# THE ASIAN AGE

**NEW DELHI THURSDAY 14 MARCH 2024** 





**Vanchiton ko Variyata** 

Assistance of ₹ 11.700 crore to over 25 lakh beneficiaries to promote entrepreneurship among Scheduled Castes, Backward Classes and Sanitation workers

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat



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Karishma Tanna walks the ramp during the Lakme Fashion Week in Mumbai on Wednesday.

#### **Delhi traffic may** be hit today for farmers' big rally

New Delhi: Delhi police has given permission to the farmers to hold their 'Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat with the condition of gathering not exceeding to 5,000, no tractor trolleys, no march at the Ramlila Maidan, and made elaborate security arrangements that may lead to a heavy traffic jam in the national capital on March 14, officials on Wednesday said. The police have also issued traffic advisory for the commuters to avoid roads leading to central Delhi, they said. Full report on Page 4

#### **Nepal's PM Prachanda**

wins confidence vote

Kathmandu: Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' secured a vote of confidence in Parliament, as the country struggled to maintain political stability due to the frequent shifting of alliances. Mr Prachanda – received 157 votes in the Full report on Page 8

#### **Bhutan PM on 5-day**

**India visit from today** 

New Delhi: Bhutanese Prime Minister Tshering Tobgay will pay a five-day visit to India beginning Thursday in his first foreign trip after assuming the charge of the top office in January. He will hold talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. - PTI Full report on Page 6

#### COUNTERPOINT



Forget political parties.. I fear that the data will also reveal the funds we personally received!





Min: 14°C **RH:** 40% Rain: 0%

Forecast: Sunny

#### ASTROGUIDE

Shubhakrut: Uttarayana Tithi: Phalguna Shukla Panchami till 11.30 pm **Star:** Bharani till 5 pm **Varjyam:** 4.37 am to 6.10 am **Durmuhurtam:** 10.27 am to 11.14 am; 3.12 pm to 3.59 pm Rahukalam: 1.30 pm to 3 pm

**SUNSET TODAY 6.30 PM SUNRISE TOMORROW 6.32 AM MOONRISE TOMORROW 9.43 AM MOONSET TODAY 11.05 PM** 

#### **Cabinet gives** nod to 2 new corridors for **Delhi Metro**

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

In a major boost to Metro connectivity in the national capital, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved two new corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project. The new lines are Lajpat Nagar to Saket G-Block (8.385 km), and Inderlok to Indraprastha (12.377

Briefing the media, Union minister Anurag Thakur said the Cabinet had cleared the two corridors that will ₹8,399 crores, sourced from the Centre, the Delhi government and interna-tional funding agencies. "The new Metro corri-dors will be completed by March 2029," he added.

Inderlok-Indraprastha corridor will be an extension of the Green Line and proride Green Line and provide interchange with Red, Yellow, Airport Line, Magenta, Violet and Blue Lines, while the Lajpat Nagar-Saket G Block corridor will connect the Silver, Magenta, Pink and Violet Lines. The Lajpat Nagar-Saket line will be entirely elevated and will have eight stations.

More on Page 4



Two anti-submarine warfare shallow watercraft, INS Agray and INS Akshay, built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers Limited during their launch in Kolkata on

## Deprived benefited most from govt schemes: Modi

■ Launches PM-SURAJ ■ 'Cong ignored backwards' ■ Inaugurates 3 semiconductor plants worth ₹1.25L-cr

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Announcing the nation-wide credit support for disadvantaged sections, Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Wednesday said that people from SCs, STs and OBCs communities are the biggest beneficiaries of his government's welfare schemes. He slammed the previous Congress dispensations



Narendra Modi vantaged sections. Earlier

in the day, Mr Modi laid the foundation stone for semiconductor and one in Assam -- at ₹1.25-lakh crores. Speaking at the launch of the Pradhan Mantri Samajik Utthan evam

Rozgar Adharit Jankalyan (PM-SURAJ) national portal, the Prime Minister cited the election of Ram Nath Kovind and Droupadi Murumu, who come from dalit and tribal communities respectively, as President to assert that Turn to Page 6

#### ■ Khattar quits as MLA, to fight Karnal LS poll ■ BJP ex-ally JJP issues whip to skip trust vote

## **New CM Saini wins** Haryana trust vote

with agency inputs NEW DELHI/CHANDIGARH.

A day after Haryana witnessed a political upheaval with the Manohar Lal Khattar government resigning and a new government led by Nayab Singh Saini replacing it, the new BJP gov-ernment on Wednesday won the trust vote by voice vote in the state Assembly. Former BJP ally Jannayak Janata Party (JJP) had issued a whip to its 10 MLAs, who left the House when the trust vote was taken up.
Speaker Gian Chand Gupta put the trust vote

for voting by voice vote, which the Saini government won. Former state home minister and senior BJP leader Anil Vij was present in the House. During the voice vote, besides the JJP's 10 MLAs, the lone Indian National Lok Dal (INLD) MLA was also not present in the House.

members Congress asked the Speaker Gupta to conduct the vote through a secret ballot, but he refused, saying there was no provision in



Haryana chief minister Nayab Singh Saini during a special session of the state Assembly in Chandigarh on

## **Tieup with BJP for LS**

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Amid an ongoing tussle between the two LJP fac-tions, Chirag Paswan (leader of the LJP Ram Vilas faction) on Wednesday met BJP president J.P. Nadda. After his meeting with Mr Nadda, Mr Paswan said his party has finalised a seat-shar-

The new CM will, meanwhile, be contesting from the Karnal Assembly seat after sitting MLA and former CM Manohar Lal ing formula with the BJP for the Lok Sabha polls.

"All my concerns have been addressed by the BJP. I am satisfied," he told reporters. He said the division of Lok Sabha seats in Bihar among NDA parties has

been decided and will formally announced.

More on Page 5

Khattar announced he was resigning as a member of the Assembly. Mr Khattar will contest the Turn to Page 4

**22,217 bonds** 

sold & 22,030

encashed: SBI

**RAKESH K. SINGH** 

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 13** 

In a seven-page compli-

ance affidavit, the State

## Gadkari, Piyush & BSY's son among 72 on BJP 2nd list

Pratap Simha, Nishank replaced

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

The BJP on Wednesday released its second list of 72 more candidates for the impending Lok Sabha elections. Former BJP president and Union minister Nitin Gadkari from Maharashtra's Nagpur, former Harvana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar from Karnal and Union minister Piyush Goyal from Mumbai North are among the prominent names on the new list. While it will be Mr Khattar's first Lok Sabha election, it is Mr Goyal's electoral debut.

Other important names in the BJP's second list of candidates are Union minister Anurag Thakur from Himachal Pradesh's Hamirpur, Rajya Sabha MP and BJP national media convenor Anil from Uttarakhand's Pauri Garhwal, former CM



Gadkari

Trivendra Singh Rawat from Haridwar, former Karanataka CM Basavraj Bommai from Haveri and the current titular king of the erstwhile Mysore royal family Yaduveer Krishnadatta Chamaraja Wadiyar from Mysore.

Mr Wadiyar will be replacing incumbent MP Pratap Simha, whose name got embroiled in the recent Parliament breach case. Uttarakhand's Haridwar seat is currently represented by former Union minister Ramesh Pokhriyal "Nishank".

Another member of an erstwhile royal family in Turn to Page 4

## Amid row, Mamata cuts ties to brother

As Didi erupts, Babun backs down, says won't contest from Howrah

Polls in J&K after security review: CEC

'Most parties want simultaneous LS, Assembly elections in UT'

RAJIB CHOWDHURI KOLKATA, MARCH 13

West Bengal chief minister Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday abandoned her brother Babun Banerjee hours after his outburst for not getting a ticket from the Trinamul Congress in the Lok Sabha election and a threat to fight the polls from Howrah as an Independent against three-time party MP and candidate Prasun

YUSUF JAMEEL

Commissioner

all stakeholders.

Chief

SRINAGAR, MARCH 13

Commissioner (CEC) Rajiv Kumar said on

Wednesday that a final

call on whether to hold

Lok Sabha and Assembly

elections in Jammu and

Kashmir simultaneously

will be taken after a

review of the security sit-

uation and feedback from

Election



Mamata Banerjee Ms

by Shaken Banerjee's announcement, Babun, who is the fourth among the six brothers of the TMC supremo, later changed his mind. In the morning

"We're aware of our

duties and responsibili-

ties. There should be no

political vacuum and elec-

tions for both the Lok Sabha and the J&K Assembly should be held

as early as possible. There

should be no delay from our side," Mr Kumar told

a press conference in

Jammu after completing a

three-day visit to the

Union territory (UT) as

Babun, who is a TMC leader and wanted to contest from Howrah, alleged: "Prasun misbehaved with me during the AGM of Mohun Bagan Club. He can't fully spend the funds under his MPLAD also." He also claimed: "One

can't do politics sitting at home. That's why I have decided to contest at Howrah as an Independent since I'm also a voter there. I will have a word with Didi over my plan since she ties rakhi on my hand. It's

a brother-sister relation. ship. I consider her my God. She might ask me not to contest there but I will try to convince her about my plan."

Hitting back at him in the afternoon, Ms Banerjee, who was at Jalpaiguri in North Bengal, said: "I have repeatedly made it clear that there is nothing called 'my family'. My family is the people. If you try to find blood connection in my family, then **Turn to Page 6** 

Srinagar and Jammu with

political parties as part of

its review preparedness

for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections in the UT.

decision whether to hold

the elections for five LoK

Sabha seats in J&K and

those of the UT Assembly

concurrently will be taken by the EC "after

taking inputs from politi-

Mr Kumar said that the

Wednesday told the Supreme Court that a total of 22,217 electoral bonds were purchased and 22,030 redeemed by political parties between

April 1, 2019 and February 15, this year, out of which 22,030 were redeemed. In its affidavit furnished to the apex court, the SBI said, as per the

court's direction, it has made available the details of electoral bonds the Commission (EC) before the close of business hours on March 12.

"In compliance with the order of the Supreme Court, please find a sealed envelope containing the above details in two PDF files, one with details of the purchasers of the electoral bonds and the other file containing names of the political parties who have encashed these bonds with all the requisite details, as per the order...," reads a letter from the SBI to the Election Commission, annexed with the affidavit, furnished to the poll panel at 4.15 PM on Tuesday.

The affidavit submitted before the top court said details, including the date of purchase of each electoral bond, the names of the purchaser and the denomination of the bonds purchased, have been furnished.

The affidavit, sworn by SBI chairman Dinesh Kumar Khara, said the bank has also furnished to the EC details like the date of encashment of the electoral bonds, the Turn to Page 6

#### Biden, Trump seal nominations; get set for a November rematch Washington, March 13: US declared the party's nomi-

President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump are set for a bitter election rematch in November after they secured their parties' presidential nominations with impressive wins in another round of key primaries. Mr Biden, 81, won the Democratic presumptive nomination on Tuesday

after easily clinching the

presidential primaries in

Georgia, as the number of

delegates in his kitty crossed the halfway mark

of 3,933 pledged delegates.



Biden

A total of 1,968 delegates

were required to win the

Washington — one American territory and

Democrats living abroad

held their primaries. Mr Biden would formally be

Democratic nomination. Four states — Georgia, Iawaii, Mississippi,



ne party during und National Democratic Convention in Chicago in

Republican

August. Mr Trump reached the 1,215 delegates necessary with an allocation of delegates.

Mr Trump will be offi-National

cially nominated at the Convention in Milwaukee this July. He will lead the Republican Party in a third consecutive presidential election after clinching the nomination Tuesday.

— *PTI* ■ More on Page 8



team of the Election

The poll panel held con-

Commission (EC).

Rajiv Kumar

Pragya, whose father Ajay Kumar Samal works as a cook in the Supreme Court, seeks blessings from Chief Justice of India D.Y. Chandrachud during her felicitation at the Supreme Court in New Delhi on Wednesday, after she got a scholarship to study masters in law at two different US universities.











Kushinagar

 Decision to establish state universities in Vindhyachal, Devipatan and Moradabad divisions

- Construction of 280 New Government Inter Colleges/High Schools and 65 girls' hostels
- Construction of 41 New Inter Colleges, 215 Government High Schools and 77 girls' hostels
- Expansion of government ITIs from 260 to 305 with seats increased from 1.25 lakh to 1.72 lakh
- 75 Government Polytechnic under construction



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#### THE ASIAN AGE | THURSDAY | 14 MARCH 2024 | NEW DELHI

## Destination Leading the way Uttarakhand

**Boosting spiritual tourism in Uttarakhand through** Badrinath, and, Kedarnath



PM Narendra Modi along with Pushkar Singh Dhami, CM, Uttarakhand, visiting Badrinath Dham

The reconstruction

on maintaining its

measures, associated

with PM Modi's focus

spiritual significance,

to its previous glory,

drawing pilgrims from

across the world

have reformed Kedarnath

Uttarakhand shines as the ultimate wedding destination

Under the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime

holistic development of our state, leveraging its natural beauty, rich cultural heritage, and immense potential.

Through sustainable policies and strategic initiatives, we aim to foster economic growth, improve infrastructure,

and enhance the quality of life for all our citizens. Our goal is to make Uttarakhand a model of progress, where

tradition meets innovation, and every individual can thrive in a conducive environment for prosperity and

-Pushkar Singh Dhami, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand

well-being."

Minister Narendra Modi, we are committed to the

Under the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, Uttarakhand is poised to become the next premier destination for weddings worldwide

ttarakhand, which lies amidst the magnificent Himalayas, is a northern state known for its spiritual importance, spectacular terrains, and rich cultural legacy. Also known as the land of gods - 'Devbhoomi', Uttarakhand has forever known as one of the most revered pilgrimage destinations for lakhs of devotees. The state has, however, seen a change in recent years, developing much more than a spiritual destination. In a recent development, Uttarakhand is on the path of emerging as the next best destination when it comes to the world of destination weddings; all thanks to the visionary guidance of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The notion of Prime Minister Narendra Modi to make Uttarakhand the next best wedding destination reflects the views of numerous who acknowledge the state's endless prospects. The Prime Minister encouraged the youth to embark upon the campaign 'Wed in India' at the inauguration of the Uttarakhand Global Investors Summit in Dehradun back in December 2023. During his address, he urged wealthy families to pick Uttarakhand as the destination for their celebrations.

The distinctive natural magnificence and myriad cultural tapestry depict the charm of Uttarakhand as the perfect wedding destination. From the serene lake of Nainital to the snow-capped mounts of Auli, each part of the state exhibits a feel of charisma and allure. Partners looking for a truly memorable experience can host their marital ceremonies amid the serene lake in Tehri, the beautiful hills of Mussoorie, or the age-old temples of Haridwar.

The picturesque northern state of Uttarakhand is well-known for its spiritual importance and stunning natural magnificence. Among the various destinations that attract devotees and visitors alike, Badrinath and Kedarnath stand out as embodiments of devotion and serenity. At the vanguard of restoring these consecrated places and utilizing their prospect for spiritual tourism is Prime Minister. Narendra Modi, whose relentless dedication and commitment have prompted transformative tasks in Uttarakhand.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi shares a deep-rooted affinity with Uttarakhand, especially Badrinath and Kedarnath, and

this is apparent through his multiple visits and visionary endeavours desired to uplift these venerated pilgrimage sites. His spiritual reverence for Baba Kedar, exemplified through periodic visits to Kedarnath Dham, highlights his dedication to the spiritual and cultural legacy of the region. The aspirations of PM Modi are much more than only reverence; he foresees a new individuality for Uttarakhand by promoting Badrinath and Kedarnath Dham to international importance.

The most important aspect of this vision of PM Narendra Modi is the complete reconstruction of Kedarnath Dham, an undertaking close to his

heart since the beginning of his tenure as the Prime Minister. The wrecking floods of 2013 initiated a revitalised emphasis on revamping Kedarnath, with PM Modi spearheading measures to assure that the reconstruction showcases brilliance and divinity befitting its essence. From building the statue of Adi Guru Shankaracharya to observing the progress firsthand, PM Modi's hands-on strategy highlights his dedication to maintaining the sanctity of Kedarnath.

Furthermore, strategic endeavours by PM Modi spread beyond Kedarnath to enclose the holistic growth of the

spiritual infrastructure of Uttarakhand. Projects such as the Badrinath Dham Master Plan modelled after the Kashi Vishwanath Corridor, seek to remake Badrinath into a smart spiritual hilltown, portraying the vision of PM Modi for incorporating tradition with modernity. The Delhi-Dehradun Economic Corridor and the Rishikesh Kamprayag Rail Project additionally highlight his dedication to improving connectivity and accessibility to these holy places

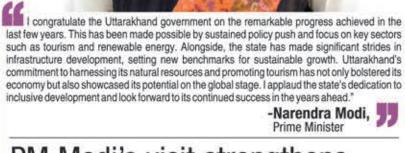
The result of these endeavours by Prime Minister Modi is discernible, with Uttarakhand seeing a revival in spiritual tourism and pilgrimage footfall. The All Weather Road Project, also

known as the Chardham Road Project, seeks to link the four Dhams of Uttarakhand, enabling seamless journeys for devotees and visitors alike. Likewise, the Rishikesh Kamprayag Rail Project, with its enterprising timeline and ingenious technique, vows to improve accessibility to Kedarnath and adjacent areas.

The importance of Kedarnath and Badrinath surpasses spiritual borders, echoing with believers and nature lovers globally. Situated amid the snow-capped peaks of the Himalayas, Kedamath carries a unique place as one of the 12 Jyotirlingas and an essential visit during the esteemed Chardham Yatra. The recon struction measures, associated with PM

Modi's focus on maintaining its spiritual significance, have reformed Kedarnath to its one-time glory, drawing pilgrims from across the world.

The recent inauguration of pivotal infrastructure projects by Prime Minister Modi emphasises the continuous renewal measures in Kedarnath. From unveiling the statue of Adi Guru Shankaracharya to inaugurating essential projects like the Saraswati retaining wall and Teerth Purohit houses, the visit of Prime Minister Narendra Modi signifies a revived dedication to promoting the spiritual legacy of Uttarakhand.



### PM Modi's visit strengthens tourism and socio-economic growth in Uttarakhand

the visit of PM Narendra Modi to Pithoragarh district in October 2023 has memorialised an important landmark in the history of Uttarakhand, along with highlighting the cultural and spiritual richness of the state. The PM's journey included visits to religious sites like Parvati Kund and Adi Kailash Parvat, depicting the deep-rooted spiritual inheritance of the land and emphasizing its possibility for expansion and tourism.

PM Modi initiated his spiritual journey at Parvati Kund, a venerated pilgrimage place ensconced amid the scenic landscapes of Uttarakhand. Attired in traditional local dress, the Prime Minister engaged himself in the spiritual aura, offering devotions with utmost reverence. His participation in the traditions. including playing the power drum and conch shell, demonstrated his respect for the local

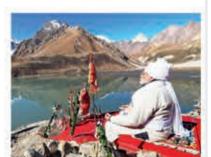


PM Narendra Modi on his Pithoragarh visit along with CM Pushkar Singh Dhami

of the local people.

The visit of the Prime Minister to Parvati Kund was not just a symbolic gesture but also a testament to the dedication to maintaining and encouraging India's cultural legacy. By performing 'aarti' at the Shiva-Parvati temple and meditating before the Adi Kailash peak, PM Modi observed the sacredness of the land and sought blessings for the prosperity and well-being of

Moreover, PM Modi's exchange with the resi-



PM Narendra Modi meditating at Parvati Kund, district Pithoragarh, during his visit to Uttarakhand

dents, both at Parvati Kund and in the border village of Gunji, echoed his compassion and consideration for their welfare. Engaging with the locals, he listened to their grievances. shared their pleasures, and reaffirmed his govemment's commitment to their upliftment. This personal touch endeared him to the individuals as well as facilitated a feeling of belonging and solidarity among them

In addition to the spiritual essence, the visit of PM Modi also had substantial importance for the socio-economic growth of Uttarakhand. The inauguration and laying of the foundation of development projects worth Rs 4,200 crore in Pithoragarh highlighted the government's dedication to infrastructure growth and employment generation in the region. These endeavours are aimed at boosting development, improving connectivity, and enhancing the quality of life for the citizens of Uttarakhand.

Moreover, the historic visit of Prime Minister Modi to Adi Kailash Parvat carries huge importance for the tourism sector of Uttarakhand. Being the first Indian Prime Minister to visit this sacred site. PM Modi has attracted awareness to the area's untapped prospect as a tourist destination. His exploration of the local art, craft, and products, as well as his arrangement with the Indo-Tibetan trade center in Gunji village, has demonstrated the cultural multiplicity and commercial possibilities of Uttarakhand.

### Scouring Uttarakhand's untapped tourism potential: Uttarakhand **Tourism Policy 2030**

With the introduction of the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030, the state sketches a transformative approach towards recognition at a global level as a diverse tourism hotspot while prioritising sustainable development and inclusive growth

ttarakhand is famous among tourists for its abundance of natural wonders. Even today, the state holds an untapped potential ready to be utilised. With the introduction of the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030, the state sketches a transformative approach towards recognition at a global level as a myriad tourism hotspot while prioritising sustainable development and inclusive growth.

The main principle of the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 lies in empowering all stakeholders within the tourism sector, assuring that each contributes to and benefits from Uttarakhand's journey towards evolution. By means of a suitable framework, the policy seeks to facilitate goals and interests, promoting holistic expansion.

Apart from its traditional essence of a spiritual and wellness destination, Uttarakhand strives to present its multifaceted allure. From heritage and nature tourism to wilderness adventures and wellness retreats, the state pledges memorable experiences for every visitor. Further, the focus on all-weather tourism, including winter and Alpine ven-

tures, seeks to draw tourists all year long. Foremost to the Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 is the making of authentic and genuine experiences, leveraging Uttarakhand's cultural and natural wealth. Tourism clusters and circuits will be designed to present new destinations, catering to various interests and likes.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 also prioritises sustainability with an emphasis on conserving the state's environmental and cultural legacy. Measures to preserve natural resources, wilderness, and cultural assets are vital, assuring Uttarakhand stays unsoiled and inviting for years.

In line with the digital era, Uttarakhand seeks to fulfill growing visitor anticipations through technology integration. Online platforms will be operated for advertising, bookings, and data dissemination, improving comfort and

Private sector involvement is promoted, with the government encouraging ease of doing trade for hospitality and tourism undertakings. This combined strategy is anticipated to propel innovation and development.

The Uttarakhand Tourism Policy 2030 also emphasises high-value tourism to minimise adverse effects on the environment and civilisation while spreading benefits to local neighborhoods. The Hub & Spoke model strives for balanced regional growth, improving infrastructure and



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami interacting with officials at an MoU event to promote tourism in Uttarakhand



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami on his visit to Corbett

conveniences to enhance the overall visitor experience. With enterprising targets to contribute USD 10 billion yearly to the economy and draw private investment, Uttarakhand seeks to build a sustainable tourism ecosystem. Job prospects and foreign traveller visits are anticipated to grow, firming the state's position as an exclusive

The idea is transparent - establish tourist-friendly infrastructure, develop new destinations, and offer world-class experiences. With a dedication to innovation, sustainability, and inclusivity, Uttarakhand arises as a shining light of reliable tourism, tempting tourists worldwide

### PM Modi's 'Vibrant Village Programme' bolsters Uttarakhand's rural economy

PM Modi's enterprising 'Vibrant Village Programme' has arisen as a silver lining for the isolated border villages, marking a transformative period of comprehensive growth and economic upliftment

nanning across 19 border regions, including Uttarakhand, the programme strives to revive 3,000 villages over a 10-year-long course. It bears an important goal of preventing migration by furnishing fundamental conveniences and promoting socio-economic sustainability. In the infancy stage of the program, 662 villages with a total population of 1,42,000 are being supported by means of an investment of Rs 4,800 crore.

Focus on infrastructure and connectivity growth is one of the key elements of the Vibrant Village

Programme. The allotment of Rs 2500 crore for building roadways and improving connectivity will give a boost to economic activities in various villages across the country where the geographical landscape constantly poses difficulties. It will foster access to markets, and enhance the overall quality of life for locals.

Along with bolstering the nation's financial stability, the programme also supports the importance of inclusive growth as a cornerstone of India's advancement by prioritising the development of



during their visit to district Pithoragarh

border villages

With the launch of the Vibrant Village Programme, the border villages in Uttarakhand and as well as other states will benefit greatly, eventually steering in a fresh phase of endless possibilities for the rural economy while reflecting the spirit of Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas.

### Homestays in **Uttarakhand: Bridging tradition** with modern travel trends

With the advent of the 'work from anywhere' culture, homestays in Uttarakhand provide an ideal setting for the millennials, as well as an idyllic break to those in their golden years

The Government of Uttarakhand is poised to provide the necessary support to proliferate homestays in all districts of the state with a focus on providing alternative sources of employment to the villagers and preventing migration from the original place of dwelling. At present, there are more than 5,000 homestays registered with Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board. The department provides necessary support in terms of marketing and training to the homestay owners. The Government also provides financial support to Homestay owners through the Deen Daval Upadhyay Grih-Awas (Homestay) Yojana. through which local residents get financial support in rebuilding/renovating rooms to upgrade them for use by



Meenakshi Sadan Homestay based at Mussoorie under Uttarakhand Government scheme



CM Pushkar Singh Dhami at one of the homestays

Homestays in Uttarakhand have also been recognised by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. In the year 2022, Sarmauli Village in Pithoragarh district was awarded the Best Rural Homestay by the Ministry of Tourism, Government of India. Several initiatives such as the Goat Villages, Sendul Village (Tehri Garhwal), and homestays in the Kumaon region have also won accolades. The Government has realised that with increasing awareness about hygiene and, the diverse food habits of travellers, it is essential that the homestays of Uttarakhand constantly upgrade themselves to provide the required services to the tourists. Hence, in addition to developing homestay infrastructure, the Government is also providing training to the local youth in the management and upkeep of these Homestays through professional agencies

Text input: Sumit Pant, director, Tourism

#### **Boosting tourism in** lesser-known Uttarakhand destinations

The combined initiative by UTDB and IRCTC seeks to highlight the lesser-known treasures of the state

The Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board (UTDB) and Indian Railways Catering and Tourism Corporation (IRCTC) have come to a remarkable understanding to further enhance tourism in the picturesque state of Uttarakhand. This endeavour seeks to highlight the lesser-known treasures of the state, like Manaskhand, by launching special tourist trains from different regions of the country.

This special tourist train is intended to begin operations in April 2024 and will accommodate up to 500 tourists per journey in Second AC coaches, providing an easy-going travel experience. The tourists will benefit from the numerous extensive excursion packages which will have everything from onboard conveniences to lodging, transportation, and sightseeing, and will be meticulously handled by IRCTC. The endeavour by UTDB and IRCTC seeks to exhibit the vast cuisine of the state during travels, along with generating occupation prospects for residents by giving them an opportunity to work

CONSUMER CONNECT INITIATIVE



SHORT TAKES

### **Mantri lashes out**

at critics of CAA

New Delhi: Union information and broadcasting minister Anurag Thakur on Wednesday lashed out at the opponents of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), saying thousands of Dalit fami-

lies from the neighbouring countries now living in India were waiting for citizenship. Mr Thakur said the CAA is a law for providing citizenship not taking it away.

"Thousands of Dalit families from the neighbouring countries whose two to three generations have passed are waiting for citizenship for years." "Do those who came

from Pakistan and whose

two-three generations have passed have no right to have citizenship," he asked. Mr Thakur also expressed pain over AAP convener and Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal's opposition to the

#### **Man sentenced to** death for killing 4

Ghaziabad: A local court here gave a death sentence to a man for killing his four relatives for refusing to lend him ₹10 lakh. The court of additional district and sessions judge-2 Pawan Kumar on Tuesday convicted Ayyub for killing four relatives, district government counsel Rajesh Chand Sharma said. The court also imposed a fine of ₹80,000 on him. Mı Sharma said the incident took place on the intervening night of June 27 and 28 2021 in Toli Mohalla of Loni. Ayyub had reached his uncle Raheesuddin's house and asked for ₹10 lakhs as a loan, which his uncle denied. Angered by this, Ayyub shot his uncle, two of his cousins, his aunt Fatima and fled from the spot, Mr Sharma

#### **HC HALTS RAZING OF PAK HINDU REFUGEE CAMP**

New Delhi: The Delhi high court has directed the authorities not to take any coercive action in relation to the proposed demolition of the Pakistani hindu refugee camp at Majnu Ka Tilla. Justice Mini Pushkarna issued a notice to the DDA and the Centre on a petition against a public notice dated March 4, which has been pasted in the area asking the residents to vacate the camp, failing which it will be demolished by the authority concerned. In an interim order passed on Tuesday, the court noted that a statement was earlier made on behalf of the Centre in another matter on extending support to the Pakistani nationals belonging to minority communities. "Considering the statement made on behalf of the then additional solicitor general of India, as recorded in order dated 29th May, 2013 in WP(C) No. 3712/2013 that the Union of India shall make endeavour to extend all support to the Hindu community which has entered India from Pakistan, it is directed that no coercive action shall be taken against the petitioner till the next date of hearing," the court said while listing the next hearing in the matter on March 19. The petitioner has stated that the

■ Lajpat Nagar to Saket G-Block, Inderlok to Indraprastha

## **Centre nod to 2 new Delhi Metro corridors**

**SHASHI BHUSHAN** NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

In a major boost to metro connectivity in the national capital, the Union Cabinet on Wednesday approved two new corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project. The two new approved corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project are Lajpat Nagar to Saket G-Block ( 8.385 kilometers), and Inderlok to Indraprastha ( 12.377 kilometers).

Briefing about the cabinet decision, Union minister Anurag Thakur said that the Union Cabinet Minister Narendra Modi approved two new corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase-IV project which are expected to further improve the Metro connectivity in the city.

Mr Thakur further said that the two new corridors of Delhi Metro's Phase -IV project will cost ₹8,399 crore and it will be sourced from Government of India, Government of Delhi, and international funding agencies. "The two new metro corridors will be completed by March 2029," he said.

These two lines will comprise 20.762 kilometers. The Inderlok

#### **Thakur launches SHABD; revamped** websites of Akashvani, DD News

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Union minister of information and broadcasting Anurag Thakur on Wednesday launched PB-SHABD, a news sharing service from Prasar Bharati to share text news, clean video feed and photographs with news organisations.

The PB-shared audio visuals for broadcast and dissemination SHABD) is a service free of cost for the first year as an introductory offer and

will provide news stories in all the major Indian languages across fifty categories.

launched revamped websites of DD News and Akashvani News, and a new-look NewsonAIR mobile app, and said that All India Radio has continued to remain immensely relevant in the age of extensive mobile connectivity and is still a source of accurate information about government schemes and policies.

will be an extension of the Green Line and will provide interchange with the Red, Yellow, Airport Line, Magenta, Violet and Blue Lines, while the Lajpat Nagar - Saket G Block corridor will connect the Silver, Magenta,

Pink and Violet Lines. The Lajpat Nagar - Saket G Block corridor will be entirely elevated and will have eight stations. The Inderlok - Indraprastha corridor will have 11.349 kms of underground lines and 1.028 kms of elevated Indraprastha corridor lines comprising 10 sta-

Inderlok

Indraprastha Line will provide enhanced connectivity to the Bahadurgarh region of Haryana as commuters from these areas will be able to travel on the Green Line to directly reach Indraprastha as well as various other areas.

Eight new interchange stations will come up on corridors Inderlok, Nabi Karim, New Delhi, Delhi Gate, Indraprastha, Nagar, Chirag Dilli and Saket G Block.

## Traffic advisory issued for farmers' mahapanchayat

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

In view of the farmers' Mahapanchayat on Thursday at Ramlila ground, the Delhi traffic police issued an advisory alerting the commuters about the traffic regulations and routes diver-

According to the advisory, movement of general traffic on Thursday will be regulated from 6 am to 4 pm on Jawahar Lal Marg, Road, Nehru Barakhamba

Bahadur Shah Zafar Marg, Tolstoy Marg, Asaf Ali Road, Jai Singh Road, Swami Vivekanand Marg, Sansad Marg, Netaii Subhash Marg, вара Kharag Singh Marg, Minto Road, Ashoka Road, Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover, Connaught Circus, Bhavbhuti Marg, DDU Marg and Chaman

"Traffic diversion may be imposed from 6 a.m. on Delhi Gate, Mir Dard Chowk, Ajmeri Gate Guru Nanak



Sanyukt Kisan Morcha leaders ahead of their 'Kisan Mazdoor Mahapanchayat' at the Ramlila Maidan in New Delhi on Wednesday.

Maharaja Ranjeet Singh flyover from Barakhamba Road to Guru Nanak Chowk, Janpath Road, Tolstoy Marg crossing, KG Marg crossing and roundabout GPO," read the advi-

The traffic cops further requested commutters to cooperate by avoiding or bypassing the above-mentioned roads, if possible,

Chowk, Kamla Market and by making maximum road, Paharganj Chowk, roundabout Jhandewalan, especially Metro services. Furtner. tne generai public is advised to keep sufficient time at hand

while planning road jour-neys through the diverted routes. People who are towards ISBT, going Station, Airport are advised to carefully plan their travel with sufficient time at hand," said a senior traffic police official.

## Kejriwal furious over CAA, urges people to vote against BJP in '24

BHASKAR HARI SHARMA

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday said the imple-Citizenship Amendment Act ahead of the Lok Sabha polls was "dirty vote bank politics" of the BJP and asserted that people want this law to be repealed.

Delhi BJP president Virendra Sachdeva, mean-while, hit back at Mr Kejriwal, charging he has hurt the sentiments of Hindu, Sikh, Buddhist, and Christian refugees living in the country.
At a press conference,

the AAP supremo said, "With this law (CAA), the BJP government at the Centre has opened the floodgates for the arrival of a large number of poor minorities from Pakistan Bangladesh into India.

Even if 1.5 crore of the minorities in neighbouring countries come to India following the implementation of the CAA, a dangerous situation will arise, he claimed.

"It will be a migration bigger than that of 1947... Law and order will go for a toss. There could be an increase in rape and dacoity," said Mr Kejriwal. There are 3.5 crore minorities in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Bangladesh, he said and alleged, "The BJP wants to spend the money of our people in settling poor migrants from Pakistan and Bangladesh by giving them houses and jobs

He claimed that the BJP stands to gain in the coming elections as poor minorities from the neighbouring countries settling in India will become its



Somnath Bharti during the inauguration of a three-lane flyover at Moti Nagar in New Delhi on Wednesday.

The country demands scrapping of CAA, he said and asked people to vote against the BJP if the law is not repealed.

The AAP national convener said that had the BJP government at the Centre done its work in its 10-year rule, there would have been no need for it to implement CAA ahead of

"On one hand there is a huge army of unemployed in the country and the government sending Haryana youths to die in Israel where a war is going on. On the other hand, the BJP wants to settle Pakistanis in India and provide employment to their children," he said.

"What kind of nonsense is this to bring people from Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Afghanistan to India and give the rightful employment of our children to them," Mr Kejriwal charged, adding, "In the last 10 years, 11 lakh industrialists and businessmen left India. If the BJP must bring people to the country, it should bring them back to provide jobs."

### Delhi govt has built 31 flyovers in 9 years: CM

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Delhi chief minister Arvind Kejriwal on Wednesday inaugurated a three-lane flyover at Moti Nagar connecting Dhaula Azadpur, and Rohtak in Haryana. The flyover connects major areas of the city and is expected to cut down travel time for commuters and provide relief to them

from traffic snarls.
Addressing the public on the occasion, he said the AAP government has built 31 flyovers in the city over the last nine years and provided all possible benefits to citizens.

"This flyover will provide relief to people from traffic jams. We have built around 31 flyovers since we came to power. What the previous governments have done in 75 years, we have done more in the last nine years. All it takes is

the will to do the work," he said.

Delhi PWD minister Atishi, present on the occasion, said, "Everyone is well aware that earlier, one had to spend more than half an hour to cross this stretch of the Ring Road. Today, with the inauguration of this Moti Nagar flyover, people will get great relief from traf-

fic congestion." As this flyover will eliminate traffic congestion, the speed of the vehicles will increase on this stretch and it will help the people of Delhi save more than 6,00,000 litres of fuel every year, she added.

This will save travel time and 9,000 man-hours will also be saved. People will be able to spend that time with their family or on their work.

This Moti Nagar flyover will also help reduce more than 50,000 tonnes of CO2 emissions every year.

## Nigerian who ingested 71 cocaine-filled capsules held

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

A Nigerian man, who had ingested 71 capsules containing cocaine worth ₹15.61 crore, has been arrested by customs officials at the international airport in Delhi, according to an official state-Wednesday.

The accused was intercepted after his arrival Addis Ababa (Ethiopia), on March 3, the statement issued by the customs department said. "The gait and movement of the passenger was unusual. The customs

▶ THE ACCUSED was taken to Safdarjung Hospital here for a suitable procedure to extract the secreted goods. The entire ejection process lasted over several days.

officers sensing unusual behaviour of the passenger maintained a vigil on him. After a while, the passenger crossed the green channel, when the customs officers finally intercepted him," it said.

"Upon questioning, the passenger admitted that he had ingested some capsules containing some statement said. The passenger was taken to Safdarjung Hospital here for a "suitable procedure to extract the secreted "The entire ejection

narcotic substances," the

process lasted over severai days...A totai of 71 cap sules (were) recovered passenger which in turn yielded 1,041 grams of white powdery substance suspected to be cocaine," it added. The value of the said

substance is ₹15.61 crore, the statement said, adding that the accused was

Chowk, and Manoj Tiwari

It is also pertinent to

mention that all three can-

didates have served as

mayor in East, North, and

South Delhi municipal

corporations respectively. Further, Ms Swaraj is

currently serving as secre-

tary in the state unit while

candidates—Mr

#### **Gadkari, Piyush** & BSY's son among 72 on **BJP 2nd list**

■ Continued from Page 1 the BJP list is Maharani Kriti Singh Debbarma from Tripura East. Ms Singh is the elder sister of regional outfit Tipra Motha's Pradvot Kishore Debbarma. Manikya Tipra Motha recently announced its alliance with the BJP. This seat is currently represented by BJP MP Rebati

Tripura. The BJP has fielded Kalaben Delkar from Dadar and Nagar Haveli, who is a sitting MP and had joined the saffron party a couple of days back. She had won the seat in a bypoll in 2021 on a Shiv Sena (UBT)

ticket The BJP has fielded parliamentary affairs min-ister Pralhad Joshi from Dharwad and former chief minister and Lingayat leader B.S. Yediyurappa's son B.Y. Raghavendra from Shimoga. Union minis-

ter Shobha Karandlaje has been shifted from Udupi Chikmagalur to Bangalore North. Former Karnataka state unit chief Nalin Kumar Kateel has been replaced

by Brijesh Chota in Dakshina Kannada. The party has fielded Pankaja Munde, daughter of late Gopinath Maharashtra's Beed

currently represented by her sister Pritam. Ưnion minister Bharati Pawar will contest from Dindori and Sudhir Mungantiwar Chandrapur.

In Telangana, the party has named Madavaneni Raghunandan Rao from Medak, D.K. Aruna from Mahabubnagar, Azmeera Seetaram Naik from Mahabubabad and Godam Nagesh from Adilabad.

In Madhya Pradesh, the party has fielded sitting MP Shankar Lalwani from Indore, sitting MP Firoziya from Ujjain and Vivek Sahu from Chhindwara.

renominated Hasmukbhai Somabhai Patel from Ahmedabad East and Ranjanben Dhananjay Bhatt from

#### **Docs perform kidney transplant** BJP names 2 remaining 2024 candidates with incompatible blood group SHASHI BHUSHAN and BHASKAR HARI SHARMA

AGE CORRESPONDENT

NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

A team of doctors has undertaken incompatible blood group kidney transplant giving hope and renewed health to a 56year-old patient. The patient Nageen Kapoor was under observation of Dr Reetesh Sharma, director, nephrology & kidney transplant medicine, for several years at the Asian Hospital

With the patient's serum creatinine levels indicating a critical stage, his family was counseled for pre-emptive kidney transplant. A preemptive kidney transplant is when one receives a kidney transplant before kidney function deteriorates to the point of needing dialysis. Despite his wife's willingness to donate kidney, her blood group (A+) differed from Mr Kapoor's (O+), a challenge uncommonly addressed in most transplant centers.

"Studies have shown that preemptive transplants not only offer cost-effective solutions, saving patients from the financial burden of dialysis, but also promise superior long-term medical outcomes, with up to 30% better results," said

**NEW DELHI, MARCH 13** The BJP on Wednesday fielded Delhi unit general secretaries Harsh Malhotra and Yogendra Chandolia from East Delhi and Northwest Delhi Lok Sabha constituencies respectively.

Mr Malhotra, a seasoned organisation man, is serving as state general secretary for the second consecutive term. He replaced cricketer-turned-politician Gautam Gambhir in East Delhi while Mr Chandolia replaced singer-turned-politician Hans Raj Hans in the Northwest Delhi Lok Sabha seat.



After today's announcement, BJP has fielded all seven candidates. Out of the seven, only one candidate has been repeated from Delhi.

Notably, there are seven parliamentary constituencies in Delhi—Chandni Chowk, Northeast Delhi, East Delhi. Northwest



Yogendra Chandolia Delhi, New Delhi, West

Delhi, and South Delhi—all seven held by BJP since The party fielded Bansuri Swaraj from the New Delhi seat, Kamaljit

Sehrawat from West Delhi, Ramvir Singh Bidhuri from South Delhi, Prayeen Khandelwal from Chandni





Mr Tiwari is a former state unit president.

## Nayab Saini-led govt wins confidence vote in Haryana Assembly

■ Continued from Page 1 Lok Sabha polls from the Karnal seat, the BJP announced on Wednesday evening.

refugees have been living

here for years.

A day after their alliance ended, Jannayak Janta Party chief Ajay Singh Chautala said his party worked with full honesty to fulfil the "gathbandhan dharma" over the last four and a half years and that his party was never power hungry.

Mr Chautala said his party had demanded two Lok Sabha seats in Haryana for the coming general electio, but was refused by the BJP. He said that he sent

Dushyant Chautala back to the BJP leadership with the message that the JJP would not fight even a single seat if it fulfils the promise of Rs 5,100 per month under the Old Age Pension scheme and would support it in all 10 seats. "We are not power hungry," he said.

we also have the trust of the

people of Haryana.

In Chandigarh, the new CM moved a motion to seek a vote of confidence in the Assembly. A two-hour discussion took place on the motion. Speaking in the House, Mr Saini said: "Our government not only has the trust of the MLAs, but

JJP MLAs Devender Singh Babli, Ram Kumar Gautam, Ishwar Singh, Ram Niwas and Jogi Ram Sihag left the House when the trust vote

was taken up. 90-member Assembly, the BJP has 41 members, and it also enjoys the support of six of the seven Independents, as well as of lone Haryana Lokhit Party MLA Gopal Kanda. main Opposition

Congress has 30 MLAs. The BJP was comfortably placed in the Haryana Assembly even without the

JJP's support. responsibility, I am here to take up the latest assignment."

praised his predecessor for the work undertaken during his nine-year-long tenure. He said it was his first day in the House as chief minister and Leader of the House. Recalling his days when he

was a member of the House during 2014-2019, Mr Saini said: "During that time I was told I had to contest Lok Sabha polls. At that time, I was a minister in the Haryana government. When the party desired that I contest the LS polls, I abided by that... When the party entrusted me with the new

The new chief minister said he comes from an ordinary background and no other member from his family was in politics. Praising Mr Khattar, the new CM said he has learnt a lot from him. Under the leadership of Mr Khattar, the state presented a good governance model in the entire country. Several development works were undertaken by the Khattar government, said Mr Saini.

Before the chief minister noved the confidence moved motion, Congress MLAs to know from sought Speaker Gupta about the urgency of convening the Assembly session.

"There was no emergency," senior Congress leader Bhupinder Singh Hooda said, and claimed that proper time was not given to the MLAs. Mr Hooda asked the Speaker to adjourn the session for at least one hour so that the legislators could reach the Assembly. To this, the Speaker said it was the duty of the members to reach the House on time.

Participating in the discussion, Mr Hooda said in 2019, the BJP formed a government in alliance with the JJP. "But the BJP-JJP government failed on all fronts and the BJP had to

change its chief minister," he alleged. The former Haryana chief minister said it was for the first time that a party (JJP) was issuing a whip to its

from the House. "What does this mean. This shows that both the BJP and JJP are hand-inglove... The JJP members should have been present and voted against this government, but people know what they are doing... This is a stopgap arrangement," said Mr Hooda, while claim-

watchman"

members to remain absent

From Gujarat, the party ing that Mr Saini was play ing the role of a "night Vadodara.

#### SHORT TAKES

#### Nath's close aide joins BJP in MP

Bhopal: In a bid to wrest Chhindwara seat in Madhya Pradesh, held by Kama Nath's family for almost 44 years, from Congress in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, the BJP on Wednesday inducted a fresh batch of 40 leaders of the grand old party from the area in its fold. Those who crossed over to BJP from Congress included former MLA Choudhury Gambhir Singh known as a close aide of the Congress veteran Mr Nath. A week ago, two dozen

Congress leaders of Chhindwara including seven elected members of Chhindwara Municipal Corporation had joined BJP. "This is a part of our strate-gy to weaken the Congress in Chhindwara and wrest the seat from the party in the ensuing LS elections", the BJP's Chhindwara district unit chief Bunty Sahul told this newspaper. The BJP had won 28 out of 29 seats in

to Congress then. **BJP retains 2 MPs** in final MP LS list

the last LS polls in MP, losing

the lone seat of Chhindwara

Bhopal: The BJP has retained its two sitting MPs in the second and final list of five candidates released by the party for the upcoming Lok Sabha elections for Madhya Pradesh on Wednesday. The party has, however, dropped its sitting MPs in two other seats, while fielding Vivek "Bunty" Sahu in Chhindwara to set up a contest with Nakul Nath of Congress, the sitting MP in the LS constituency, in the polls. The BJP has retained party MPs Shankar Lalwani and Anil Ferojia in Indore and Ujjain respectively. The party has replaced the sit-ting MPs, Chhatar Singh Darbar and Dhal Singh Bisen in Dhar and Balaghat respectively, with new faces, Sabitri Thakur and Bharti Pardhi, in the two seats. The Bharatiya Janata Party on Wednesday launched a 10-day mass outreach campaign, christened "Booth Vijay Abhiyan", across 29 Lok Sabha constituencies in Madhya Pradesh.

#### **BJP picks names** for Arunachal polls

New Delhi: The BJP on Wednesday names its candidates for all 60 Assembly seats in Arunachal Pradesh. with chief minister Pema Khandu contesting from Mukto seat that he represents in the current House. The party has retained most of its sitting MLAs. State unit chief Biyuram Waghe will be contesting from Pakke Kessang. Ratu Techi, who recently joined the BJP, has been fielded from Sagalee, which is currently held by the former CM and Congress leader Nabam Tuki. The party's central election committee approved the names in a recent meeting, it said in a statement. Assembly polls in the state are held along with Lok Sabha polls. The BJP had won 41 seats in the 2019 Assembly polls.

#### **BHOJPURI SINGER MAKES U-TURN, WILL RUN FOR LS**

Kolkata, March 13: Bhojpuri singer and actor Pawan Singh, who had expressed his inability to contest the Lok Sabha elections from West Bengal's Asansol just a day after the BJP announced his name for the constituency, took a U-turn on Wednesday stating that he will fight the polls to honour

the promise he made to his mother. Mr Singh, however, did not say from which constituency or from which state and on which party's

ticket he will contest the elections. "I will fight the elections to fulfil the promise I made to my mother, my society and the people, Singh wrote in his X handle. "I seek blessings and coop-

eration from everyone," he wrote. Though, he had not specified the reason behind his decision to not contest from Asansol, his candidafrom the Trinamul Congress.

ture had drawn criticism which alleged that some of his songs were crude and depicted women, including those from Bengal, in a vulgar way. He was put up by the BJP against actorturned-politician Shatrughan Sinha, the TMC MP from Asansol in the outgoing Lok Sabha. — PTI

## Rahul pledges ₹1L to poor women if voted to power

Cong leader promises 50% women quota in govt jobs

**BHAGWAN PARAB** MUMBAI, MARCH 13

A day after promising sops for the tribals, Congress leader Rahul Gandhi on Wednesday announced "Mahila Nyay Guarantee" schemes for women, which include ₹1 lakh annually for the poor women and 50 per cent reservation in govern-ment jobs if his party is voted to power in the upcoming Lok Sabha

Addressing a women's rally in Maharashtra's Dhule district as part of his ongoing "Bharat Jodo Nyay Yatra", Mr Gandhi announced that ₹1 lakh will be deposited annually into the bank accounts of poor women.

'Our guarantees are not like what the Modi government promises and fails to deliver. We will not conduct any survey, we will directly deposit ₹1 lakh annually in the bank accounts of poor women,"



Congress leader Rahul Gandhi visits a Hanuman temple in Maharashtra's Malegaon on Wednesday.

the Congress leader said. Mr Gandhi also said that the Congress government will give 50 per cent reservations in government

jobs for all women. He promised that the government's share in the budget for Asha (accredited social health activist) workers and women working in anganwadis (government-run women and child care centres) and in mid-day meal schemes would be doubled.

Saying Maharashtra is the land of social reformers like Savitribai Phule, the Wayanad Congress MP announced the government will build at least one Savitribai hostel for working women at district headquarters in her hon-

our.
The number of such hostels across the country will be doubled, he added.

■ Security beefed up in cities with 2019 protests against act

## **AASU launches 'satyagraha'** in Assam, moves SC on CAA

**MANOJ ANAND** 

The All Assam Students' Union on Wednesday launched a "satyagraha" across the state protesting the implementation of the

Amendment Act.

The AASU has announced to hold a "satyagraha" in all the district headquarters dur-

ing the day.
It is significant that the AASU had taken out a torchlight procession in several parts of the state on Tuesday evening. An AASU delegation is also in New Delhi to pursue the petition against the act in the Supreme Court.

Several student and nonindigenous political organisations along with Opposition political parties in Assam are also opposing the CAA, claiming that it violates the provision of the 1985 Assam



Members of All Assam Student Union during a protest march against the CAA in Sonitpur in Assam on Wednesday.

Accord. Anti-CAA protests by Opposition parties, such as the Congress, and others were held in

the state in past two days. The Congress, Raijor Dal, Assam Jatiyatabadi Parishad, Left parties and others have already announced that they will continue with their protests in a peaceful and

democratic manner.

state president Ripun Bora said that party workers will burn copies of the

state on Thursday Meanwhile, security has been intensified across the state with additional deployment of police personnel, including commandos in sensitive areas. while all police stations

act and rules in all the dis-

trict headquarters of the

**Assam Cong netas** move SC over issue

AGE CORRESPONDENT **GUWAHATI, MARCH 13** 

Leader of the Opposition in the Assam Assembly Debabrata Saika and state Congress MP Abdul Khaleque have filed an interim application in the top court seeking a stay on the implementation of the CAA. The application contended these rules are unconstitutional.

sources said.

Patrolling has been increased and check-posts have been set up on the major thoroughfares in almost all towns and cities, where widespread anti-CAA protests were held in 2019. The police has also been deployed at the gates of all the colleges and educational

#### **Blow to Cong. HC** refuses to stay recovery of ₹105cr tax

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

The Delhi high court on Wednesday upheld an order of the Income-Tax Appellate refusing to stay a notice issued by the income-tax department to the Congress for the recovery of outstanding tax of more than ₹100 crores.

A bench of Justices Yashwant Varma and Purushaindra Kumar Kaurav said there was no reason to interfere with the ITAT's March 8 order. The bench had reserved its order on Tuesday after hearing the submissions on behalf of the Congress

and the I-T department.
The Congress
approached the high
court after ITAT dismissed the party's application seeking a stay on the February 13 notice of the I-T department initiating recovery proceed-

ings against it.
The assessing officer nad raised a tax demand of more than ₹100 crores for the assessment year 2018-19 when the income was assessed to be more than ₹199 crores.

The counsel for the Congress had urged the court to grant it some protection otherwise the party would collapse. The I-T department's counsel had informed the court that the original tax demand stood at ₹102 crores and together with interest it rose to ₹135.06 crores. He said ₹65.94 crores stands recovered now.

The tribunal had dismissed the stay applica-tion saying, "We do not find that the recovery notice under Section 226(3) of the Act issued by the assessing officer on February 13, 2024 is lacking in bona fides, so as to require us to inter-

The party had earlier said the I-T tribunal order freezing its funds was "an attack on democracy".



## 'Cong facing fund crisis as govt has frozen accounts'

Kalaburagi (Karnataka), March 13: Congress President Mallikarjun Kharge on Wednesday indicated that the party is facing funds crunch, that accounts where money donated by people had been kept had been freezed by the BJP-led NDA government, while huge fines have been imposed on the party by Income-Tax department. Targeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi and the BJP, Mr Kharge

also called upon the people to stand strong together and ensure his party's victory in the upcoming Lok Sabha polls, to "save" Constitution and democracy in the country.

Noting that everyone should have equal opportunity in election, Mr Kharge accused the BJP of freezing Congress' bank accounts and imposing huge fines on the party through I-T department, while "they are not ready to disclose thousands of crores of rupees they got through electoral bonds, despite Supreme Court's directions.

'It was our party money



Mallikarjun Kharge

that you the people gave as donations, they have frozen it and we don't money ..while, they (BJP) are not disclosing about electoral bonds they got because their theft will come out, their wrong deeds will come out, so they asked for time till July," Mr Kharge said.

Accusing Mr Modi of naming a cricket stadium in Gujarat after himself, Mr Kharge said, "You are still alive, such namings are done after someone (passes away). When a person is alive, memorials are not erected in his name, it is done by followers of the person later." He also claimed people

of Kalaburagi have decided to make Congress victorious in the polls. — PTI

#### 'Ship attacks in **Red Sea have** put focus on marine threats'

**RAJIB CHOWDHURI** 

IAF Chief Air Chief Marshal Vivek Ram Chaudhari Wednesday underlined tnat tne recent attacks on ships in the Red Sea have highlighted threats in the global maritime domain. "Today sea-line communications are an important contributor to world trade and prosperity. Recent events particularly in the Red Sea have highlighted the threats in the maritime environment across the globe," the Indian Air Force (IAF) Chief said.

A large number of Indian naval ships are patrolling the high seas and rendering assistance to safeguard the seafarers and merchant vessels of different nationalities, he added. Air Chief Marshal Chaudhari was speaking at the launch of two anti-submarine warfare shallow watercrafts (ASW SWC) Agray and INS Akshay, being built by Garden Reach Shipbuilders and Engineers (GRSE) in the city for the Navy.

Neeta Chaudhari, wife of the IAF Chief, launched the warships. They are the reincarnations Abhay-class warships of the Navy.

## Shinde's Cabinet renames district, 7 railway stations

Ahmednagar to be called Ahilya Nagar PRASAD PATIL LAST YEAR, the

The Maharashtra Cabinet on Wednesday approved the proposal to change the name of Ahmednagar district to Ahilya Nagar after Maratha queen Ahilyabai Ahilyabai Holkar. Ahmednagar is the third district after Aurangabad and Osmanabad to be

The decision was taken in the Cabinet meeting, which could be the last before the model code of conduct comes into force for the Lok Sabha elections. The Eknath Shinde government also approved the name-change of seven railway stations in Mumbai. name-

Addressing an event in Ahmednagar in May last year, Mr Shinde had announced that Ahmednagar would be renamed as Ahilya Nagar. Taking to announced that he has

fulfilled his promise. In September last year, the Maharashtra government had issued a notification renaming the

Maharashtra government had issued a notification renaming the Aurangabad and Osmanabad revenue divisions to Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Dharashiv Revenue divisions, respectively.

Aurangabad and Osmanabad revenue divisions to Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar and Dharashiv Revenue divisions, respectively. Velha tehsil in Pune dis-

trict will also be renamed as Rajgad, which was the first capital of Chhatrapati Shivaji Maharaj. Deputy chief minister Ajit Pawar said that the wish of the residents of Velhe taluka and Pune district has been fulfilled. He also congratulated all the gram pan-chayats and zilla parishad members who supported this demand

The Shinde Cabinet also cleared the proposal to rename seven railway stations in Mumbai, which earlier were given

#### Have finalised seat-sharing formula with **BJP: Chirag** AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Amid the ongoing tussle between the Lok Janshakti Party's two factions, party leader Chirag Paswan on Wednesday met BJP president J.P. Nadda.

Mr Paswan was accompanied by the BJP leader Mangal Pandey, who had met Mr Paswan's uncle and Union minister Pashupati Kumar Paras on Tuesday. Mr Paras heads the other faction

of the LJP. Both the factions are said to be fighting over how to distribute the five Lok Sabha seats offered to them, in particular Hazipur repre-sented by LJP founder late Ram Vilas Paswan.

After his meeting with Mr Nadda, Mr Paswan said his party has finalised a seat-sharing formula with the BJP for the Lok Sabha polls. He thanked Prime Minister Narendra Modi always protecting in the alliance.

"All my concerns have been addressed by the Bharatiya Janata Party. am satisfied," Paswan told reporters.

### 'UP has unlimited potential, some people made it bimaru'

Lucknow, March 13: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath slammed previous governments on Wednesday, saying they turned the state "bimaru" in spite of its unlimited potential. He also said there was a time when no one was ready to invest in Uttar Pradesh, but the state has now emerged as a superior destination for investment in the country.

Speaking at a mega loandistribution programme of the ministry of MSMEs (micro, small and medium enterprises) here in the state capital, Mr Adityanath said, "Uttar Pradesh is a state of unlimited potential. Some people turned the state 'bimaru" in spite of that



Yogi Adityanath

unlimited potential." The CM said when the "double-engine" government came to power, this 'unlimited potential was linked to the campaign for the country's progress development of youngsters and entrepre-neurs under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi"

Mr Adityanath said once no investor wanted to come to Uttar Pradesh but

now, the state has emerged as a superior destination for investment. According to an official statement, Mr Adityanath

said with the growing robustness of the MSMEs in Uttar Pradesh, the government has flushed Chinese products out of

the state's markets. "What is greater patriotism than this? When our domestically-produced goods gain traction in the market, it is imperative that we nurture, incentivise and provide them with a platform to flourish. It is immensely gratifying to witness our products gaining popularity while those of the enemy country recede," the chief minister said.

## In Odisha, Padma awardee to get ₹25,000 honorarium

AGE CORRESPONDENT BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 13

The Odisha government Wednesday announced a monthly honorarium of ₹25,000 to the recipients of Padma awards. The payments will be made from April 2024, as a mark of recognition of their contribu-

tion to the society. "The Padma awards are the country's proudest

civilian honour. This

honour is given to indi-

viduals who have made

the country proud in var-

awardees have enhanced

the glory of Odisha with

their talent and service,"

Padma

fields.

A LOT of people in Odisha have received Padma awards earlier. Four persons received the Padma Shri in 2024; they are Gopinath Swain, Bhagbat Padhan, Binod Maharana, and Binod Kumar Pasavat.

the state government said in a press statement. While a lot of people in Odisha have already received Padma awards four persons earlier, received the Padma Shri They are Swain, in 2024. Gopinath Bhagbat Padhan, Binod Maharana, and Binod Kumar Pasayat.

Mr Swain is a 105-yearold artiste from Ganjam district, who has been performing Krishna Leela for over nine decades. Mr Padhan is an exponent of Sabda Nrutya folk dance from Bargarh. He was given the award for "expanding the scope of Nrutya dance to wider platforms and imparting training to diverse groups in the art".

The Padma Shri — also

spelled Padma Shree — is the fourth-highest civilian award of Republic of India, after the Bharat Ratna, the Padma Vibhushan and the Padma Bhushan.

## Impasse over BJP-BJD ties continues

AKSHAYA KUMAR SAHOO BHUBANESWAR, MARCH 13

The impasse over the pro-Biju Janata Dal and Bharatiya Janata Party alliance continued on amid the Wednesday, amid the unconfirmed reports that a crucial meeting of BJP leaders took place at Union home minister Amit Shah's New Delhi residence to thrash out the roadblocks, which among others, included the contentious seat-sharing arrangements.

However, no concrete decisions could be taken at the meeting as to what would be the seat-sharing lavouts with the Odisha's regional party, the reports

The BJD is bent on fightfrom 100-plus Assembly seats, while the BJP wants the Naveen Patnaik-led BJD to contest from less than 100 seats. Both the parties have also not reached a consensus on sharing of the Lok Sabha seats. Of the 21 Lok Sabha seats, the BJP is bent on fighting from 14 seats, a demand which the BJD appears to be in no mood to concede.

The strange alliance bid by the BJD and BJP has now caught the attention of the entire nation as people are curiously try-

THE BJD is bent on fighting from 100-plus Assembly seats, while the BJP wants it to contest from less than 100 seats. Both the parties have also not reached a consensus on sharing of the Lok Sabha seats.

ing to understand how the two key rivals—the ruling BJD and key rival BJP are entering into a coalition, allowing the diminutive Congress to grab the main opposition space in the state.

Since 2009, when the BJD president and Odisha chief minister ousted the BJP out of an 11-year-old

coalition by dubbing the latter as "communal," the saffron party was breathing fire against the former. However, the political equations have suddenly changed in the state after two friends-turned foes decided to re-enter into an alliance to help Prime Minister Narendra Modi realise his dream to get more than 400 Lok Sabha seats. In the 2019 general elec-

tions, the BJD had bagged 12 Lok Sabha seats while the BJP got 12.

Neither the BJD nor the BJP leaders have yet come out with clarification as to why both of them are eager to forge an alliance.

#### SHORT TAKES Girl delivers baby, warden suspended

Bhopal: A Class 12 student, an inmate of a government-run residential school in Bijapur, Chhattisgarh, delivered a baby, official sources said on Wednesday. The 20-year-old complained of headache and uneasiness on Tuesday evening and was admitted to a local hospital, where she gave birth to a baby, local district education officer (DEO) Baliram Baghel said. A probe by Mr Baghel into the incident has found that the girl was in a relationship with a boy for twothree years and their families were aware of it. She had appeared in three papers of the ongoing Class 12 board examinations. The hostel warden, Anshu Minj, was suspended on charges of dereliction of duty for not being aware of the development.

#### Mamata cuts ties to brother

■ Continued From Page 1

there will be 32 members in the chain. But none of them is like him. He creates problems in every election. Everyone is

aggrieved by him."
She elaborated: "When some one grows, his greed also increases... Anyone can do anything without involving the family. But from today I don't see him as my family

member." "All ties have been severed by not only me but also those in our blood connection and Maa. Mati, Manush. Don't introduce him as my brother further. Don't take my name also because I disassociated from my family

bonding."
The CM added: "There are no relations between us anymore. Prasun will remain our candidate in Howrah. If everyone in my family asks for tickets in polls, it will amount to dynasticism, which I don't follow. immediately said: "What Didi said as a guardian is right and a blessing to me. Didi brought me up after our parents' demise. She has the right to say this after my mistake. I will meet her and won't

contest the polls. The TMC also faced another backlash when its former Rajya Sabha MP Santanu Sen revolted for not getting a ticket in the Lok Sabha polls.

He claimed: "I can show statistics that I worked tirelessly for my party in the RS against the BJP. I thought I would be renominated to the RS, which the party didn't do. It's not that I dreamt of getting a ticket for the LS since I concentrated myself in parliamentary politics. That also didn't happen.

Sen nowever. asserted. that he would follow the orders of Ms Banerjee and her MP nephew Abhishek Banerjee to continue in the Meanwhile, Barrackpore MP Arjun Singh, who was also denied a TMC ticket, sounded confident of his contest at his seat apparently for the BJP after Ms Baneriee asserted that he won from the BJP before defection.

#### Bhutan PM to arrive on 5-day India tour today

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Minister Bhutan Tshering Tobgay will be in India on a fiveday visit from March 14-

This will be Mr Tobgay's first overseas visit, after assuming office in January 2024. Minister of foreign affairs and external trade, minister of enerand natural resources, minister for industry, commerce and employment and senior officials from Bhutan government will accompany Mr Tobgay.

During the visit, the Bhutan Prime Minister will call on the President
Ms Droupadi Murmu
and hold bilateral
talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The external affairs minister S. Jaishankar will call on Mr Tobgay. Tobgay will also visit Mumbai during his visit, the ministry of external affairs said, while announcing the

"India and Bhutan enjoy exemplary ties of friendship and cooperation, based on trust, goodwill and mutual understanding at all lev-

els."
"The visit of the Prime Minister of Bhutan will also provide an opportunity to the two sides to review the progress in our unique partnership and to discuss ways and means to expand the enduring ties of friendship and cooperabetween India and Bhutan," the ministry of external affairs



People collect free drinking water from a tanker due to the ongoing water crisis in

## Mob beats, abuses foreign footballer

Malappuram (Kerala), March 13: A football player from the Ivory Coast was beaten up by a mob of spectators and was also allegedly racially abused a few days ago during a soccer match between local clubs near Areekode in this northern Kerala district known for its

craze for the sport.
As per foreign national's complaint to the district Malappuram malappuram district police chief, he was racially abused and pelt-ed with stones during the match by some of the spectators who also beat

An officer of Areekode police station said that the player's statement was being recorded, but it was taking some time due to language issues.

After his statement is recorded an FIR will be lodged, the officer said. The officer also said that some of the spectators can be seen in videos of the incident, making **AN OFFICER** of Areekode police station said that the player's statement was being recorded, but it was taking some time due to language issues

fun of the player and throwing something at

Subsequently, he can be seen going up to the spectators and kicking one of them, the officer said.

"That led to the people there getting agitated and they chased him around the ground and beat him up," he added.

The officer said that a

complaint has also been received from the person who was allegedly kicked at by the player.

"Since he is a foreign national, we are giving priority to his complaint," police said and added that a probe will be launched to ascer tain what actually hap-

#### **Orchardists in Valley against** land acquisition

AGE CORRESPONDENT SRINAGAR, MARCH 13

The fruit-growing and other farmers of Reshipora-Zainapora area of Kashmir Valley's southern Shopian district have held protests against the proposed takeover of their land for a railway project.

Recently, the railway ministry approved a railway line from Awantipora in Pulwama district to Shopian and the locals said that since it runs through their orchards and other farming land "it would

destroy our livelihoods" Former chief minister and PDP president and PDP president Mehbooba Mufti, while endorsing their view, told a press conference that building railway lines through the Kashmir Valley without taking into consideration ecological impact is fraught with

#### ■ Gets Prez assent ■ CM vows early execution

## U'khand all set to be 1st state to have UCC

**PRITHVIRAJ SINGH** 

The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) Bill, passed by the Uttarakhand Assembly in February, has become a law with President Daoupadi Murmu giving her assent to it.

"The Uniform Civil Code, 2024 was granted assent by the President on March 11 and is being published for the information of the public," the gazette notification issued by the Uttarakhand government said on March

Reacting to the notification, chief minister Pushkar Singh Dhami thanked Ms Murmu for ratifying the bill and said that the law will soon be effectively implemented

"It is a moment of great joy and pride for the peo-

**REACTING TO** the notification, CM Pushkar Singh Dhami thanked Ms Murmu for ratifying the bill and said that the law

will soon be effectively

implemented in the state

ple of Uttarakhand that president Draupadi Murmu has given her nod to the UCC bill passed by the state Assembly. The UCC will homogenise citizen rights and opportunities in the state. Besides, it will help curb the oppression of women as well. The UCC law will be crucial in promoting harmony and social equality across the communities in

the state" Mr Dhami said. The bill to bring the UCC was passed in the state Assembly on February 6. It was sent for governor's assent a few days later. Uttarakhand governor

Gurmit Singh subse quently recommended the bill to the President for final ratification.

Uttarakhand officials informed that following the gazette notification, the "Implementation of the UCC will be expedited soon as a committee to frame a rule manual has been constituted," Shailesh Bagoli, secretary

to the chief minister, said Mr Dhami had promised the UCC to the people of Uttarakhand as an electoral plank on the eve of the 2022 Assembly polls. After his return to power, the chief minister constituted an experts panel to draft the bill.

The panel presented the report in January following which it was cleared the state Cabinet and tabled in the February session of the state

## Rajnath nod to expand NCC by adding 3L cadet vacancies

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

Defence minister Rajnath Singh has approved a proposal for the expansion of the National Cadet Corps (NCC) with the addition of three lakh cadet vacancies. This expansion is expected to cater to the increasing demand for the NCC from educational institutions throughout the country.

From just 20,000 cadets in 1948, the NCC will now have a sanctioned strength of 20 lakh cadets on its roles, making it the largest uniformed youth organisa-

tion of the world, the defence ministry said. With the NCC being offered as an elective sub-

ject as per the National

Education Policy 2020, the

expansion will be a step towards meeting the aspirations of the youth towards playing a pivotal role as future leaders of the nation.

impact of this expansion will lead to proportionate distribution of vacancies across all states and territories would reduce the waiting list of institutions aspir-

ing for the NCC," defence ministry The expansion encompasses the estab-lishment of four new group headquarters and the addition of two new NCC units. An important facet of the expansion plan involves the proposal for employment of ex-servicemen as NCC instructors, thus leveraging their skills and vast experience. "This noble initiative will ensure quality training to the NCC cadets and would generate employment opportunities for the veterans," the ministry said.

#### MoD inks ₹8,073 crore pact with HAL to procure 34 ALHs

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

The defence ministry on Wednesday signed a contract with defence PSU Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) for the acquisition of 34 advanced light helicopters (ALH) for the Army and the Indian Coast Guard for ₹8,073 crores. Out of 34 Dhruv Mk III helicopters, the Army will get 25 and the Coast Guard will receive nine, according to the ministry. It also signed an agreement with Armoured Vehicles Nigam Ltd. (AVNL) for the procurement of 693 armament upgrades of infantry combat vehicle BMP2 to

The Army's ALH Dhruv Mk III UT (utility) is designed for search and rescue, troop transportation, internal cargo, recce and casualty evacuation, among others. It has proved its performance in high altitude regions like Siachen Glacier and Ladakh.

The ICG's version of the ALH Mk III MR (maritime role) is designed for mar itime surveillance and interdiction, search and rescue, rappelling operations and also for cargo and personnel transportation, pollution response using external cargo carrying capability and medical casualty evacuation. It has proved its mettle even in adverse atmospherics

## Row over appointment of ECs, CEC: SC to hear plea March 15

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

The Supreme Court on Wednesday agreed to hear on Friday a plea of an NGO challenging the exclusion of the Chief Justice of India from a selection panel to choose the CEC and election commissioners on the grounds that the poll panel should be insulated from "political" and "executive interference" to maintain a healthy democ-

bench headed by Justice Sanjiv Khanna took note of the submissions of lawyer Prashant Bhushan, appearing for Association for Democratic Reforms, seek-

plea and said it will be listed on Friday. "I just got the message from the CJI that it will be listed on Friday," Justice Khanna said.

The NGO challenges the validity and seeks a stay on the operation of Section 7 of the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners Act, 2023, which excludes the CJI from the panel meant to select the CEC and ECs.

Under the new law, the selection panel includes the PM as the chairperson and the LoP and a Union minister nominated by the PM are the two other mem-

bers. The NGO has moved the commissioner Arun Goel put in his papers recently. "Direct the Union of India to appoint the vacant positions of election commissioners till the pendency of the writ petition, in accordance with the selection committee laid down by this Hon'ble Court Anoop Baranwal v. Union of India (Supra) in 2023. Democracy is a facet of the basic structure of the Constitution and in order to ensure free and fair elections and to maintain healthy democracy in our country, the EC should be insulated from political and/or executive interference," the plea, filed in the

#### **Mukhtar Ansari jailed for life in 36-yr-old fake gun licence case** Varanasi (UP), March 13:

A special Varanasi court on Wednesday sentenced gangster-politician Mukhtar Ansari to life imprisonment in a threedecade-old fake gun licence case. The MP-MLA court of judge Awanish Gautam also slapped a fine totalling ₹2 lakh on Ansari under various penal provisions, aistric government counsel Vinay Singh said.

He said the case against Ansari was registered under IPC sections 467 (forgery), 468 (forgery for the purpose of cheating) and 120B (criminal conspiracy), along with provisions of the Arms Act at Mohammadabad police station of Ghazipur district in December 1990.



Mukhtar court pro-ceedings via video conference from Banda Jail, where he is currently lodged.

 $\widetilde{\text{As}}$  per police, around 60 cases are pending against the gangster-turned-politician in UP, Punjab, New Delhi and other states. He has so far been convicted in seven cases. Mr Singh said that on June 10, 1987, Ansari had approached the district magistrate of Ghazipur for a gun licence. He later obtained licence by forging signatures of the then-district magistrate and the SP.

### 'Deprived benefited most from schemes'

■ Continued From Page 1 the BJP's efforts to ensure

that those from deprived sections reach top positions will continue. In a swipe at the Opposition, Mr Modi asked the gathering,

which consisted of people from disadvantaged groups, "How can anyone say I have no family when I have brothers and sisters like you? The Prime Minister pointed out that his government's schemes for toilets and cook-

ing gas have benefited deprived sections of society. 'SCs, STs, OBCs are the biggest beneficiaries of government welfare schemes for the poor," he said. The PM-SURAJ national portal aims to provide credit support to eligible individuals

across the country, including Scheduled Castes and backward classes and sanitation workers. This initiative is set to facilitate financial empowerment and enable entrepreneurship opportunities for the most disadvantaged sections At the portal launch event,

the Prime Minister said that 1beneficiaries from deprived sections have been given ₹720 crore assistance till now. Talking about the goal of Viksit Bharat by 2047, the Prime Minister said that the goal cannot be achieved without the development of the deprived segments.

He said he has broken the mindset of the past and it is being ensured that facilities available to others, like gas connections, bank accounts, toilets etc, are available to dalits, backwards, the deprived and tribals.

The Prime Minister pointed out that many generations of the deprived segments were wasted in just arranging for the basic amenities. "After 2014, the government reached the segments devoid of any hope and made them partners in the nation's development," he said.

Mr Modi said that the biggest beneficiaries of schemes like free rations, free medical treatment, pucca houses, toilets, and Ujjwala gas connections are the people on the periphery, the deprived segments. "Now we are working with

the goal of saturation in these schemes," the PM added. Earlier in the day, the Prime Minister virtually laid the foundation stone for the three major semiconductor manufacturing projects worth about ₹1.25-lakh crores in Dholera and Sanand in Gujarat and Moregaon in Assam. Addressing the event after the launch, Mr Modi said, 'Today's projects will play a key role in making India a

semiconductor hub.' Attacking the previous governments, particularly the Congress, Mr Modi pointed out that India's semiconductor dreams were first envisioned during the 1960s but the then governments failed to act upon them due to a lack of will and the effort to convert the resolutions into accomplish-

He also lamented the inability of the previous governments to understand the country's potential, priorities and futuristic needs. Throwing light on the forward-thinking and futuristic approach of the present government, the

semiconductor manufacturing with ambitions to compete with developed countries.

The Prime Minister stated that the government has taken care of all the priorities of the country as he gave examples of investments in pucca houses for the poor as well as encouraging research, running the world's largest sanitation movement, moving forward in semiconductor manufacturing and rapid reduction in poverty to massive infrastructural investments with the "atma nirbhar of

"In 2024 alone, foundation stones have been laid and schemes worth over ₹12 lakh crores have been inaugurated," the PM said.

In his address, Mr Modi talked about the Bharat Shakti exercise in Pokhran on Tuesday that provided a glimpse of 21st century India's self-reliant defence sector, India joining the exclusive club of the world in the form of Agni 5, the initiation of the drone revolution in agriculture two days ago where thousands of drones were handed over to women under the Namo Drone Didi scheme, India's preparations for Gaganyaan gaining momentum and the recently inaugurated India's first indigenously built fast breeder nuclear

"All these efforts and all these projects are taking India closer to the goal of development. Certainly, these three projects of today will also have a big role in this," Prime Minister Modi added.

### disposed of PIL, said. **CEC:** J&K elections after security review

■ Continued From Page 1 magistrates, the SPs, the DIGs, the IGs, senior officers

of the state government and paramilitary forces." He added: "We're equally concerned about the LS and (J&K) Assembly elections."

The CEC confirmed that most of the political parties whose representatives met the EC team in Srinagar on Tuesday demanded that the Assembly and the Lok Sabha polls in J&K be held simultaneously. "They also asked us why we have taken so much time to hold the Assembly elections in J&K and why the SC had to direct that steps be taken by the EC to conduct the elections

of the J&K Assembly by September 30, 2024," he said. Mr Kumar said that the EC did not delay the Assembly elections in J&K, but the progressions related to the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019, which became effective on October 31, 2019, and the delimitation report, which was released on May 5, 2022, under which additional six seats were added to Jammu division and 1 seat to Kashmir division in the Assembly, taking the total tally to 90 seats, played their role.

dissonance between the J&K reorganisation and the delimitation process." he said, adding that Parliament had in December 2023 passed two major pieces of legislation the J&K Reorganisation Act 2019 and (Amendment) Bill 2023 to nominate two members from the "Kashmiri migrant community" and one representing the displaced persons from Pakistan occupied Kashmir (PoK) to the J&K Legislative Assembly. "So, our time to initiate the process of holding elections in J&K started only after December 2023. We got just three months. Therefore, there has not been any delay on our part," the CEC said.

Mr Kumar said: "One thing is sure...we want early Lok Sabha and Assembly polls in J&K. The representatives of various political parties that met us demanded that there should be a level playing field and that no candidate should be discriminated against when it comes to providing security cover to him or her. We want to assure all that elections will be held in a peaceful manner; adequate security will be provided to all candidates and the Central forces will be deployed. These will be free and fair polls. Replying to a question, Mr Kumar said that the EC has received details from the State Bank of India related to the electoral bonds and will share all relevant information in

"The Commission has always believed in complete transparency. The SBI was supposed to submit data by March 12. They have given us the details in time. I will look at it data and will definitely disclose it in time," he said.

## 22,217 bonds sold: SBI affidavit

■ Continued From Page 1

parties that received the contributions and the denominations of the bonds. "A total of 22,217 bonds were purchased during the period from April 1, 2019 till February 15. At the time of collating the information for the EC, the details were segregated as below...," it said.

The affidavit said between April 1, 2019 and April 11, 2019, a total of 3,346 electoral bonds were purchased and 1,609 redeemed. It further said that from April 12, 2019 to February 15, a total of 18,871 electoral bonds were purchased and 20,421 were redeemed.

"The SBI has ready records in which the date of purchase, denomination and name of the buyer were recorded and (in relation to the political parties), the date of encashment and the denominations of the bonds encashed were

recorded," the affidavit said. The affidavit said, in compliance with the apex court's directions, a record of this information was made available to the EC by hand delivery in digital form (password protected) before the close of business hours on March 12. The SBI said the aforesaid data has been furnished in respect of bonds purchased and redeemed between April 12, 2019 and February 15. "The electoral bonds were sold and redeemed in phases during this period and phase IX started on April 1, 2019. The number of bonds set out in the application included (by oversight) the bonds that were purchased during the period commencing April 1, 2019 and not from April 12,

2019," it said. The affidavit also contains as an annexure a copy of the letter as proof of service of data sent by the SBI to the EC. "The amount of the electoral bonds that were not encashed by the political party within the validity period of 15 days during this period have been transferred to the Prime Minister's National Relief Fund, as per Gazette notification no 20 dated January 2, 2018," said the letter sent by the SBI to the poll panel.

March Constitution bench of the apex court headed by CJI D.Y. Chandrachud had dismissed the SBI's plea seeking an extension of time and ordered it to disclose the details of electoral bonds to the EC by the close of business hours on March 12. The apex court had also directed the EC to publish the details shared by the bank on its official website by 5 pm on March 15.

In a landmark verdict delivered on

February 15, a five-judge Constitution

bench scrapped the Centre's electoral

bonds scheme that allowed anonymous political funding, dubbing it "unconstitutional" and ordered the closure of the scheme forthwith. Through the February 15 order, the top court had directed the SBI, the exclusive banker authorised under the scheme, to submit by March 6 the details of the electoral bonds pur-

chased since April 12, 2019, till date to the EC. The EC, in turn, was asked to upload the data by 5 pm on March 13. On March 11, while hearing SBI's application seeking an extension of time till June 30 to furnish the details to the EC, the apex court had observed that the bank's submissions in the application sufficiently indicated that

the information was readily available with the bank. In its application, the SBI had contended that the retrieval of information from "each silo" and the procedure of matching the information of one silo to that of the other will be a time-

consuming exercise. The data related to the issuance of the bond and the data related to the redemption of the bond were kept and recorded in two different silos. No central database was maintained," the

The SBI also said: "It is submitted that donor details were kept in a sealed cover at the designated branches and all such sealed covers were deposited in the main branch of the applicant bank, which is located in Mumbai.

bank had said.



## THE ASIAN AGE

14 MARCH 2024

## BJP follows old tactics as it changes Haryana CM

he fast-paced developments in Haryana which saw the parting of ways between the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Jannayak Janta Party, the resignation of old RSS hand Manoharlal Khattar as chief minister and his replacement with a younger Nayab Singh Saini reflect some interesting tactics by the BJP ahead of the Lok Sabha elections. On the one hand, it goes against the current practice of the party which is strengthening the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) it leads by recruiting new allies and mending friendships with old ones. On the other, it perfectly fits into the party's way of dispensing with leaders whom it believes would not be fetching electoral victory, however tall they appear in the popular imagination.

The JJP with 10 members in the Assembly had come to the aid of the BJP after the latter failed to muster a simple majority in a House of 90 in the 2019 elections. After running a major part of the course with regard to the

Given the disenchantment with Mr Khattar, the two-time chief minister, the party used the chance provided by the alliance partner to dump the entire team and opt for a new one

current Assembly's term, it appears that both the parties have felt the association becoming untenable as each one would be looking at strengthening oneself at the cost of the other. The JJP's demand for two of the 10 seats the state has in the Lok Sabha was inadmissible for the BJP as it had won all of them on its own in the 2019 elections. Its demand for a higher number of Assembly seats was also unacceptable as the BJP has assiduously built the party from the scratch in the state and come to power on its own in the 2014 elections for the first time. Haryana is a state which did not go the BJP

way as most other most north Indian states did.

The presence of the various factions who owe allegiance to farmer leader of yore Devi Lal along with the Congress had stopped the saffron party in the state but the 2014 Lok Sabha elections was the turning point when the party won seven seats and 34 per cent votes. The Assembly elections later in the year repeated the pattern and brought the BJP to power. The party was, however, unable to repeat the feat and had fallen short of majority, necessitating an alliance with the regional party. The BJP is justified if it is worried about facing the polls with the

Given the fact that there has been disenchantment with Mr Khattar, the two-time chief minister, the party used the opportunity provided by the alliance partner to dump the entire team and opt for a new one. This way, the party expects to overcome the anti-incumbency factor in both the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections, and bring up a new crop of young leaders to power. Mr Saini, 54, now joins the league of BJP chief ministers Mohan Yadav, 59, of Madhya Pradesh, Bhajan lal Sharma, 56, of Rajasthan and Vishnu Deo Sai, 60, of Chhattisgarh who recently replaced veteran leaders and marked a generational shift in the power structure.

Critics would have several objections to the way the BJP functions but none should have a complaint about its ability to reinvent itself at regular intervals and anointing new crops of leaders to suit its larger political objectives. Mr Saini is the latest among them.

### Probe Tejas crash thoroughly

t is only the first crash in 23 years since the first test flight of a Tejas light combat aircraft, which is the backbone of the Indian Air Force, but it must be thoroughly probed. The IAF is never known to share the findings of its courts of inquiry into crashes, perhaps because security considerations preclude sharing such details publicly.

The inquiry must, however, get to the bottom of the incident that saw the fighter jet crash into a five-room student hostel, causing no injuries or loss of life, to rule out any misgivings over a vital cog in the functioning of the

The safety record of the MiGs that were the forerunners to the Tejas got so frequent as the fleet aged that there were murmurs of dissent from the families of IAF pilots whose lives were frequently at risk in those crashes. And we lost more than a few seasoned pilots to those lumbering machines

In moving on to a more modern fleet of Tejas aircraft, the IAF had taken a giant leap into modern combat aviation aircraft. With the pilot ejecting the jet plummeted there was no loss of crew either but the ne for a comprehensive probe cannot be overstated.

The aircraft was returning to its base from an impressive Bharat Shakti military exercise in Pokhran where the efficiency of indigenous aircraft and weaponry was on display, with the Prime Minister in attendance. The incident that occurred in Jaisalmer, Rajasthan later was the sole blot on the record of the "Atmanirbhar" movement in defence acquisitions that was on show.

The indigenously developed Tejas is a leading showpiece of a thrust for lessening reliance on imports of military equipment, mostly Russian, and is already of two-squadron strength in the IAF, with the Cabinet having recently approved the procurement of 73 LCA Tejas Mk-1A fighters, which are 4.5 generation aircraft.

The aircraft serve vital functions in air combat and support missions as well as in marine reconnaissance. There is no room for panic but the need to know why the crash happened is vital to the IAF that is way short of the number of squadrons it needs to cope with the required air defence

#### THE ASIAN AGE

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CROWDS ... WE HAVE PUBLIC GRAPHIC DECIGNERS

## After CAA rules, contours of confrontation changing



Subhani

Shikha Mukerjee

olarisation on the asis of religion is now the rule because the law has changed. Citizenship is available to select categories of persons from select countries, so long as the applicant under the 2019 Citizenship Amendment Act and now notified rules is not Muslim. The line that separates Muslims from Pakistan, Afghanistan and Bangla-desh is their status as the majority community there. Hindus, Sikhs, Jain, Parsis and Buddhists, as minorities there, are covered by the CAA and CAR.

The statement of the obvious is like telling oneself that discrimination on the basis of religion is now kosher in India, though the Constitution explicitly forbids such differentiation. This was explicit in Article 15, that the State shall "not discriminate against any citizen on grounds only of place of birth or any of them." The moment the CAA rules came into effect was when India appeared to shift from secular to something else, that may over time begin to resemble the Hindu Rashtra that Anant Kumar Hegde, a prominent Karnataka BJP leader, so ardently desires.

The tectonic shift in India's identity from secular to something else is timed for the 2024 Lok Sabha polls. The Narendra Modi government is fulfilling its 2019 guarantee that new citizenship rules would be enacted targeting pockets where large numbers of Hindus crossed over from Bangladesh, especially in West Bengal, Tripura, Assam, Meghalaya and elsewhere in Northeast. The notification was confirmation that the BJP is a party that delivers on promises.

The polarisation is evident from the reactions that flooded in from Kerala CM Pinarayi Vijayan, West

Bengal CM Mamata Baner-jee, Delhi CM Arvind Kejri-wal, SP chief Akhilesh Yadav, Sitaram Yechury and Mallikarjun Kharge, and smaller and regional parties. The INDIA bloc is against the changes to the cit-izenship law, while the BJP is crowing over its success.

The impact of the change will impact the political dynamics in West Bengal and Assam more than in other states. Whereas in West Bengal implementing is straightforward, in Assam it has triggered protests from ethnic groups violently hostile to the presence of Bengali speakers, be they Hindus or Muslims. Much as the chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma tries to explain away the protests as misguided, the fact is that the BJP's move to give citizenship to Bengali speakers is the polarising factor, not the religious

identity of the applicants. Baneriee may have dismissed the change as "lollipops", but she was alert to the probability that something like this would happen on March 10, when she addressed a mega rally at Kolkata's Brigade Parade Grounds. She warned that no detention centres would be allowed in West Bengal. She vowed to block implementation of the CAA and Register Citizens, and the National Population Register enumeration process.

It is Ms Banerjee's contention that the CAA is unnecessary. Hindus from the Scheduled Caste Matua community who came from Bangladesh have Aadhaar cards, PAN cards. ration cards, work in the government and defence services, and have been elected as MLAs, MPs and panchayat and municipal body members. She claims the BJP has incited gullible people from the Matua community to swallow the

The Matuas aren't a homogenous vote bank. Thus, both the BJP and the TMC have to woo them. The lollipops have to keep coming. Guarantees' are, therefore, the new currency...

story that the CAA is a life-

ween the Trinamul Congress and BJP about the status of Hindus who came Bangladesh till 2015 is about creating loyalty votes. The BJP wants these voters, as does the TMC. aren't a homogenous vote bank. Thus, both the BJP and the TMC have to woo them. The lollipops have to keep coming.

fore the new currency in which political leaders affirm their credibility to voters, who obviously calculate the advantages to themselves as individuals by openly siding with one or the other party. Mamata Banerjee has announced gramme at the Brigade rally, including the negative guarantee of no detention centres in West Bengal. Aimed at reassuring the Muslim voter, whose choice influences the outcome in about 125 Assembly constituencies that is about 16-17 parliamentary constituencies stretching across North to South Bengal, the emphatic commitment is Mamata Banerjee's gesture to secure support.

In 2024, as much as the Matua vote across a handful of parliamentary constituencies are consequential, the Muslim vote is equally significant. By pushing Mamata Banerjee to declare her stand on Matua and Muslim voters, the BJP obviously expects negative response from Hindu voters who have swallowed the bait that their status as the majority community is in danger because of the TMC's appeasement politics and

ning 40 out of

saver.
The confrontation bet-

across the border from The crux is that the Matuas 'Guarantees" are there

before that by the Left parties and the Congress.

Over two weeks, West Bengal has hosted Prime Minister Narendra Modi four times because he is in pursuit of his target of 370 seats for the BJP and a total of 400 seats with allies out of the 543 elected seats in the Lok Sabha. It's a different matter that the BJP seems to have scaled down its expectations from win-Bengal's 42 seats to 25 seats in the same period. The competition and the confrontation is no less fierce regardless of the number of seats that are set as targets.

Voters are being given a choice between the bird in hand, namely the guarantees of Mamata Banerjee, versus the birds in the bush, namely the Modi Sarkar's guarantees. Offering a choice between a government and administration that is accessible, proximate and can be made accountable for the transgressions of its local leaders like Sheikh Shahjahan for land grab or sexual violence and intimidation. and a remote and distant power in New Delhi, Mamata Banerjee is hoping that she has effectively closed off other options for voters. In reducing the choice to a government that can impoverish itself to pay 23 lakh or 69 lakh people who worked on MGNREGA projects, dues that are pending for over two years, the inducement to vote for the Trinamul Congress in the LS elections is very clear. The 2024 election is

tougher than all previous elections since she wrested control over West Bengal in 2011. The rise of the BJP as the Opposition, beginning with its unexpected win of 18 seats out of a total 42 parliamentary seats in the state in 2019, and the 77 294 Assembly seats in 2021, turns this election into a "mother of all battles" category confrontation.

Mamata Banerjee, like Narendra Modi and the BJP, has set herself a target, of winning more than the 22 Lok Sabha seats her party had won in 2019.

> Shikha Mukerjee is a senior journalist in

#### **LETTERS**

Not even the most hardened gangsters are immune from the arrows of Cupid as was proved by the marriage of Kala Jathedi and Madam Minz in New Delhi. Their aliases sound more attractive and appealing than their real names. Marriages, they say, are made in heaven but some are also made in prisons. The lovestory of these two will make compelling viewing if some enterprising producers wants to make a film on this. All the security measures at the wedding will have cost a packet and I wonder who is footing the bill. Perhaps the responsibilities of a married life will cause a change of heart in the two individuals.

**Anthony Henriques** Mumbai

#### **WELCOME, PANT**

THE BCCI'S confirmation that Rishabh Pant is fit to play as a wicketkeeper batter in the upcoming IPL must cheer his fans and admirers. The dashing batter will return as skipper for Delhi Capitals after suffering multiple injuries in a harrowing car crash last year. Pant aced the fitness tests related to his "Return To Play" (RTP). An impressive showing in the IPL could earn him a spot in the T20 World Cup squad, scheduled for June in the West Indies and the United States.

N.J. Ravi Chander

#### SBI EXPOSED

THE STATE BANK of India (SBI) on Tuesday informed the SC that it has furnished details of the purchase and redemption of electoral bonds to the Election Commission of India in pursuance of the top court's directions. Now, it has become amply clear that the bank sought time only to save the face of the ruling party that has benefited the most from the scheme.

Sankar Paul Chakdaha, West Bengal

Maleeha



Trump 2.0 will see Deep State revamp; foreign policy may get unpredictable

hat will US foreign policy look like under Donald Trump 2.0? Governments and people across the world have already started assessing this as the former President appears increasingly likely to return to power even though the election is far too early to call. But irrespective of who wins the presidential race, there is a general perception of the US among the international community that is informing assessments about Washington's future engagement with the world.

This concerns the intensely polarised state of the country, which frequently gridlocks the political system, threatens government shutdowns and paralyses Congress. So much so that agreement on the budget proves elusive, and even aid to America's closest ally (Israel) fails to pass Congress. This in turn means Washington's international engagement is neither seen as sustained nor consistent and US reliability also comes into question. This at a time when the US is no longer the sole dominant power in a growing multipolar world.

The prospect of another Trump presidency only reinforces this perception given both his unpre-dictability and "America First" unilateralist approach, which produced so much disruption and discontinuity in foreign policy in his first term and eroded America's international standing. His isolationist approach also made the country retrench from its global role.

As he is now a known quantity, will it be easier for the world to deal with him? Not necessarily. His mercurial and whimsical personality makes it uncertain whether his second term will just mimic the first. He is capable of suddenly changing course. When Joe Biden became President, his defining phrase of how his administration would depart from Trump was "America is back". It meant more expansive and energetic US engagement with the world in line with traditional US policy and global role. But in several core areas his approach was not different from that of his predecesso

In others, his administration's declaratory policy was not matched by operational reality, as for example the aim to "restore America's global leadership". On China, his policy differed little from Trump's, except perhaps in tone. On trade their approach was identical. Trump-era tariffs not only remained intact but were supplemented by tech restrictions unleashing an intense tech war.

Mr Biden's aggressive stance towards Beijing and policy to contain China of course reflected the political consensus in the US for a tougher posture towards Beijing. For their part, Chinese officials saw little to distinguish between Trump and Biden's policies This prompted Chinese leaders to repeatedly warn Washington against engaging in a Cold War and describe the Biden administration's strategy as one of 'confrontational competition'.

In many respects, Mr Biden's worldview seemed stuck in the past and not in sync with a vastly transformed world. For example, his effort to cast the world into a defining battle between democracy and authoritarian rule was a throwback to a Cold War paradigm and rhetoric. The idea never took off, not least because American democracy itself had regressed. His chaotic management of the US military withdrawal from Afghanistan was a major blow to US image and credibility. He failed to mediate peace to bring the costly Ukraine war to an end. His policy on Israel's war in Gaza isolated the US from the international community, which wanted the conflict to end, but instead, witnessed repeated American vetoes of ceasefire resolutions in the UN Security Council. This and Washington's arming of Israel also eroded support for Mr Biden from within his own party, especially among young and liberal

Not that Mr Trump will be any different on this issue given his staunch pro-Israel stance, which also appeals to his supporters among evangelical Christians. He said last week that Israel should continue its military offensive until "complete victory" and "finish the problem". His other utterances during the campaign have a familiar ring. He has repeated the America First rhetoric, talked of imposing new trade restrictions/ tariffs on China and ending its most favoured nation trading status.

He also chastised Nato allies for not sharing the defence burden. He said in his second term, America would fundamentally rethink "Nato's purpose and its mission" and ask European nations to reimburse the US billions of dollars for military supplies it sent to Ukraine. He even said he would encourage Russia to attack "delinquent" Nato countries who don't spend what they should on defence.

Much of this is campaign rhetoric. But there is little question that a man who brings business instincts to politics has a strong aversion to supporting wars or getting America embroiled in other people's wars. Which is why European countries should worry most about his return and about the US security guarantee for Europe. Mr Trump will likely force Ukraine into negotiations with Russia to seek a peace deal to end the war and would be unconcerned if the outcome favoured Moscow.

He has often bragged he can end the war in 24 hours. There is also strong opposition among Republicans and party supporters to aid for Ukraine. Mr Trump's stance on Ukraine has implications for the Taiwan issue, which he has seldom referred to. Mr Trump has also never said America would intervene militarily if China "invaded" Taiwan, as Mr Biden once declared.

Because Mr Trump has a transactional view of foreign relations that would make his policies unpredictable but also open to pragmatic possibilities. His administration would prefer to strike deals with competitors and rivals rather than try to subdue them, especially given his admiration for strongmen at the helm in some of these countries. His resistance to detail in his foreign policy pronouncements gives him room to manoeuvre. Mr Trump's more ambitious, if not sweeping, plans are on the domestic front, which aim to downsize the "administrative state" and revamp the deep state.

- By arrangement with **Dawn** 















#### TAKES SHORT

#### 2 KILLED, 26 HURT **IN EXPLOSION AT CHINA EATERY**

Beijing, March 13: A deadly suspected gas leak explosion ripped through an eatery in north China's Hebei province on Wednesday, killing at least two people and injuring 26 others. The blast rocked a fried chicken shop in Yanjiao township in the city of Sanhe, close to Beijing.

It is suspected to have been caused by a gas leak. Two people were killed and 26 others were injured from the explosi-on, *China Daily* reported. Rescue workers have rushed to the site immediately, state-run Xinhua news agency reported.

#### **TEXAS MAN WHO LIVED 70 YEARS IN IRON LUNG DIES**

**Texas, March 13:** A paralysed Texas man who lived 70 years inside an iron lung after he survived polio as a child has died, his family said.

Paul Alexander, 78, died on Monday, his brother Philip said in a post on Facebook. He gave no cause of death.

"It was an honour to be part of someone's life who was as admired as he was. He touched and inspired millions of people and that is no exaggeration, Philip Alexander wrote in a post on Tuesday. Alexander was six years old when he was placed in full-body metal cylinder known as an iron lung.

#### \$6.2L DEMANDED **TO FREE NIGERIA SCHOOL HOSTAGES**

Kaduna, March 13: Gunmen who kidnapped 286 students and staff from a school in northern Nigeria last week have demanded a total of 1 billion naira (\$620,432) for their release, a spokesman for the families of the hostages, and a local

councillor, told *Reuters*.

The school children, some older students and members of the school staff were abducted on March 7 in Kuriga, in the first mass kidnapping in the country since 2021.

Jubril Aminu said he had received a call on his phone from the kidnappers on

#### **LANKA NABS 21 INDIANS OVER ILLEGAL WORKING**

Colombo, March 13: Sri Lanan authorities have arrested 21 ingian nationals for illegally operating an online marketing centre in the island nation, vio lating the relaxed tourist visa norms, a media report said.

The 21 Indian men in the age group of 24 to 25, who were in Sri Lanka on tourist visas, were taken into custody by the Department of Immigration and Emigration, the *Daily Mirror* reported. After a preliminary inquiry, the department raided a rented house in Negombo city, where those arrested were found operating an online marketing centre.

#### **JAPAN SPACE ROCKET EXPLODES AFTER LAUNCH**

Tokyo, March 13: A rocket made by a Japanese company exploded seconds after launch on Wednesday, in a spectacular failure for the start-up's bid to put a satellite into orbit.

Tokyo-based Space One's 18metre (60-foot) Kairos rocket blasted off in the coastal Wakayama region of western Japan, carrying a small government test satellite.

But around five seconds later, the solid-fuel rocket erupted in fire, sending white smoke billowing around the remote mountainous area as orange flames raged on the ground, live footage showed.

#### **KISHIDA GRILLED OVER DANCERS AT** PARTY MEETING

Tokyo, March 13: Japan's Prime Minister Fumio Kishida was grilled by lawmakers on Wednesday about a gathering of ruling party members at which scantily clad female dancers were reportedly told to use their mouths to receive cash tips.

Footage leaked from the event in November organised by a regional chapter of the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) showed women in what appeared to be swimsuits dancing and sitting on participants' laps. The women came from a troupe called Glamour Dancers

## China ups def. ties with Lanka, Maldives, Nepal

**Beijing, March 13:** A Chinese military delegation on Wednesday wrapped up a visit to three of India's closest neighbours — the Maldives, Sri Lan-ka and Nepal — to boost bilateral defence ties, deepening relations in a region that New Delhi considers its sphere of influ-

ence. The People's Liberation Army (PLA) delegation held "in-depth discussions" on bilateral defence cooperation and reached various points of "consensus" during a visit from March 4 to 13, China's defence ministry said in a statement, without elaborating.

The talks also focused on regional and security issues, the statement said, adding it "enriched the content of defence cooperation" between

China and three nations.
Ties between Beijing and New Delhi have grown more tense in recent months, strained by disputes over how their borders should be drawn to the passage of Chinese survey vessels in the Indian Ocean. In 2020, relations nosedived after 20 Indian and four Chinese soldiers were killed during a border skirmish.

#### **CHINA BANKER UNDER PROBE FOR CORRUPTION**

Beijing, March 13: China has launched an investigation into another former top banker for suspected corruption, state media reported on Wednesday, as President Xi Jinping's flagship antigraft drive rages through the financial sector.

Li Jiping, the onetime vice-chief of the state-owned China Development Bank (CDB), is "suspected of serious violations of discipline and law", state broadcaster CCTV reported on Wednesday.

President Xi has waged a sweeping campaign against deep-rooted official corruption since coming to power a decade

On Tuesday, India rejected Chinese objections to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's weekend visit to Arunachal Pradesh in the eastern Himalayas, which China claims to be a part of south-

## Biden, Trump set for poll rematch

**Washington, March 13:** US President Joe Biden and his predecessor Donald Trump are set for a bitter poll rematch in November after they secured their parties' presidential nominations with impressive wins in another round of key primaries.

Biden, 81, won the Democratic presumptive nom-ination on Tuesday after easily clinching the presidential primaries in Georgia, as the number of delegates in his kitty crossed the halfway mark of 3,933 pledged delegates. A total of 1,968 delegates were required to win the

Democratic nomination. Four states — Georgia. Hawaii, Mississippi, Washington — one American territory and Democrats living abroad held their primaries on Tuesday. Biden would formally be declared the party's nomination during the Democratic National Convent-

ion in Chicago in August. Trump, 77, reached the 1,215 delegates necessary with an allocation of delegates from Washington state. He will be officially nominated at the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee this July

He will lead the Republican Party in a third consecutive presidential election after clinching the nomination. Their rematch, long anticipated, but hardly clamoured for, is broadly expected to mirror the 2020 campaign, though Trump will run this time under the spectre of 91 felony charges.

Trump is scheduled to become the first former American president to go on trial in a criminal case on March 25 in New York, where he faces charges he falsified business records to hide hush money payments to a porn star. Other charges are related to allegations that he

#### U.S. HOUSE **PASSES BILL TO BAN TIKTOK**

Washington, March 13: The US House of Representatives overwhelmingly approved a bill on Wednesday that would force TikTok to divest from its Chinese owner or get banned from the US.

The lawmakers voted 352 in favour of the proposed law and 65 against, in a rare moment of bipartisan unity in politically divided Washington.

The legislation threat ens to be a major setback for the video-sharing app, which has surged in pop ularity across the world while causing nervousne ss about its Chinese own ership and its potential subservience.

plotted to overturn his 2020 election defeat; played a lead role in the January 6, 2021, insurrection at the US Capitol and illegally took classified documents from the White House. It would be the first presidential rematch since 1956.

The last presidential rematch came in 1956 when Republican president Dwight D. Eisenhower again defeated Adlai Stevenson, the Democratic opponent he had four years prior. Biden defeated Trump in the 2020 November elections, an outcome still challenged by the Republican leader.

Biden has faced only nominal opposition to become the Democratic nominee. Trump has defeated several Republicans in primary elections, including Indian-origin former UN Ambassador Nikki Haley.

## Russia ready for nuclear war if sovereignty threatened: Putin

Russian oil refineries again damaged; Moscow kills 234, staves off incursion

President Vladimir Putin said on Wednesday that Russia is ready to use nuclear weapons if its sov-ereignty or independence threatened, issuing another blunt warning to the West just days before an election in which he's all but certain to secure another six-year term. Ukraine struck Russian

oil refineries in a second day of heavy drone attacks on Wednesday, causing a fire at Rosneft's biggest refinery. A day after seriously damaging Lukoil's LKOH.MMNORSI refinery in Nizhny Novgorod, Ukrainian drone attacks hit refineries in the Rostov and Ryazan regions, Russian officials said.

The Russian defense ministry said on Tuesday night that Moscow's military and security forces killed 234 fighters while thwarting an incursion into Russian border regions earlier in the day. In a statement, the ministry blamed the attack on the 'Kyiv regime" and "Ukraine's terrorist formations, insisting that the Russian military and border forces were able to stop the att-ackers and avert a crossborder raid.

The Russian leader has repeatedly talked about his readiness to use nuclear weapons since launching a full-scale invasion of Ukraine on Feb 24, 2022. The most recent such threat came in his state-of-thenation address last month, when he warned the West that deepening its involve-ment in the fighting in Ukraine would risk a nuclear war.

Asked in an interview with Russian state television released early on Wednesday if he has ever considered using battlefield nuclear weapons in Ukraine, Putin responded that there has been no need for that. He also noted that he



Workers install anti-tank bulwarks, also known as dragon's teeth, at the construction site of a defence line in Kharkiv region, on Wednesday.

#### NATO ALLIES TOLD TO RAISE DEFENCE SPENDING FRANCE, GERMANY, POLAND TO IN WHITE HOUSE VISIT, POLISH PRESIDENT

**CALLS ON U.S. TO REPLENISH UKRAINE** 

Polish President Andrzej Duda used a joint White House visit with his political rival, Prime Minister Donald Tusk, on Tuesday to call on Nato allies to significantly increase defence spending and press a divided Washington to break its impasse over replenishing funds for Ukraine at a critical moment in the war in Europe.

**HOLD TALKS ON UKRAINE IN BERLIN** The leaders of France, Germany and Poland will hold urgent talks on Ukraine in Berlin on

Friday, Warsaw and Berlin said, as they seek to scrape together additional support for Kyiv.

#### AFTER UKRAINE CONTROVERSY, POPE AGAIN CONDEMNS 'MADNESS OF WAR'

Pope Francis issued a fresh condemnation of all wars on Wednesday, days after irking Kyiv and Western capitals for appearing to suggest that Ukraine should surrender and negotiate peace with its Russian invader. "Many young people, many young people go to die (in war). Let's pray to the Lord to give us the grace to overcome this madness of war, which is always a defeat," the pope said.

doesn't think that the world is heading for a nuclear war, describing US President Joe Biden as a veteran politician who fully understands the possible dangers of escalation.

Still, the remarks appeared to be a message to the West that he's prepared to use all means to protect his gains in Ukraine. Putin said in line with the country's security doctrine, Moscow is ready to use nuclear weapons in

ven't changed it, he said. In an apparent reference to Nato allies that support Kyiv, he also declared that the nations that say they case of a threat to the exishave no red lines regarding Russia should realise tence of the Russian state, our sovereignty and inde-pendence. All that is writthat Russia won't have any

ten in our strategy, we ha-

#### ATTACK ON **NAVALNY ALLY IN LITHUANIA**

Vilnius, March 13: Leonid Volkov, a close ally of late Russian opposition leader Alexei Navalny, was assaulted outside his home in Vilnius on Tuesday, an incident that sparked an uproar from the Li-

thuanian government. Volkov vowed to continue his struggle against President Vladimir Putin in a video posted on Tele-gram early on Wednesday after he was discharged from hospital.

"We will work and we will not give up," he said, adding that the attack, which left him with a broken arm, was a "characteristic bandit hello" from Putin's henchmen.

Volkov, 43, is one of Russia's most prominent opposition figures and was a close confidant of Navalny, working as the late leader's ex-chief of staff and as chair of his Anti-Corruption Foundation until 2023.

In his post on Wednesday, Volkov said he was struck 15 times on the leg during the attack. "The leg somehow is OK, it hurts to walk... However, I broke my arm," Volkov said on Wednesday. "They literal-ly wanted to make a schnitzel out of me," he added.

Navalny spokeswoman Kira Yarmysh earlier said that "someone broke a car window and sprayed tear gas in his eyes" before hitting him with a hammer.

Volkov's wife, Anna Biryukova, earlier shared photos of her husband's injuries on social media, including a black eye, a red mark on his forehead and blood on his leg, which had soaked through

**BICYCLE STABS** 

**TWO ISRAELIS** 

Jerusalem, March 13: A 15-

year-old Palestinian boy

riding a bicycle stabbed

two Israeli security per-

sonnel at a checkpoint in

the occupied West Bank

on Wednesday before he

was shot dead, police said.

around 8:15 am (0615

The attack occurred at



Pushpa Kamal Dahal

#### **PRACHANDA** WINS VOTE OF **CONFIDENCE**

Kathmandu, March 13: Nepal Prime Minister Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' on Wednesday secured a vote of confidence in Parliament, as the Himalayan country struggled to maintain political stability due to the frequent shifting of alliances.

'Prachanda', 69, a former guerilla leader belonging to the Communist Party of Nepal (Mao-ist Centre) — the third largest party in the House of Representatives (HoR) — received 157 votes in the 275-member lower house. Altogether 268 MPs were present during the voting.

A total of 110 votes were cast against him while one lawmaker abstained from voting. He needed 138 votes to win the trust vote, his third since assuming charge in Dec. 2022.

## Hamas member killed by Israel

Israeli drone strike on a car outside the southern Lebanese city of Tyre on Wednesday killed a member of Hamas from the Palestinian camp of Rashidieh, Israeli and Hamas officials said.

A Hamas source, speak ing to Reuters, identified the member as Hadi Mustafa but said he was not a senior figure. Hamas's Al Aqsa television said Mustafa was a leader of the group's armed wing. The Israeli military con-

firmed it had killed Mustafa in southern Lebanon and called him a "significant" Hamas operative alleging he was responsible for attacks against Israeli and Jewish targets around the world.

Two security sources said a Syrian man who was passing by on his motorcycle was also killed in the strike, after earlier saying that the two fatalities had been in Mustafa's car. All three sources said the drone, which they identified as Israeli, hovered in the air above the strike site for several minutes after it was carried out.

Hamas, the Palestinian faction that carried out a deadly incursion into southern Israel from the Gaza Strip on Oct. 7, also has a political and military pr-



Firefighters douse a burning car after it was hit in a reported Israeli drone attack in Lebanon's Nagoura near the border with Israel, on Wednesday.

### Gaza aid warehouse 'hit', scores wounded

Gaza Strip, March 13: The United Nations agency for Palestinian refugees said one of its aid warehouses in the war-ravaged Gaza Strip was "hit" on Wednesday, scores of people.

UNRWA warehouse/dis-

(southern Gaza) has been agency spokeswoman Juliette Touma said, adding there were "scores injured". "We do not yet have information on what wounding cores of people. exactly happened nor the "We can confirm that an number of staff impacted," she said.

esence in Lebanon, largely based in camps where Palestinian refugees have lived for decades. Lebanese armed group

Hezbollah launched rockets at Israel in Oct. in support of Hamas. Since then, Israel has been carrying

GMT) at the Tunnels checkpoint south of Jerusalem when the teenager arrived on a bicycle, the force said in a statement. "When security forces at the crossing attempted to check him, the terrorist drew a knife and began sttribution centre in Rafah

abbing the forces present at the scene," the police said. "An armed civilian guard immediately engaged with the terrorist, and simultaneously (Army) forces at the location responded with precise gunfire neutralising the terrorist." A female soldier and a civilian armed guard were wounded in the stabbing, the police said, adding their injuries were "mild to moderate'

Police later pronounced the attacker dead. -AFP

## CITIZENS' I SAFETY Rules, passed 523 to 46, will be fostering innovation on the continent

## EU Parliament adopts 'historic' rules on AI

Strasbourg, March 13: The European Parliament gave final approval on Wednesday to wide-ranging EU rules to govern artificial intelligence, including powerful systems OpenAI's ChatGPT.

Senior European Union officials say the rules, first proposed in 2021, will protect citizens from the possible risks of a technology developing at breakneck speed, while also fostering innovation on the conti-

Brussels has sprinted to pass the new law since OpenAI's Microsoft-backed ChatGPT arrived on the

ing a global AI race.

There was a burst of excitement for generative AI as ChatGPT wowed the world with its human-like capabilities — from digesting complex text to producing poems within seconds. or passing medical exams. Further examples of generative AI models include DALL-E and Midjourney, which produce images, while other models produce sounds from a simple input in daily language.

The far-reaching regulation passed with the support of 523 lawmakers in the European Parliament



The EU's 27 states are expected to endorse the text in April before the law is published in the EU's Official Journal in May or June. Agencies

with 46 voting against. The EU's 27 states are expected to endorse the June.

in Strasbourg, France, text in April before the law is published in the EU's Official Journal in May or

#### FTC CAN REOPEN META PRIVACY CASE IN SPITE OF \$5 BN FINE, COURT RULES

California, March 13: Meta facial recognition technol-META.O cannot stop the US Federal Trade Commission from reopening a probe into its Facebook unit's privacy practices for now, a US appeals court ruled, despite Meta's objections that it already paid a \$5 billion fine and agreed

to a range of safeguards.
The FTC wants to tighten an existing 2020 Facebook privacy settlement to ban profiting from minors' data and expand curbs on ogy. The agency has accused Meta of misleading parents about protections for children. The decision late on

Tuesday from the United States Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit was a setback for Meta, which had asked the court to freeze the FTC case while it pursues a separate lawsuit challenging the FTC's inquiry on constitutional grounds.

#### PAK TO ASK FOR **LONGER-TERM IMF BAILOUT**

Islamabad, March 13: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) will hold a second and last review of Pakistan's \$3 billion stand-by arrangement (SBA)this week, the finance ministry and the IMF said on Wednesday, during which the South Asian nation will ask for a new longerterm bailout.

The four-day review begins on Thursday, the ministry said in a statement, and if successful, will release a final tranche of around \$1.1 billion under a last-gasp rescue

#### OTHER STORIES

#### **Saveetha Oral Cancer Institute** helps fight oral cancer

Chennai: With the only inhouse chemoradiation units in India seamlessly integrated with its maxillofacial surgery department, Saveetha Öral Cancer Institute enables a highly coordinated treatment approach, tackling nearly 100 complex oral cancer cases annually. In the past five years, SOCI has provided free, life-saving treatment to nearly 200 patients every year, significantly impacting the commu-

nity's well-being. Recognising the critical role of early detection and financial accessibility, the institute offers free treatment to patients covered by the Chief Minister's Comprehensive Health Insurance Scheme and those facing financial hard-

Established in 1990 within the Saveetha Dental College, Saveetha Institute of Medical and Technical Sciences, Chennai SOCI has established itself as a leader in the fight against oral cancer.

While oral cancer has a 5year survival rate, SOCI has a track record of numerous patients defying those statistics and living well beyond the projected survival rate. This achievement is a direct result of their highly skilled team, personalized treatment plans, and unwavering focus on patient outcomes.

SCOI offers a comprehensive approach to oral cancer treatment, encompassing not only tumour removal but also reconstructive surgery to restore function and aesthetics utilising microvascular surgery to reconstruct the jaw, tongue, or other affected areas. This not only improves cosmetic outcomes but also enables patients to regain vital functions such as speech and swallowing.

They understand that cancer affects more than just the physical body. To support patients' physical, emotional, and social wellbeing, there are counselling services, support groups and a nutrient-rich diet for each admitted patient.

The plans ensure patients receive the essential nutrients to accelerate the healing process and maintain overall well-being The Institute stands as a beacon of hope for oral cancer patients, offering comprehensive care, advanced technology, and a commitment to social respon-

#### **Dolby Vision tech** revolutionising entertainment

AGE CORRESPONDENT

Dolby Vision, the cutting-edge technology known for its stunning visuals and dynamic picture quality, is reshaping the entertainment landscape worldwide. Since its inception, Dolby Vision has left an indelible mark on the silver screens, with over 1,400 Indian theatrical releases across seven languages since December 2012. Indian consumers can immerse themselves in these cinematic experiences in more than 950 Dolby Atmos-enabled screens spread across 250 cities in

Sameer Seth, Director of Marketing at Dolby Laboratories, India, empha-sized the transition of Dolby Vision from cinemas to television sets, marking a new era of enriched entertainment. Dolby Vision enhances every viewing experience with richer colours, brighter contrasts, and finer details, offering a deeper connection to characters and stories crafted by filmmakers and creatives.

From blockbuster movies to live sports and gaming, Dolby Vision's advanced highdynamic range technology image quality optimizes across various platforms and devices, ensuring a cinematic experience without compromise. Recognized with 12 Academy Awards and 17 Emmy Awards, Dolby continues to push boundaries in entertainment technology.

With major Hollywood studios adopting Dolby Vision and Dolby Atmos for premium entertainment, thousands of movies and TV episodes are now available for home viewing, delivering unparalleled visual and audio experiences. With over 6,000 Dolby Atmos enabled screens worldwide and a commitment to providing over 250 premium large format experiences through Dolby Cinema, Dolby Vision is undoubtedly shaping the future of entertainment.

## PROTESTERS WANT NEPAL KING BACK ON THRONE

Kathmandu: Sixteen years ago, mass protests in Nepal forced then-King Gyanendra Shah to give up the throne and clear the way for a republic. Now, a new wave of protest is trying to bring him back.

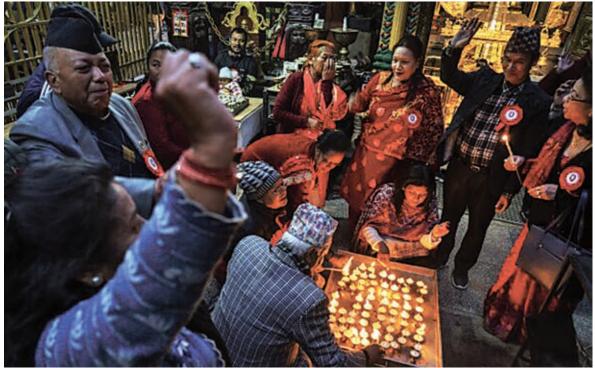
The capital of the Himalayan country is again teeming with demonstrators, this time demanding that Shah be reinstated as king and Hinduism brought back as a state religion. Royalist groups accuse the country's major political parties of corruption and failed governance and say people are frustrated with politicians.

"Come back king, save "Come back king, save the country. Long live our beloved king. We want a monarchy," the crowd chanted at a rally last month in Kathmandu.

Growing frustration with the present system has led to calls for radical

has led to calls for radical change. Pro-monarchy rallies have been growing larger, and an increasing number of homes and businesses are displaying portraits of the ex-king and his ancestors.

Gyanendra was a constitutional head of state without executive or political powers until 2005, when he seized absolute power. He disbanded the government and parliament, jailed politicians and journalists and cut off



Protesters light candles to bring back King Gyannendra to the throne of Nepal.

ing a state of emergency and using the army to rule

the country.

Protests that drew hundreds of thousands of people forced him to give up power to the parliament in parliament voted to abolish the monarchy and Gyanendra left the Royal Palace to live the life of a

But many Nepalis have and grown frustrated with the republic, saying it has failed to bring about political stability and blaming it for a struggling economy and widespread corruption. Nepal has had 13 governments since the monar-

chy was abolished in 2008. Many Nepalis believe elected politicians are thousands rallied in sup-more interested in power port of the king in

addressing their problems, said Dhruba Adhikary, an independent analyst based Kathmandu. "That's why some people started to think that, well, it was far

chy," he said. In November, tens of

better under the monar-

Kathmandu, where riot police officers used batons and tear gas to halt them from marching to the centre of the capital.

Kings were long considered reincarnations of the god Vishnu in the majoritv-Hindu nation. "The ty-Hindu nation. "The king is the umbrella that is really needed to block and protect (the country) from

Nepal by countries like India, China or America," said Rudra Raj Pandey, who was among the protesters at last month's

"Our country will retain its values and identity only if it is turned back to a monarchy and the king is reinstated to the throne," he said. But the movement is too small to prevail any time soon, Adhikary said.

With polls and surveys rarely conducted in Nepal, it's not clear how many people support the monarchy. Gyanendra was an unpopular king, but the monarchy remained broadly popular before he seized absolute power.

The country's major political parties have rejected the possibility of the king returning to power. "Nepal is a republic and the monarchy will never be reinstated," said Narayan Prakash Saud of Nepali Congress, which led the revolt against the kind in 2006 and is currently the largest party in parliament. "The only way it would be possible would be through changing the constitution, but there is

pening at all.' The most powerful group supporting restoration of the monarchy is the Prajatantra

no possibility of that hap-

ence that is being put on Party, or national democratic party, which was founded in the 1990s by allies of the monarchy. It has 14 seats in parliament — around 5% — but wields outsize influence as a representative of the protest movement.

Party leaders met with the prime minister in February and presented their demands. "I think it is very possible and the environment throughout the country has never been so congenial for this agenda," said Rabindra Mishra, deputy chairman of the party. "If we can't restore the institution of the monarchy in this country, there is no future for the youth in this country and the existence of this country itself could be at risk," he said.

Gyanendra himself hasn't commented on the movement. He has stayed out of open involvement in politics since his abdication, and only rarely makes public appearances. Nepal's monarchy did

not allow political parties to form until 1990, when a pro-democracy movement brought in elections and reduced the monarchy to a ceremonial Gyanendra became king after his elder brother, then-King Birendra, and his family were killed in a massacre at the royal

palace in 2001.

## Hyundai launches Creta N Line

AGE CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI

Hyundai Motor India Ltd. (HMIL) has launched the much awaited the sporty and exhilarating perform-

ance-inspired SUV Hyundai CRETA N Line. Building on the success and legacy of the brand CRETA, Hyundai CRETA N Line, will break the monotony in the mid-size SUV segment with its track inspired aesthetics and dynamic driving experience for the thrill-seekers. The Hyundai N Line portfolio signifies a perfect balance of distinctive N Line design language, tuned dynamics and statetechnology, promising a compelling journey every time you take the wheel.

Speaking at the launch, Mr. Un Soo Kim, MD & CEO, Hyundai Motor India Ltd., said, "Hyundai Motor India has cemented its position as a pioneer in

**FAKE ROLEX** 

**SHEDS LIGHT** 

**FRAUD** 

**'PRINCE' TRIAL** 

**ON ELABORATE** 

futuristic technology, revolutionising the Indian automobile Industry. With benchmark products, we are continuously working towards amplifying the mobility experience and delighting customers with exceptional offerings. The launch of sporty and performance-oriented Hyundai CRETA N Line aims to fuel dreams and aspirations of customers.

We not only meet cus-tomers' aspirations, but surpass them. We have been pioneers in bringing new technology and features to the Indian automobile industry. In the last 27 years, Hyundai Mobility India has made significant strides in india automobile markets. We have challenged the state of school all along the way, he said. Capitalising on the popu-

larity and legacy of the brand CRETA, The Hyundai CRETA N Line will strengthen Hyundai's

Frenchman accused of

making millions selling

fake luxury watches is put-

ting the spotlight on an

elaborate commerce of lucrative replicas spanning

Nicknamed "the prince of fake," Julien V. has freely

admitted to running a net-

work of fake watch sales into France from Thailand

N line portfolio and profoundly resonate with the ambitions of new age Indian buyers. We are confident that with the launch of Hyundai CRETA N Line, we will further elevate fun driving experiences and fulfil requirements of thrill-seekingadventure enthusiasts."

The Performance Inspired SUV – Hyundai CRETA N Line draws inspiration from the high-performance world of WRC, the vehicle promises an exhilarating driving experience. Its charismatic exterior boasts a distinctive N Line-specific sporty front grille adorned with the emblem, accompanied by a new front bumper design featuring bold red inserts. The commanding rear view is accentuated by a sporty skid plate with matching red inserts and a dynamic twin-tip exhaust system, ensuring

between 2019 and 2022, before being arrested. He told investigators that contractors in China produced up to 10 watches per day for him - most of them fakes of luxury Swiss brand Rolex resulting in total sales of 12,000 watches for a turnover of \$3.3 million.

a thrilling ride.

However, a watch expert quoted in the Nice-Matin newspaper, Michel Vittini,

Enhanced agility and confidence are delivered through sportier suspension and steering, ensuring superior handling and responsiveness for a spirited drive. Revolutionising the driving experience, the Hyundai CRETA N Line integrates cutting-edge technology seamlessly, featuring a curvilinear 10.25-inch HD infotainment system and digital cluster offering essential

ADAS alerts and displays. With over 70 Bluelink connected car features, connectivity reaches new heights, elevating the driving experience for customers. Safety is paramount, with 42 standard satety teatures and over 70 advanced safety features ensuring peace of mind on every journey. As an exclusive offering, the CRETA N Line boasts a Dashcam\* with Dual Camera, adding an extra layer of delight for customers.

said he believed Julien V. sold "at least 50,000" fake Rolexes.

Some of them appear to have been virtually indistinguishable from the real thing, with Julien V. claiming that he could "make it completely real, or completely fake" depending on "what makes the customer happy".



### Tulip in Netherlands named after Indian-American diplomat

**Washington:** A tulip in the Netherianus named after Indian-diplomat Netherlands has been Shefali Razdan Duggal, the US Ambassador to the country, for advocating for gender equity, as it celebrated International Women's Day. Tulipa Shefali comes from Maveridge International's breeding programme in St. Maarten and grew out of a years-long project for strong and healthy tulips, a media release said.

"It is a genuine and surreal honour to be included

LILY GLADSTONE DIDN'T LOSE

amongst such a remarkable group of individuals who have received this recognition. The tulip is a beautiful flower which has been cherished and loved for centuries and so positively represents the Netherlands," I Duggal 50 Razdan Duggal, 52, said. "Throughout history,

women have been forced to overcome gender bias and discrimination, and we have worked hard and continue to work hard to each milestone. We do this for ourselves and for

future generations of women to be seen, to be heard, to be included and to be empowered," Razdan Duggal said. Tulip breeding is a long-

endeavour. term Accordingly, the origin of the Shefali tulip dates back to 2009. One of the crosses in the project was Tulipa Lucky Strike with a strong cutting tulip, a media release Duggal is an advocate for inclusive women's rights and is an "International Gender Champion".

#### **EMMA STONE WON**

the globe.

Angeles: Academy Awards were full of sure-things, long-awaited anointments and easy predictions. "Oppenheimer" romp. Ryan Gosling's Ken steal-

ing the show. That put even more focus on the category that was hardest to call: best actress.

When Emma Stone was announced as the winner, a ceremony light on surprise got a genuine shock, perfectly illustrated by Stone's stunned expression. Stone's win, for her sensational performance in "Poor Things," was hard not to cast as a defeat for Lily Gladstone. The "Killers of the Flower Moon" actress had been picked by most prognosticators and — as everyone knew — history hung in the balance. Her win would have been the first for a Native American in the nearly century-long history of the Oscars.

It was difficult to define the result. It wasn't quite an upset — Stone's performance, equally favored, was too good to call it that. But it still stung, particu-

larly for Native Americans watching across the country – a community that has watched Hollywood for most of its existence overlook its stories and performers. One thing you couldn't call

it, though, was a loss for

Gladstone. 'Lily Gladstone has undeniably left an indelible mark, breaking barriers and inspiring countless individuals with her remarkable presence and commitment to story-

telling," cheered Blackfoot Confederacy, a Tribal Council for the Blackfoot Confederacy Nations of Kainai-Blood Siksika, Peigan-Piikani and Aamskapi Pikuni. "Her representation is a source of pride for the Confederacy, Blackfoot Blackfoot Confederacy, The Osage Nation, and all indigenous communities. resonating far beyond the confines of a single cere-

Throughout awards season, Gladstone has been a figure of rare grace, speaking eloquently on behalf of her tribe, the Osage, Native American representation



Hollywood history. More than any other nominated performer on Sunday night, she carried the hopes and dreams of a peo-

"This is for every little rez kid," Gladstone said, accepting her Golden Globe award in January. "Every little urban kiď, every little Native kid out there who has a dream, who is seeing themselves

represented and our stories told by ourselves in our own words, with tremendous allies and tremendous trust with and from each other."

Gladstone, born in Montana and raised in the Blackfeet Nation, was the first Indigenous performer to win that award, for best actress in a drama - just one of the many "firsts" that she achieved leading

up to the Oscars. She likewise made history at the Screen Actors Guild Awards, where she won best female actor in a leading role. Those wins along with the devastating empathy and poise of her performance in "Killers of the Flower Moon" — were more than enough to leave cheering Gladstone's milestone accomplishments.

Lily Gladstone, from the Osage tribe, was the oevrwhelming people's favourite for the Best Actress Oscar. She remained graceful as the prize went to Emma Stone.

Gladstone, you y won," Peggy 'Lily already won," Peggy Flanagan, Minnesota's Lieutenant Governor and a member of the White Earth Band of Ojibwe, wrote on X. "You bring all of us into every room you enter. We see ourselves in you every day – thank you for taking us along on this journey with you. We can dream bigger than we ever thought because of you." Gladstone's SAG award was a big reason some expected her to win at the Oscars. It's the most predictive awards for acting prizes. All of the other SAG winners — Cillian Murphy, Da'Vine Joy Randolph, Robert Downey Jr. — won Sunday. In the two previous years, the SAG winners have exactly

But Stone also won at the BAFTAs and at the Globes, where "Poor Things" was slotted into the comedy or musical categories. At the Oscars, it was clear academy voters were more passionate about "Poor sionate about "Poor Things" than "Killers of the Flower Moon." "Poor Things" took home four awards, second most to "Oppenheimer," while "Killers of the Flower Moon" was shut out. Martin Scorsese could be seen consoling Gladstone after the ceremony ended. The 81-year-old director knows something about Oscar disappointment. Scorsese, remarkably, has won only one Academy Awards (for directing "The Departed"), and he's sat through numerous cere-

Academy Awards.

monies only to see his much-nominated films including "Taxi Driver,"
"Gangs of New York,"
"The Wolf of Wall Street" and "The Irishman" leave with nothing. His last two features have gone 0-for-20 at the Academy Awards, easily a record.

## THURSDAY | 14 MARCH 2024 | NEW DELHI

INDICATO	RS	%	
Sensex	72,761.89	-1.23	
Nifty 50	21,997.70	-1.51	
S&P 500*	5,172.08	-0.06	
Dollar (₹)	82.85	-0.08	
Pound Sterling (₹)	105.86	0.01	
Euro (₹)	90.51	-0.02	
Gold (10gm)* (₹)	65,769 <b>▼</b> 288	0.44	
Brent crude (\$/bbl)*	83.36	1.76	
IN 10-Yr bond yield	7.039	0.012	
US 10-Yr T-bill yield*	4.182	0.027	
* As of 8:30 PM IST			

#### **SJVN** receives LOI for 500 MW solar project

SJVN Green Energy has received a letter of intent from Guiarat Uria Vikas Nigam Ltd (GUVNL) for a 500 MW solar project entailing an investment of ₹2,700 crore. The project is to be developed at Gujarat Industries Power Company solar park, Khavda. The power purchase agreement shall be executed with GUVNL after adoption of tariff (₹2.54 /unit) by Gujarat electricity regulatory commission, SJVN said.



#### **NHAI** advises Paytm users to get new FASTags

NHAI has advised Paytm FASTag users to obtain a new FASTag from another bank before March 15 to ensure a smooth travel experience and avoid inconvenience at toll plazas, an official statement said. This will help avoid penalties or double fee charges while commuting on national highways, as per the statement. NHAI also advised Paytm FASTag users to reach out to their respective banks.

### KMEW gets work order of ₹100 cr for maintenance

Knowledge Marine and Engineering Works (KMEW) on Wednesday said it has secured a work order of about ₹100 crore from the inland waterways authority of India (IWAI). The letter of award (LoA) from inland waterways authority of India is for the maintenance of the Farakka-Kahalgaon stretch of National Waterway-1 of river Ganga, the company said. The contract is valued at the ₹98.06

#### Meesho to buy ₹200-crore worth employee stocks

Meesho said it will spend ₹200 crore to buyback shares from about 1.700 former as well as existing employees. Eligible current and ex-employees across the spectrum can voluntarily participate in this program, the company said. "We persist in providing opportunities for wealth creation and nurture a culture of growth within the organisation," Ashish Kumar Singh, CHRO, Meesho said.

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Dholera unit to spend ₹91,000 cr; to make 50K wafers a month

## **Chips from Tata plant** in Dec.'26: Vaishnaw

Dholera (Gujarat), March 13: The first set of semi-conductors will start rolling out from Tata Electronics' plant here in December 2026, union minister for communications and IT Ashwini Vaishnaw said Wednesday.

Speaking at the ground-breaking ceremony of Tata Group and CG Power chip plants, Vaishnaw said India will be among the top five chip ecosystems in the world by 2029.

"The first chip from Dholera plant will be out in December 2026 and chip from Micron plant will be out by December 2024," the minister said.

He said Tata's Dholera plant will make chips in 28, 50, 55 nanometer node. Prime Minister Modi Narendra Wednesday laid the foun-

SANGEETHA G

CHENNAI, MARCH 13

E-commerce exports from

India, which currently account for \$2 billion,

have a potential to grab a

larger share of the \$8 tril-

lion global B2C e-commerce market by the end of this decade if regulato-

ry policies are supportive,

As the majority of min-

istry of micro, small and

(MSME) exporters are

generating revenues of

enterprises

finds Niti Aayog.

dation of three chip plants two units by

technologies. Electronics and the third involve an investment of by CG Power -- entailing total investment of ₹1.26 ₹91,000 crore. The Centre will contribute 50 per cent

lakh crore. The three plants include the country's first hightech chip manufacturing plant of Tata Electronics which the company is set-ting up in partnership with Taiwan's Powerchip Semiconductor Manufacturing Corp at Dholera's special industrial region.

around ₹1 crore, it will be

feasible for them to utilise

e-commerce as that would

exports stands at \$2 bil-

lion, which is 0.5 per cent

of the country's exports and 0.25 per cent of the global B2C e-commerce

exports. This is largely

due to the lack of aware-

ness about the channel

and the regulatory poli-

cies that do not adequately

support the nature of the

lower their customer

acquisition cost.

India's

The plant will have the

e-commerce

aging technologies, including flip chip and integrated system in package Assam. capacity to produce 50,000 wafers per month and

of the capex on pari passu basis. These chips driven by advanced technology will cater to multiple sectors -power management chips for electric vehicles (EV), telecom, defence, automotive, consumer electronics, display, and power

TSAT will develop

indigenous advanced

semiconductor pack-

electronics. Semiconductor is a foundational industry touch-

ing almost every aspect of life, powering everything from fridge to ACs and cars, aircraft to trains. The PM also laid the foundation of another new assembly and test facility of Tata Electronics in Jagiroad,

Tata's Assam facility will be built with an investment of ₹27,000 cr and is expected to generate over 27,000 direct and indirect jobs in the region. Notably, this will be India's first semiconduc-

tor unit in the Northeast. Tata Semiconductor Assembly and Test (TSAT) will develop indigenous advanced semiconductor packaging technologies, including flip chip and integrated system in package (ISIP) technologies. with a capacity of 48 million chips per day. -PTI

## E-commerce exports from India set to grow: Niti

E-COMMERCE **EXPORTS** have the potential to grow to \$350 billion accounting for one-third of its exports, as global B2C ecommerce market

expands to \$8 trn.

is an immense potential for India to significantly e-commerce exports in the coming years," said Niti Aayog. Projections indicate that

e-commerce exports have the potential to grow to \$350 billion accounting for one-third of its exports, as global B2C e-commerce market expands to \$8 trn.

In order to boost e-commerce exports, it is essential to create distinction between exporter on record and seller on record, allow reduction in invoice value without any percentage ceiling for all ecommerce exports, introduce annual financial reconciliation process for e-

CEA: Retail investors playing risky F&0



#### **CABINET APPROVES INDIA-BHUTAN** MOUs FOR PETROL, **LUBRICANT SUPPLY**

FC CORRESPONDENT NEW DELHI, MARCH 13

The union cabinet on Wednesday approved the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Bhutan government for the supply of petroleum, oil, lubricants (POL) and related products from India to Bhutan.

The government said that the move aims to benefit India with improved economic and commercial linkages with Bhutan.

"The MoU will promote bilateral trade in the hydrocarbon sector and will ensure a secure and long-term supply of petroleum products to Bhutan,' the government said.

Besides, it also approved another MoU between India and Bhutan on extending co-operation in the field of energy efficiency and energy conservation measures

The cabinet also approved signing of an agreement between two neighbouring nations in the area of food safety to facilitate trade meeting the requirements of Indian regulator.

"The move would promote ease of doing business and will reduce compliance costs for both sides," the government



#### New Delhi, March 13: Investment has become a major driver of India's booming economy, according to economists at Morgan Stanley, adding that the country's current expansion resembles that of the mid-2000s when growth averaged more

than 8 per cent.
The economists also said the economy appears to have room for even further expansion, given the path for additional capital expenditure, especially from private businesses, rising exports and a more stable economy.

After declining for a decade, India's investment as a percentage of gross domestic product is steadily climbing and could reach 36 per cent by 2027 from a recent low of 28 per cent in 2021, economists including Chetan Ahya wrote in a note.

The upswing mirrors the period from 2003-2007, when India's investment ratio rose to 39 per cent,

they said.
"We see a long runway ahead for the current expansion cycle," economists said. India, the world's fastest-

growing major economy, logged a growth rate of 8.4 per cent in the final three months of last year.

However, a more representative measure of growth that stripped out one-off items showed a slowdown, raising questions about the sustainability of India's growth path.

Economists at Societe Generale also wrote that



#### INDIA'S INVESTMENT as a percentage of gross domestic product is steadily climbing and could reach 36 per cent

low of 28 per cent in major growth driver for

by 2027 from a recent

India's economy.

They added that they see early signs of a revival in private capital expenditure, signalling that investment appears to be expanding beyond just

public capex.
Separately, India's top economic adviser said there were sustained signs of capital formation that may help the economy expand more than 7 per cent in the fiscal year beginning in April. The investment drive has lifted key stocks.

The S&P BSE industrials index, which includes manufacturers of bridges. helicopters, and wind turbines, has risen over 71 per cent in the past year, increasing the collective market value of its more than 200 members by more than \$175 billion.

## FinMin asks PSU banks to review gold loan portfolio game, losing focus on capital formation

New Delhi, March 13: The directed all state-owned banks to review their gold loan portfolio as instances of non-compliance with regulatory norms nave been noticed by the gov-

department financial services (DFS) a communication addressed to heads of public sector banks has asked them to look at their system and processes related to gold loan.
"We have asked banks to

undertake a comprehensive review of the gold loan business," financial services secretary Vivek Joshi said. A directive in this

regard was issued last month advising them to fix anomalies relating to collection of fees and interest and closure of gold loan accounts.

The letter flagged various concerns, including disbursement of gold loans without requisite gold collateral, anomalies regarding collection of fees and repayment in

The DFS urged banks to undertake a thorough review of the last twoyear period from Jan. 2022 to Jan. 2024 so as to ensure that all gold loans were disbursed in compliance with regulatory require-



ments and internal policies of banks.

It is to be noted that the price of the yellow metal has surged to a record level. Price of 10 gm gold in the last one month has jumped from ₹63,365 to

According to the letter, the department has come across instances of noncompliance regarding the gold loan portfolio and hence issued the advisory. As per the RBI norms, banks or gold loan finance

firms can provide only 75 per cent of the value of the jewellery. However, relaxation was provided during the Covid period to mitigate hard-

The RBI had increased the permissible Loan to Value (LTV) for loans sanctioned by banks against pledges of gold ornaments and jewellery for non-agricultural purposes to 90 per cent from 75 per cent in August 2020. This relaxation was available till March 2021.

#### Mumbai, March 13: Chief economic advisor V Anantha Nageswaran on Wednesday said he is 'worried" futures and options (F&O)

over retail investors' play in risky segment in search of instant profits. Speaking at a conference organised by capital markets regulator Sebi and

NISM, Nageswaran said the biggest threat to sustainable capital formation and also sustainable economic growth is the "short-termism" in attitudes that the country is afflicted with.

Bemoaning the "furore" caused every time there is a discussion on allowing corporate groups to promote banks despite the need for capital in a growing economy, Nageswaran said India Inc needs to reflect on the state of corporate governance practices and analyse its own conduct. "The biggest risk for sustained capital formation and sustained economic growth is in our

short-termism," he said. He added that it is "puzzling" to see that a country otherwise blessed with a "deep spiritual heritage and wisdom" is actually interpreting mindfulness and living in the present

in the wrong ways. Nageswaran rued that even now, people are men-



tioning handsome growth in F&O volumes, despite Sebi's own studies suggesting that 90 per cent of trades in the riskier segment leading to losses for

investors. "Our actions make me worry that we may be interpreting mindfulness and living in the present as being myopic," he said, making it clear that those two concepts stress on performing one's duty and obligations without thinking about the fruits of the

actions. He said there is a need to change the outlook from a behavioural perspective to achieve goals like longterm capital formation

and growth. Nageswaran rued that there is an "adversarial" attitude among stakeholders when it comes to regulators, wherein people overlook the fact a regulator's job is to have a longterm view of things and 'providing counterbalance for instant gratification or myopia".

### MARKETS DOWN ON SELLING PRESSURE, INVESTORS POORER BY ₹13.4 LAKH CR

Mumbai, March Equity benchmark index Sensex on Wednesday crashed over 900 points to sink below the 73 000 level due to widespread selling pressure amid a sharp fall in smallcap and midcap indices.

Investors became poorer by ₹13.47 lakh crore in single day Wednesday amid heavy selling in the equity mar-

Besides, deep losses in utility, energy and metal stocks and recent selling by foreign investors added to the gloom, analysts said.

Benchmark indices started the session on a positive note, but the selling intensified during afternoon trade, with all sectoral indices ending in the red.

The 30-share index tanked 906.07 points or 1.23 per cent to settle at 72,761.89. During the day,

"The focus that the regulators have is to ensure that we stay stronger for longer rather than get caught up in the euphoria of our growth rates, mar-



it dropped 1,152.25 points or 1.56 per cent to 72,515.71

The Nifty plummeted 338 points or 1.51 per cent to 21.997.70.

"In contrast to the global uptrend, the unfavourable risk-reward balance of mid and smallcap stocks, fuelled by prolonged premium valuations, has aggravated the downfall. Other than the premium valuation no fundamental issue is noticed to drawback the long-term growth image of domestic midcaps, said Vinod Nair, head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

ket valuations," he said. He said the economy is likely to grow 7 per cent in FY25, third year in a row when the GDP has grown at over 7 per cent. — PTI

#### ₹500-CR SCHEME New Delhi. March 13: The central government on Wednesday announced a new scheme to promote emobility in the country with an outlay of ₹500

**E-MOBILITY GETS** 

**GOVT PUSH WITH** 

crore for four months oeginning Aprii tili July The new scheme is for 2wheelers and 3-wheelers. Announcing electric-

mobility promotion scheme 2024 (EMPS 2024), heavy industries minister Mahendra Nath Pandey said the government is committed to promoting e-mobility in the country. Under the scheme, a support of up to ₹10,000 per 2-wheeler will be provided. The aim is to pro-

3.33 lakh 2-wheelers The scheme will be for four months till July 2024,

vide support for about

the minister said. A support of up to ₹25,000 will be given for purchase of small threewheelers (e-rickshaw and e-carts). More than 41,000 such vehicles will be provided the incentive under the scheme. The financial support will be up to ₹50,000 on purchase of a

large three-wheeler. The ministry and Indian Institute of Technology, Roorkee signed a memorandum of understanding to work together to encourage innovation and advance the automotive and electric vehicle (EV) sector.

**NEW** | CHOICES

## Overall leasing across formats stood at 0.6 million sq ft in 2023 Luxury brands eye high street retail spaces

New Delhi, March 13: Luxury brands preferred high street retail locations over shopping malls to open their stores during the last calendar year, according to a CBRE and

PHDCCI report. Real estate consultant CBRE and PHD chamber of commerce and industry released their joint report 'The Ascent of Indian 'Luxe RE' that highlights luxury retail leasing patterns across various retail formats from 2022 to 2023. "In 2023, stores across

streets, typically



• THE LUXURY sector, which saw a significant increase in leasing in 2023, shows a promising trend with the entry and expansion of international brands.

open marketplaces in a prominent area with a strong retail presence, remained the top choice for luxury brands in India's top eight cities," CBRE said. Luxury brands leased 0.3

million square feet of space in the high street store formats, registering over 100 per cent Y-o-Y (year-on-year) increase. Leasing of retail space by luxury brands in malls stood at 0.24 million sq ft

during 2023, up 300 per cent Y-o-Y. Leasing in standalone stores by luxury brands

stood at 0.1 million square feet last year, registering a jump of over 200 per cent The overall leasing by luxury brands across the

formats stood at 0.6 million square feet in 2023, at almost 170 per cent Y-o-Y growth.

While high streets constituted a 45 per cent share in the overall luxury retail leasing in 2023, luxury brands' stores in malls followed at 40 per cent and

standalone stores accounted for the remaining 15 per cent.

Anshuman Magazine, chairman and chief executive officer, India, CBRE, said, "India's reputation as a sought-after tourist destination and increasing international exposure have significantly influenced the demand for

luxury retail." The luxury sector, which saw a significant increase in leasing in 2023, shows a promising trend with the entry and expansion of international brands, he

## Spotify rolls out videos to grow subscriber base

Bengaluru, March 13: Swedish music streaming company Spotify is rolling out full-length music videos in a limited beta launch for premium subscribers.

Music videos will be available to premium users in the UK, Germany, Italy, Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, Brazil, Colombia, Philippines, Indonesia, and Kenya, in beta start-ing on Wednesday, the company said, as it attempts to grow its user

While it aims to reach 1

billion users by Spotify's new plan faces competition from Apple Music and Alphabet's YouTube, which allows users to watch music videos for free.

Spotify's roll-out will include a "limited catalogue of music videos, including hits from global artists like Ed Sheeran, it said In February, it forecast

subscribers premium would reach 239 million in the current quarter, above the estimates of 238.3 mil-— Reuters

New Delhi, March 13:

Rishabh Pant will soon be back on the field 14

months after surviving a life-threatening car accident and ahead of that moment, the wicket-

keeper-batter is "nerv-

ous" like a debutant all over again. Pant was

cleared to play the IPL by the BCCI on Tuesday.

His team Delhi Capitals

will open its IPL cam-

paign against Punjab

Kings in Mohali on

He met with a horrific car crash in December,

2022, while driving to his

home in Roorkee. He suf-

fered multiple injuries

and a ligament recon-

struction surgery had to be performed on his

right knee. He was also

left to nurse a fractured

"I am excited and nerv-

ous at the same time. It feels like I am going to

make my debut again,

said Pant in a Delhi

Capitals release. The 26-year-old underwent an extensive reha-

bilitation and recovery

process at the National

Cricket Academy follow-

"To be able to play cricket again after everything I've been

through is nothing short

of a miracle. I'm grate-

ful to all my well-wish-

ers and fans, and most importantly, the BCCI and staff at NCA. All

their love and support

continues to give me immense strength," said

On joining the Delhi

Capitals pre-season camp, Pant added, "I am

excited to return to

Delhi Capitals and the

IPL — a tournament I enjoy so much. Our team

owners and support staff

have been by my side

throughout with their

full support, guidance

and co-operation at every step, for which I am deeply grateful."

with my DC family and

play in front of the fans

again."
Pant will be expected

to bat as well as keep

wickets with the BCCI

declaring him fit as a

The southpaw was present at the Capitals table during the IPL auc-

The big-hitting player

has appeared in 33 Tests, 30 ODIs and 66 T20 Internationals for India.

BAIRSTOW TO PLAY FULL IPL SEASON

England batter Jonny

Bairstow will be avail-

able for the entire dura-

tion of the Indian

ning March 22, despite

returning home only recently following a long

On the sidelines of the

Dharamsala Test, the

Premier League

Test tour of India.

wicketkeeper-batter.

tion last year.

"I can't wait to re-unite

ing the accident.

wrist and ankle.

March 23.

#### SHORT TAKES

#### **Ashwin replaces Bumrah at top**

Dubai: A nine-wicket haul in his 100th Test match helped Indian off-spinner Ravichandran Ashwin re-claim the top spot in the bowlers' list, while his captain Rohit Sharma was back in the top-10 at sixth in the batting charts of the latest ICC rankings on Wednesday. Ashwin was at his best throughout the Dharamsala contest against England as the experienced right-armer picked up four wickets in the first innings and then a 36th five-wicket haul in the second innings as India cruised to a dominant triumph

in the fifth and final Test of their series. The big haul helped Ashwin move past teammate Jasprit Bumrah into the premier posi-tion that he previously held earlier this year, the ICC said in a

Rohit, who smashed a hundred in Dharmsala, rose five places to sixth and within 108 rating points of No.1 ranked Test bat ter Kane Williamson. - PTI

#### **Rachin youngest to** get Hadlee medal

Christchurch: The biggest find of New Zealand's World Cup campaign in India, Rachin Ravindra on Wednesday became the youngest recipient of the Sir Richard Hadlee Medal after becoming the country's best male cricketer of the year.Among women, Melie Kerr grabbed the major prizes at the New Zealand Cricket Awards. Kane Williamson was recognised for his outstanding form in the Test arena with the ANZ Test Player of the Year Award, and winning the Redpath Cup for men's first-class batting. At 24, Ravindra is the youngest winner in the award's history,

Zealand's red and white ball After breaking into the side in March last year, Ravindra shone in the ODI World Cup in India, scoring 578 runs at an average of 64, including three centuries and two half-centuries, including an unbeaten 123 in the tournament opener against England

after a season that's seen him

become a mainstay of New

in Ahmedabad. As a result, Ravindra was named as the ICC's Emerging Player of the Year for 2023, and also secured a \$350,000 Indian Premier League contract with Chennai Super Kings. - PT

#### No direct foreign ties for states

New Delhi: The BCCI is set to bar state associations from directly engaging with foreign boards for organising training camps and competitions, making it mandatory for them to

route all such proposals through the parent body. The decision will be taken at the board's Apex Council meeting on March 18.

The BCCI was forced to take the decision after a host of state units, including the Delhi and Puducherry, held talks with foreign boards, mainly the associate nations, for hosting them on exposure trips. It could be confirmed that Delhi

and Districts Cricket Association has received a proposal from the Nepal board. "State units can surely partner foreign boards for cricket related activities but those agreements have to be facilitated by the BCCI as it is the parent body. All proposals must go through BCCI," said a BCCI

source. - PTI **Narwal dominates** 

## with two silvers

New Delhi: Star Indian para shooter Manish Narwal won a silver medal each in the men's 10m air pistol (SH1) individual and team events at the WSPS Para Shooting World Cup here on Wednesday. Narwal shot 236.7 to finish behind Chao Yang of China (240.3), who claimed the top step on the podium while Korea's Jeongdu Jo of Korea settled for the bronze (214.7) in individual section. The World Champion para shooter then joined forces with Rudransh Khandelwal and Sanjeev Giri to fetch the silver in the P1 men's team 10m air pistol (SH1) event. Earlier, Narwal had shot 574 to finish third in the qualification round while Khandelwal (564), Giri (559) and Singhraj (546)

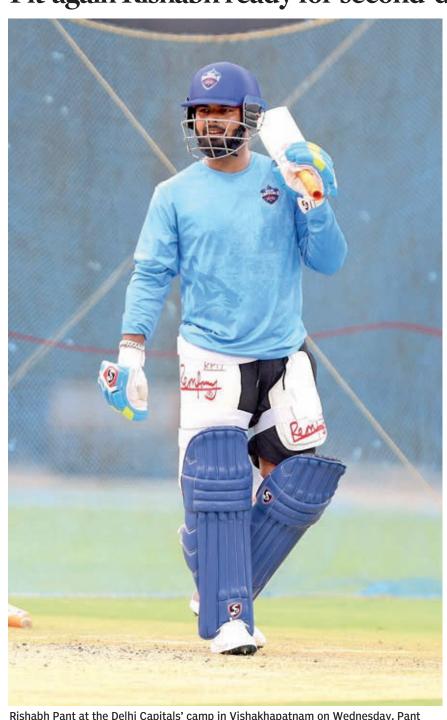
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# PANT 2.0!

### Fit-again Rishabh ready for second 'debut' in IPL



Rishabh Pant at the Delhi Capitals' camp in Vishakhapatnam on Wednesday. Pant took part in the team's first training session for the 2024 IPL season. — Delhi Capitals

#### **SHAMI PROVIDES INJURY UPDATE AFTER SURGERY**

New Delhi, March 13: His stitches removed after a surgery to fix an injured ankle, senior India pacer Mohammed Shami on Wednesday said he was looking forward to the next phase of his "healing journey". The pacer, who took 24 wickets in the 2023 ODI World Cup, missed the five-match Test series against England recently and will also sit out of the IPL after having undergone surgery for an ankle injury last month.

"Hello everyone! I wanted to provide an update on my recovery process. It has been 15 days since my surgery, and I recently had my stitches removed. I am thankful for the advancements and looking forward to the next stage of my healing jour-ney," Shami wrote on 'X' along with three photo-

graphs. The 33-year-old Shami has been missing in action since the ODI World Cup last year.

Shami, who was one of the architects of India's stupendous World Cup campaign, played through pain as he had problems with his landing but didn't let it affect his performance.

Shami has 229 Test, 195
ODI and 24 T20 wickets
in his decade-long career. Along with Prasidh Krishna, Shami was on Tuesday rule out of the upcoming IPL and is also set to miss this year's T20 World Cup.

**WOMEN'S PREMIER | LEAGUE** 

## DC secure direct entry into final

New Delhi, March 13: The big-hitting Shafali Verma led the way with a blazing 37-ball 71 as a dominant Delhi Capitals secured direct qualification into the final of the Women's Premier League with a seven-wicket hammering of Gujarat Giants here on

Wednesday.
Table-toppers Delhi
Capitals entered the game looking to bag a direct spot in the final and once their bowlers restricted Giants to 126 for 9 with a disciplined show at the Arun Jaitley Stadium, the hosts inched closer to realising their goal.

In the final on Sunday, the Capitals will play the winners of the eliminator between Mumbai Indians and Royal Challengers Bangalore.

Shafali struck a flurry of boundaries, including hitting as many as five sixes and seven fours, to help her side complete the chase of 127 without much ado.

Delhi finished the game with as many as 41 balls remaining.

Shafali reached her fifty in just 28 balls. She got to the landmark with a four over extra cover off Mannat Kashyap. The duo of Shafali and

Jemimah Rodrigues (38 not out) then bludgeoned Meghna Singh for 20 runs, and Ashleigh Gardner was also carted for 28 runs in two overs. Earlier, Delhi Capitals'

bowlers produced a fine effort to restrict Gujarat Giants to a modest total. If it was not for Bharati Fulmali's 36-ball 42 and Kathryn Bryce's unbeaten 28, the Giants would have finished with a

much lower total. South African veteran Marizanne Kapp led the way with fine figures of 2/17 in four overs, bowling beautifully in the powerplay, while there were also two wickets apiece for Shikha Pandey

#### **SCOREBOARD**

Gujarat Giants: Laura Wolvaardt c Shafali Verma b Kapp 7, Beth Mooney b Kapp O, Dayalan Hemalatha b Jonassen 4, Phoebe Litchfield c Yadav b Mani 21. Ashleigh Gardner b Mani 12, Bharti Fulmali b Pandey 42, Kathryn Bryce not out 28, Tanuja Kanwar b Pandey O, Shabnam Shakil run out 1, Meghna Singh run out 4, Mannat Kashyap not out 0. Extras (b-1, lb-4, w-2) 7. Total (for 9 wickets in 20 overs) 126.

Fall of wickets: 1-1, 2-12, 3-16, 4-39, 5-48, 6-116, 7-116, 8-118, 9-122.

Bowling: Marizanne Kapp 4-0-17-2, Shikha Pandey 4-0-23-2, Jess Jonassen 4-0-32-1 Radha Yaday 2-0-17-0 Arundhati Reddy 3-0-20-0, Minnu Mani 2-0-9-2, Alice Capsey 1-0-3-0.

Delhi Capitals: Meg Lanning run out 18. Shafali Verma c Litchfield b Kanwar 71, Alice Capsey c Kashyap b Kanwar 0, Jemimah Rodrigues not out 38, Marizanne Kapp not out 0. Extras (w-2) 2. Total (for 3 wickets in 13.1 overs) 129.

Fall of wickets: 1-31, 2-31, 3-

Bowling: Shabnam Shakil 2-0-15-0, Kathryn Bryce 1-0-16-0, Tanuja Kanwar 4-1-20-2, Meghna Singh 2-0-28-0, Ashleigh Gardner 2-0-28-0, Mannat Kashyap 2.1-0-22-0.

and Minnu Mani.

Gugarat Giants' decision to bat first on winning the toss backfired as they found themselves in a spot of bother at 12/2 in the fourth over, including losing the big wicket of skipper Beth Mooney for a duck to South African all-rounder Kapp in the match's very first over.

Mooney shaped up to flick a length delivery on the leg stump but the ball brushed past her thigh pad before going on to disturb the leg and middle stump.

## Vidarbha prolong Mumbai's wait

Mumbai, March 13: A out), prolonged Mumbal's wait for a 42nd Ranji Trophy title as the visiting side reached 248/5 in pursuit of a mammoth 538 on the fourth and penultimate day of the final here on Wednesday.

BCCI officials were in Set an improbable target talks with their England and Wales Cricket Board to win the final after being (ECB) counterparts over outplayed since the first the availability of their day afternoon, Vidarbha players for the IPL. put up a resolute show Test regulars like skipwith the bat to frustrate per Ben Stokes, Joe Root and Mark Wood had their hosts by resorting to stonewalling for already made themmajority of the day.

Nair, who joined the Vidarbha ranks only at selves unavailable for the lucrative T20 league. the start of this season,

was at the forefront of dogged fightback from their resistance as he Vidarbha, led by Karun faced as many as 220 balls Nair (74) and skipper while batting for 287 min-Akshay Wadkar (56 not utes to keep Mumbai at bay. But the right-handed batter ultimately fell to the brilliance of Musheer Khan late in the day, with the 19-year-old producing a superb bowling show after setting up the game with 136 in the second

innings. Nair's skipper Wadkar was batting on 56 with Harsh Dubey (11 not out) for company. The team required another 290 runs with five wickets in hand. Mumbai managed a couple of wickets each in the first two sessions and the vital scalp of Nair in the

**BRIEF SCORES** 

Mumbai 224 & 418 vs Vidarbha 105 & 248/5 in 92 overs (Atharva Taide 32. Aman Mokhade 32, Karun Nair 74, Akshay Wadkar 56 n.o; Tanush Kotian 2/56, Musheer Khan 2/38).

new ball in the 82nd over of the innings.

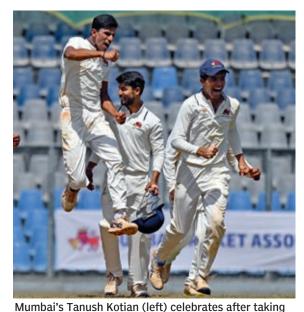
Up until then, Mumbai had tried almost everything on what remained a pitch at the . Wankhede Stadium. It had team's spinners who remained nerois more on offer for the home persistent throughout.

Mumbai's troika of

right-arm pacers took turns to come around the wickets to try and bounce out Vidarbha, while spinners operated from both ends to challenge the bat ters' techniques.

In the end, Vidarbha walked away with a moral win of sorts having not capitulated given the occasion and pressure of the final and the fact that a target of 538 is perceived as out of reach for most batting line-ups.

The leader of the spin pack for Mumbai was Musheer, who remained nearly unplayable for his figures of 17-3-24-2. He bowled a challenging line from both the sides of the pitch to keep troubling the Vidarbha batters.



the wicket of Vidarbha's Yash Rathod on the fourth days of their Ranji Trophy final match at the Wankhede Stadium in Mumbai on Wednesday. - DEBASISH DEY

#### INDIAN WELLS | MASTERS

## Alcaraz & Sinner cruise into Last 8

Wells (United March 13: States). Defending champion Alcaraz and rival Jannik Carlos remained Sinner course for a semifinal showdown after cruising into the last eight of the ATP-WTA Indian Wells Masters on Tuesday.

Alcaraz sailed into the last eight as he took revenge on Hungary's Fabian Marozsan with a 6-3, 6-3 victory.

In-form Sinner meanwhile booked his last eight berth with a 7-6 (7/4), 6-1 defeat of Ben Shelton.

Sinner's win was his 18th straight victory dating to late last season, leaving him three wins away from his third title of the season after winning the Australian Open and Rotterdam.

"I played really well in the tight moments," the 22-vear-old world number three said as he lines up Czech Lehecka in the quarters. "I knew I would not get much rhythm from him. I

can be proud of how I played. The wind didn't make it easier but I tried to stay positive and it worked out.

could Sinner reigning champion Spain's Wimbledon Alcaraz in the semi-finals in California in what would be the latest instalment of a burgeoning rivalry.

The duo fought an epic US Open quarterfinal in 2022 and met in the semifinals at Indian Wells and Miami Masters events last season.

Alcaraz must navigate a quarter-final against sixth seed Alexander Zverev before any meeting with Sinner. Zverev reached the last eight after defeating Alex de Minaur 5-7, 6-2, 6-3 in two and three-quarter hours.

Alcaraz had a score to settle with the 58thranked Marozsan after losing their only other meeting at last year's Rome Masters. The top seed reeled off 22 winners in 75 minutes to race into the quarterfinals. — AFP

### Raya was the hero as Arsenal beat Porto 4-2 on penalties on Tuesday to

last,. They took the second

reach the Champions League quarter-finals for the first time since 2010. The teams were locked at 1-1 on aggregate after an absorbing second leg at

the Emirates but Raya twice in shootout to break the hearts of the two-time champions. The goalkeeper dived full stretch to deny Wendell

and repeated the feat against Galeno, while the home side converted all four of their penalties as the decibel count soared. It is the first time a

Champions League match has been decided by penalties since the 2016 final between Real Madrid and Atletico Madrid. "You are very nervous, you are hoping for the best

but you know that it (the

shootout) is a bit of a lot-

tery," Arsenal manager

Mikel Arteta said. "So happy. It has been 14 years (without reaching quarterfinals), which is a long time for a club like Arsenal and it shows how difficult it was. We really had to dig in to find the magic moment at the end." "We've been patient,

worked so hard and a lot of



Arsenal's Spanish goalkeeper David Raya (in green) is mobbed by teammates as they celebrate winning the penalty shoot-out against Porto FC in the Champions League pre-quarterfinal second leg at the Arsenal Stadium in London on Tuesday.

people have made good decisions and showed difficult moments and this is where you want to be," he added. Raya, on loan from Brentford, said it was a "great moment personally and collectively".

"This means everything. Barcelona survived a You play football for these

kind of things and I'm lucky to be playing for Arsenal, to be in the Champions League and to get through to the quarter-

**BARCA EDGE NAPOLI** 

nervy second half to beat

Napoli 3-1 and reach the quarterfinals 4-2 on aggregate. Xavi Hernandez's side came flying out of the blocks with goals from Fermin Lopez and Joao Cancelo but after Amir Rrahmani pulled one back, the Catalans started

champions

4-2 on penalties (Fermin 15, Cancelo 17,

aggregate; Arsenal win

THE RESULTS

Tie level 1-1 on

Arsenal

FC Porto

(Trossard 41)

Lewandowski 83) Napoli (Rrahmani 30) Barcelona win 4-2 on aggregate

Napoli, who salvaged a 1-1 draw in the last-16 first leg, were finally beaten

Lewandowski swept home from close range. It is the first time fivetime winners Barcelona have reached the last eight of the competition since 2020, and they did so without injured midfield trio Pedri, Gavi and Frenkie de

Jong.
"We're in the quarterfinals of the Champions League after four years, it's the moment to enjoy that," Barca coach Xavi told Movistar.

'We played a great game, the team gave everything, we dominated in many moments... (I'm) very

proud.'



## Viksit Bharat, Viksit Delhi Modi Sarkar Ki Guarantee

Foundation Stone Laying for

Two new corridors

LAJPAT NAGAR-SAKET G BLOCK

INDERLOK-INDRAPRASTHA

of Delhi Metro (Phase-IV)

with a cost of ₹8,400 Crore



Shri Narendra Modi

Hon'ble Prime Minister

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> March 2024 | Time: 05:00 pm (through Video Conferencing)

In the august presence of

Shri Hardeep Singh Puri

Union Minister, Housing and Urban Affairs and Petroleum & Natural Gas



8.4 Kms long Lajpat Nagar to Saket G Block corridor will have 8 Stations -Lajpat Nagar, Andrews Ganj, Greater Kailash -1, Chirag Delhi, Pushpa Bhawan, Saket District Centre, Pushp Vihar and Saket G Block

Lajpat Nagar to Saket G Block corridor will connect the Golden, Magenta, Pink and Violet Lines with interchanges at Lajpat Nagar (with Violet and Pink Lines), Chirag Delhi (with Magenta Line) and Saket G Block (with Golden Line)

12.4 Kms long Inderlok to Indraprastha corridor will have 10 Stations - Inderlok, Daya Basti, Sarai Rohilla, Ajmal Khan Park, Nabi Karim, New Delhi, LNJP Hospital, Delhi Gate, Delhi Sachivalaya and Indraprastha

Inderlok to Indraprastha corridor will connect Red, Yellow, Airport Express Line, Magenta, Violet and Blue lines with interchanges at Inderlok (with Green and Red Lines), Nabi Karim (with Magenta Line), New Delhi (with Yellow and Airport Express Lines), Delhi Gate (with Violet Line) and Indraprastha (with Blue Line)

Close to 2.5 lakhs people will be able to avail benefits of these new lines

These two corridors will boost businesses and provide neighbourhood connectivity in the central and old Delhi areas such as Delhi Gate, New Delhi, Nabi Karim and South Delhi areas such as Andrews Ganj, Pushp Vihar and Saket

Metro connectivity will help in reduction of travel time, reduction in pollution and road congestion

Trains equipped with the most advanced 'Driverless Train Operations' technology

