the final match of this

group, no result was possible at Kanpur's Green Park Stadium between home team Uttar Pradesh and visitors Assam with the two teams sharing one point each after the end of the match as no play was

Aryan Juyal was declared the Player of the Match for his double century — 201 in 278 balls, 21x4s, 1x6s in the first innings. **DELHI STAY SECOND** 

**FROM LAST** 

Delhi produced vet another inept batting performance to end up with a single point against Baroda in a Group 'D' match, thereby dashing hopes of a knock-out qualifications in this year's Ranji Trophy.

After Baroda declared

their first innings at 435

for 9, Delhi started the day

at 113 for 4, and were all-

the follow-on and Delhi crawled to 68 for 1 in 34 overs when the two captains decided to shake hands as they agreed to a **BRIEF SCORES** ■ In Patna: Bihar 182 & 124 in 51.1

overs (Babul Kumar 34: Lalith Mohan 4/35, KV Sasikanth 3/8) lost to Andhra 463. In Raipur: Kerala 350 & 251/5d

in 18 overs (Sachin Baby 94, Mohammed Azharuddeen 50\*; Ajay Mandal 2/93) drew with Chhattisgarh 312 & 79/1 in 22 overs (Rishabh Tiwari 39\*; Basil Thampi 1/18)

■ In Porvorim: Goa 241 & 168 Vishnu Solanki enforced lost to Tamil Nadu 273 & 142/3 in 49.5 overs (Suresh Lokeshwar 52. Pradosh Ranian Paul 65: Darshan Misal 2/51). ■ In Delhi: Baroda 435/9 decl. drew with Delhi 177 in 56.2 overs

(Ayush Badoni 44, Jonty Sidhu 40, Atit Seth 3/39, Bhargav Bhatt 3/18) & 68/1 in 34 overs (Yash Dhull 39 not out). In Cuttack: Odisha 322 & 201 (Govinda Poddar 46, Gourav

. Yadav 3/48, Sagar Udeshi 4/45). drew with Puducherry 284 & 175/8 (Paras Ratnaparkhe 72, Biplab Samantray 2/28). In Dharamsala: Himachal

Pradesh 169 & 42/5 (Anubhav Agarwal 4/6) drew with Madhya Pradesh 217 (Venkatesh Iyer 72)