

401 Eklavya Model Residential Schools across the country; Scholarships distributed to over 3 crore ST students till now

### HTBRIEFS

### **Drivers Union**

DIPHU: Karbi Anglong Motor Workers and Drivers Union (KAMTW&DU) is supporting the 24-hour strike of Joint Forum of Motor Workers, Assam on February 15. The strike is for demanding the repeal of the Hit and Run Rules. The Joint Forum of Motor Workers Assam has decided to go on a 24-hour strike on February 15 in support of the bandh. KAMTW&DU, president Abdul Nur and secretary, in charge, Hari Thousen said medical services, water, milk, newspapers and other essential services are exempted from the strike. They requested to drivers and workers to maintain peace and harmony during the strike.

### Worker dies

**DIPHU:** A construction worker died after falling off from the third floor of an under construction building near Diphu Medical College & Hospital here. According to witnesses workers were removing the shuttering of the third floor when one of them fell down. The injured worker was rushed to the hospital but died before treatment. The deceased has been identified as Dildar Hussain, son of Abdul Karim, a resident of Barkabal village under Laharighat police station in Morigaon district.

Population malady his state's Manipur to 'deport' those who came after 1961: CM performance hard: CM

GUWAHATI, Feb 13: Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma on Tuesday asserted in the Assembly that high population is a "disease' for the state, which impacts its performance in various parameters.

Hamara Sankalp Viksit Bharat

He also maintained that the state's poor performance in a nationwide cleanliness survey "is a reflection on the people as a whole rather than the government", as he pitched for a 'proper citizens' movement'.

Taking part in a discussion on the state Budget, Sarma said the state's performance in terms of percentage cannot be compared with Arunachal Pradesh or Meghalaya, which have a much lower population than Assam.

"Our population burden affects our performance in terms of percentage. Population vis-à-vis students determine the percentage", he said, referring to opposition Congress MLA Bharat Chandra Narah pointing out that Assam's gross enrolment ratio (GER) was much less than the national aver-

Narah, speaking before the chief

minister, had said that Assam's is population. He also claimed that participa-

GER was 16.9 per cent as per recent survey findings, while the na-tional average is 27.1 per cent. Most other North Eastern states have better percentages than Assam, with a few of them even performing better than the national average, he added.

Responding to the Congress MLA's statements, Sarma said, 'We have to attack the disease and not the symptoms, and our disease the national average.

"Previously data of 130 colleges was not even uploaded. I had a meeting with the principals of 350 colleges the day before yesterday," he added.

The CM also maintained that there is no shortage of colleges in the state anymore and in some newly opened ones, there is a dearth of students.

"Hence, we have new schemes in the budget to encourage youth to pursue higher studies. We are aware of the problems of the state and the budget is a reply to these", Sarma maintained.

and its cities, especially the largest city Guwahati, performing poorly in Swachh Survekshan 2024, the CM said a proper citizen movement is needed to address it.

low in the state previously, which "It is not the Assam government negatively impacted the state's powhich has been shamed, but our 'jati' (community) which has to "This time, everyone particibear the 'lajja' (shame) (of poor pated properly in the higher educaperformance)... The government tion survey and when the results has provided various facilities, we come out next year, we will be at need to now motivate the people to 23-24 per cent, which is closer to use it properly. We need a proper citizens' (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

Manipur chief minister N Biren Singh said those who entered and settled in the state after 1961 would be identified and deported, experts on Tuesday raised doubts

over viability of the move. They said the identification of illegal immigrants was a "welcome step" but their deportation would be difficult unless the foreign countries concerned recog-

nise them as their bonafide citizens. The northeastern state has been rocked by ethnic strife since May

last year, and the government has accused a section of immigrants from neighbouring Myanmar of fomenting trouble.

Speaking at the launch of 'Project Buniyaad' on Monday, the chief minister said, "Those who entered and settled in the state after 1961, irrespective of castes and communities, would be identified

and deported.' The chief minister's assertion comes after the Manipur cabinet

had, in June 2022, approved a proposal to adopt 1961 as the base year for determining the "native status" of residents of the state for

inner line permit.

"In order to deport illegal immigrants, the foreign country concerned must accept them as their bonafide citizens. If the foreign country does not recognise the immigrants as their citizens, how will they be deported?" Pradip Phanjoubam, a political analyst, told PTI.

Naga leader and Forum for Restoration of Peace convenor Ashang Kashar said deportation cannot be done by the Manipur government alone. "Identification of immigrants is crucial. Those who would be identified as illegal immigrants should not have the rights

enjoyed by the original inhabitants. For instance, they should not have voting rights," Kashar told PTI.

The decision to adopt 1961 as the base year for ILP implementation is a "welcome step towards solving issues confronting the state", Phanjoubam said.

"But many of those are living in the state over several decades. They have become naturalised citizens. In (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

# Ranjan Gogoi receives Assam Baibhav Award Mizoram, Assam CMs agree not to

22 individuals honoured with state's highest civilian awards

sition

Awards, reflecting the highest civilian honors bestowed by the Government of

tion of colleges in the national sur-

vey on GER at various levels was

On Narah's criticism of the state

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 13: The state Government on Tuesday conferred the state's highest civilian awards upon 22 outstanding personalities for their exceptional contributions to society.

The award ceremony was held at the Srimanta Sankardeva Kalakshetra and was graced by Vice-President of India, Jagdeep Dhankhar.

The distinguished awards, namely Assam Baibhav, Assam Saurav, and Assam Gaurav, were bestowed upon individuals who have left an indelible mark in their respective fields.

Former Chief Justice of India, Ranjan Gogoi, received the prestigious Assam Baibhav Award 2023 for his remarkable contributions to the field of law and justice. Gogoi, hailing from Assam, made history as the first judge from the region



to serve as the Chief Justice of India. In a noteworthy comparison, the Assam Civilian Awards mirror the prestigious Bharat Ratna and Padma India. The number of awards conferred each year varies based on the decision of the Award Committee.

During his address, Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar commended the transparent selection process of the Assam awards, emphasising the evolution from a system driven by "patronage and event management" to one focused on merit and contribution to society.

The Assam Sauray was presented to Dr. Kishan Chand Nauriyal, Elvis Ali Hazarika, Hima Das, and Nadiram Deuri, recognising their exemplary achievements. Additionally, the Assam Gaurav was bestowed upon 17 individuals, including Ranjit Kumar Gogoi, Parvati Barua, Deboiit Changmai, and others. for (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

his Assam counterpart Himanta Biswa Sarma have agreed not to allow any more violence along the disputed inter-state border

Lalduhoma also said that Assam border area development minister Atul Bora will visit Mizoram next month.

Addressing a press conference in Aizawl, the chief minister said that he recently met Sarma in Guwahati and both discussed the border issue.

He said that the two neighbouring states agreed to maintain peace along the border and resolve the long-standing dispute. "We agreed that no more violence will

be allowed along the border. We have been making efforts to resolve the dispute," Lalduhoma said.

The border dispute between Mizoram



and Assam had taken an ugly turn in July 2021 when police forces of the two states exchanged fire at the inter-state boundary, leading to the death of six policemen and a civilian from Assam.

allow violence on disputed border

More than 60 people were also injured in the violent clash that took place in the disputed area near Mizoram's Vairengte village. Three Mizoram districts - Aizawl, Kolasib and (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

'Over 3,700 children

PM Modi holds talks with UAE President; bilateral investment treaty inked



ABU DHABI, Feb 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Tuesday said he had an excellent meeting with the UAE's President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan during which they reviewed the strategic partnership, discussed new areas of cooperation and witnessed the signing of several key agreements, including a bilateral investment treaty.

In a special and warm gesture, Modi was received at the airport by President Mohamed bin Zayed. The two leaders hugged each other. He was later given a guard of hon-

"Had an excellent meeting with people (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

my brother HH @MohamedBin-Zayed. India-UAE friendship is growing stronger and stronger, greatly benefitting the people of our nations," Modi tweeted.

The two leaders held one-on-one and delegation-level talks soon after Modi landed here.

They reviewed the bilateral partnership and discussed new areas of cooperation.

They welcomed the deepening of the Comprehensive Strategic Partnership across sectors, including trade and investment, digital infrastructure, fintech, energy, infrastructure, culture and people-to-

# 'No country in the OECD is on track to triple renewable energy capacity relative to 2022 levels' USD 2 trillion per year needed to triple global renewables by 2030: Report

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: An investment of USD 12 trillion till 2030 is needed to deliver the goal of tripling renewables, as agreed at the UN climate conference in Dubai in December, according to a report released on Tuesday. The report by global think-tank

Climate Analytics said Asia is the only region broadly on course to meet the goal of tripling global renewable energy capacity - driven mostly by policies in China and India.

The region makes the biggest overall contribution, providing around half (47 per cent) of the 8.1 Terawatt of renewable capacity additions needed globally by 2030. However, the significant coal and gas pipelines in these countries risk stranded assets or slowing the transition. As renewables are set to grow strongly in the region, new fossil fuel plants are not needed and should be avoided, it said. The growth of renewable energy

in China and India compensates for laggards such as South Korea, where it is set to grow at half the rate of the region as a whole.



The report finds that an investment of USD 8 trillion is needed for new renewables and USD 4 trillion for grid and storage infrastructure for tripling global renewable energy capacity to 11 Terawatt or 11,000 Gigawatt.

According to the International Energy Agency, tripling the global renewable energy capacity and doubling the energy efficiency rate by 2030 are critical to limiting the average global temperature rise to 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The majority of the global capacity gap needed to be closed by 2030 is found in OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) countries that are currently lagging behind the .5-degree-Celsius compatible benchmark by around 1 to 1.4 Terawatt.

No country in the OECD is on track to triple renewable energy capacity relative to 2022 levels, the report said.

Renewables capacity in Sub-Sa-

haran Africa needs to scale rapidly by a factor of seven (double the global average) due to historic underinvestment and energy access needs, it said.

Neil Grant - Climate Analytics expert and the report's lead author said. "USD 2 trillion a year sounds like a cost but it's really a choice. We are set to invest over USD 6 trillion in fossil fuels over this decade - more than enough to close the tripling investment gap. Faced with this choice, I would go with the safest, best-value option renewables.'

According to Claire Fyson, the report's co-author and policy head at Climate Analytics, "The OECD needs to triple renewables but is currently way off target.

"Countries in the region claiming to be climate leaders need to walk the talk, not just by ramping up renewables at home but by coming through for other regions that need finance to contribute to the tripling goal." The report finds renewables need to continue growing strongly beyond the end of the decade - (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

go missing in Assam in 3 years' GUWAHATI, Feb 13: More than 3,700 children had gone missing in Assam in the last three years, with over 3,400 of them also rescued by different agencies, women and child development minister Ajanta Neog said in the state Assembly on Tues-

The rescued children are handed back to their families wherever possible, or else they are taken care of by the government, she said.

Replying to a question by Congress MLA Bhaskar Jyoti Baruah, Neog said a total of 3,779 children had been reported missing from their homes from 2021 to 2023.

Of these, 3,419 children were rescued, she added.

Rescued children who could provide details of their homes were sent back to their families, and those who could not give the details were taken care of at childcare institutions, she said.

The minister also said that 6,054 cases under POCSO Act, 2012, were registered from 2012 to 2023, of which 3,522 cases have been disposed.

She also said that cases of child trafficking are reported from almost all districts of the state, with Kamrup, (CONTD. ON PAGE-9)

### BUSINESS

# Stock markets rebound on buying in banking, IT stocks

BSE Sensex surged 482.70 points or 0.68 % to settle at 71,555.19. NSE Nifty also soared 127.20 points or 0.59 per cent to close at 21,743.25

MUMBAI, Feb 13: Benchmark Sensex spurted by 482 points while broader Nifty closed above the 21,700 level on Tuesday on buying in banking, financial services and IT sector stocks as easing retail inflation boosted investor sentiment. The 30-share BSE Sensex surged 482.70 points or 0.68 per cent to settle at 71,555.19. The gauge moved between a high of 71,662.74 and a low of 70,924.30 during intra-day.

The broader NSE Nifty also soared 127.20 points or 0.59 per cent to close at 21,743.25 with 39 of its components ending in the green and 11 in the red.

Among Sensex stocks, ICICI Bank was the lead gainer, rising by 2.46 per cent. Axis Bank, Wipro, Kotak Mahindra Bank and NTPC were among the major gainers.

The five stocks that defied the trend included UltraTech Cement, Mahindra & Mahindra, Titan, Tata Motors and Nestle.

'The domestic market largely recovered from yesterday's losses,



driven by gains in the banking sector. Improved sentiment stemmed from a decline in domestic inflation, which is expected to boost rural demand," said Vinod Nair, Head of Research, Geojit Financial Services.

"However, investors remained cautious ahead of US inflation data, anticipating a moderation, pivotal for the Fed's interest rate trajectory," he added.

Government data released on Monday showed India's retail inflation declined to a three-month low of 5.1 per cent in January. However, the country's industrial production growth slowed to 3.8 per cent in December 2023.

Among sectoral indices, bankex and energy gained 1.03 per cent.

major losers, declining 1.44 per

BSE smallcap index inched up 0.18 per cent while midcap and largecap indices closed with a gain of 0.61 per cent each.

In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 and China's Shanghai Composite settled in the positive territory while Hong Kong's Hang Seng was in the red. European markets were in the red with CAC 40 of France and DAX of Germany declining 0.32 per cent and 0.62 per cent, respectively.

The US market ended Monday's session on a mixed note. Global oil benchmark Brent

crude rose 0.78 per cent to USD 82.64 a barrel on Tuesday.

On Monday, Sensex settled 523 points or 0.73 per cent lower at 71,072.49 points while the Nifty closed 166.45 points or 0.76 per cent down at 21,616.05 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers as they bought equities worth ₹ 126.60 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

convenience and support for our valued commercial

Santosh Nair, head of consumer lending and mort-

gages of Bandhan Bank said, "Bandhan Bank is

pleased to partner with Tata Motors to offer seamless

vehicle financing solutions. This association reflects

our dedication to serving the diverse financial needs

of commercial vehicle customers. We are confident

that this collaboration will enable us to extend our

reach and provide tailored financing options to sup-

port the growth of businesses in the commercial vehi-

### **Gold falls** ₹50; silver remains flat

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: Gold prices fell ₹ 50 to ₹ 63,100 per 10 grams in the national capital on Tuesday amid a fall in the precious metal's prices globally, according to HDFC Securities. The yellow metal had closed at ₹ 63,150 per 10 grams in the previous trade.

However, silver remained flat at ₹ 75,400 per kilogram.

"Spot gold prices (24 carats) in the Delhi markets are trading at ₹ 63,100 per 10 grams, down ₹ 50 from the previous close," Saumil Gandhi, senior analyst of commodities at HDFC Securities, said.

In the international markets, spot gold at Comex was trading at USD 2,021 per ounce, down USD 1 from the previous close. Silver was quoting with gains at USD 22.82 per ounce. Gold prices declined marginally due to a strengthening in the dollar and US Treasury yields, before crucial US consumer inflation data, which is scheduled to release later on Tuesday, Gandhi added. (PTI)

#### (provisional), unchanged from its Dredging Corporation previous close. Q3 profit doubles ated 7 paise to close at 83 against to₹27 cr the US dollar.

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: Dredging Corporation of India Ltd (DCI) on Tuesday posted two-fold jump in net profit at ₹ 27.22 crore for the quarter ended December 31, supported by lower expenses.

It had reported a net profit of ₹ 13.83 crore for the October-December period of 2022-23, the company said in a BSE filing. Total income fell to ₹ 266.23 crore from ₹ 372.30 crore a year ago.

The company trimmed its expenses to ₹ 238.52 crore from ₹ 358.10 crore a year ago.

In a separate statement, the company said its earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation & amortization (EBIDTA) in Q3 FY24 was at ₹ 69.59 crore as against ₹ 59.71 crore in the same quarter last year.

"The third quarter witnessed successful completion of several signifdredging icant projects, contributing significantly to our revenue surge. Our expertise in executing complex projects has solidified the company's position as a preferred partner for clients seeking efficient and sustainable solutions, company's chairman Madhaiyaan Angamuthu said

The company maintained its focus on operational excellence during Q3 FY24 achieving cost management and optimal resource utilization. These efforts resulted in improved profit margins and enhanced shareholder value, its MD and CEO, S Divakar said.

He further said the company is expecting to maintain this upward trend to achieve the goal of ₹1,200

Based in Visakhapatnam, Andhra

Pradesh, DCI caters to dredging and

allied services to ports, Indian

Navy, fishing harbours and other

2024

crore turnover for 2023-24.

maritime organisations. (PTI)

TE

## Rupee settles flat at 83 against US dollar



MUMBAI, Feb 13: The rupee set-

tled flat at 83 against the US dollar

on Tuesday, as the support from a

rally in domestic equities was

negated by a strong greenback

overseas and rising crude oil

At the interbank foreign ex-

change, the rupee opened at 83

against the dollar, and touched an

intraday high of 82.98 and a low of

The rupee finally settled at 83.00

On Monday, the rupee appreci-

Meanwhile, India's industrial

production growth slowed to 3.8

per cent in December 2023, mainly

due to poor performance of mining

and power generation segments,

according to official data released

three-month low of 5.1 per cent in

January, mainly due to subdued

prices of vegetables, fruits and

other food items, according to gov-

ernment data released on Monday.

with a slight positive bias on posi-

tive Asian markets and fresh for-

eign inflows. However, positive

tone in the greenback and rising

crude oil prices may cap sharp

'We expect the rupee to trade

Retail inflation declined to a

prices

83.02

on Monday.

search Analyst, Sharekhan by BNP Paribas

Escalation of geopolitical tensions in the Middle East after Israel forces launched airstrikes in Rafah may also weigh on riskier currencies

"Traders may take cues from US inflation data. US CPI is expected to cool down to 2.9 per cent from 3.4 per cent in the previous month, while core CPI is expected to cool down to 3.7 per cent from 3.9 per cent. USD/INR spot price is expected to trade in a range of ₹ 82.80 to ₹ 83.20," Choudhary said.

Meanwhile, the dollar index, which gauges the greenback's strength against a basket of six currencies, was trading 0.05 per cent higher at 104.21, ahead of the US inflation report.

Brent crude futures, the global oil benchmark, rose 0.85 per cent to USD 82.70 per barrel.

In the domestic equity market, the 30-share BSE Sensex closed 482.70 points or 0.68 per cent higher at 71,555.19 points. The broader NSE Nifty advanced 127.20 points or 0.59 per cent to 21,743.25 points. Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers in the capital markets on Monday as they purchased shares worth ₹ 126.60 crore, according to gains," said Anuj Choudhary Re- exchange data. (PTI)

## Walmart Vriddhi empowers over 50,000 MSMEs

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 13: Walmart proudly announced today the successful culmination of its ambitious supplier development program, Walmart Vriddhi, which has surpassed its target by empowering more than 50,000 Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) across India within five years.

The program, launched in December 2019, offers free training, mentoring, and digital tools aimed at facilitating the growth and integration of businesses into domestic supply chains. Partnering with Swasti, Walmart's program extends access to training, mentorship, and business guidance to local suppliers, leveraging Flipkart's platform expertise.

The comprehensive digital training provided covers essential aspects of business management, including finance, marketing, workforce management, and environmental sustainability, empowering entrepreneurs to establish sustainable business models and contribute to local employment opportunities.

Accessible across India, the program has made significant strides in

### Stocks decline in early trade

MUMBAI, Feb 13: Benchmark indices Sensex and Nifty fell in early trade on Tuesday as volatility persisted amid mixed trends in global markets. The 30-share BSE Sensex opened on a positive note and climbed 116.42 points to 71,188.91 points. However, it soon took a Uturn and fell 129.92 points to 70,942.57 points.

Showing a similar trend, the broader Nifty rose 14.80 points to 21,630.85 points initially but lost ground and declined 63.25 points to 21,552.80 points.

In the Sensex pack, Tata Steel, JSW Steel, PoweGrid and Wipro were among the major losers while ICICI Bank, NTPC, ITC and Kotak Bank were trading in the green.

BSE smallcap index fell 1.65 per cent, midcap index dropped 0.57 per cent and largecap index slipped 0.12 per cent. V K Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services, said midcap and smallcap stocks are likely to see a sharp fall as many such scrips are excessively valued.

"Correction will give opportunities to buy fairly valued stocks in this segment like PSU banks," he noted

In Asia, Tokyo's Nikkei 225 and hai Composi



vehicle customers.'

cle segment.'

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 13: Tata Motors, India's largest commercial vehicle manufacturer, has signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Bandhan Bank, one of India's fastest-growing private sector banks, to offer convenient financing solutions to its commercial vehicle customers.

Under this collaboration, Bandhan Bank will offer financing across the entire commercial vehicle portfolio and customers will benefit from the bank's wide network and specially curated easy repayment plans.

Commenting on this partnership, Rajesh Kaul, vice Tata Motors offers extensive range of sub 1-tonne president and business head of Trucks, Tata Motors, to 55-tonne cargo vehicles and 10-seater to 51-seater said, "We are delighted to announce our partnership mass mobility solutions, ranging in small commercial with Bandhan Bank through this MoU, which reprevehicles and pickups, trucks and buses segments to sents a major milestone in our commitment to providaddress the evolving needs of logistics and mass mobility segments. The company ensures unparaling seamless financing solutions to our customers. This partnership reflects our commitment to providing leled quality and service commitment through its accessible and efficient financial solutions, empowerextensive network of 2500+ touchpoints, manned ing our customers to achieve their business goals with by trained specialists and backed by easy access to ease. Together, we look forward to driving greater Tata Genuine Parts.

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 13: Informa Mar-

kets in India, a leading exhibition or-

ganizer, is gearing up to host SATTE

2024, hailed as South Asia's top

Scheduled to take place from Feb-

ruary 22nd to 24that the India Expo

Mart in Greater Noida, Delhi NCR,

SATTE has garnered immense inter-

est from both Indian and global play-

ers in the travel and tourism industry.

This year marks the 31st edition of

the event, with expectations soaring

as it promises to be the biggest ever,

drawing participation from over 1500

travel exhibition.

and financial services gained 1.44 per cent and 1.23 per cent, respectively. While services rose 1.45 per cent, tech advanced 0.40 per cent Metal and commodities were

cent and 0.94 per cent, respec-

Tata Motors, Bandhan Bank sign MoU

offering vehicle financing solutions

trading in the positive territory while Hong Kong's Hang Seng was in the red. European markets ended Monday's session in the green with CAC 40 of France and DAX of Germany rising 0.55 per cent and 0.65 per cent respectively.

On Monday, the US market ended on a mixed note.

Global oil benchmark Brent crude rose 0.09 per cent to USD 82.07 a barrel on Tuesday.

On Monday, Sensex settled 523 points or 0.73 per cent lower at 71,072.49 points while the Nifty closed 166.45 points or 0.76 per cent down at 21,616.05 points.

Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs) were net buyers on Monday as they bought equities worth ₹ 126.60 crore, according to exchange data. (PTI)

#### ELECTRICAL WORKS UNDER LUMDING & CHAPARMUKH JURISDICTION

E-Tender Notice No. Sr. DEE/LMG 38 of 2023-24; dated: 09-02-2024. E tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: SN.1; Tender No: <u>EL/LM/23-24/29</u>; Name of work: Electrical work for renovation of damaged, worn out, overaged, electrical assets & other ancillary works under the jurisdiction of SSE/P/Lumding and SSE/ P/Chaparmukh. Tender Value: ₹53,13,039.27; Earnest Money: ₹1,06,300.00; E-tender will be closed at 11:00 hrs. on 23-02-2024 and Opened at 11:30 hrs. on 23-02-2024. The complete information with the tender document of above e-tender will be available upto 11:00 hrs. on 23-02-2024 n website www.ireps.gov.in

Sr. DEE/G&Op, Lumding

### ROVISION OF ADDITIONAL WATER OPENING

E-Tender Notice No.: LMG/Engg/25 of 2024. E-Tenders are invited by the undersigned for the following works: Brief Description of Item Provision of additional water opening Protection of bank & other ancillar works in between KM 69/8-70/0 & 70/2-9 in Maibang-Daotuhaja section o Lumding-Badarpur hill section. Tender Value: ₹5,33,67,312.72. Earnest Money: ₹4,16,800/-. Date & Time of Closing Tender: 15.00 hrs. on 04-03-2024 & opening of Tender 15.00 hrs. of 05-03-2024. The complete information with tender documents of above e-tender will be available upto 15.00 hrs. of 04-03-2024 in website www.ireps.gov.in

DRM (W), Lumding ONORTHEAST FRONTIER RAILWAY Informa Markets to host SAT exhibitors, 800 hosted international and domestic buyers, and professionals from over 120 Indian cities and towns

SATTE 2024 serves as a crucial platform for gaining insights into India's thriving travel industry, bringing together the entire value chain of the travel, tourism, and hospitality sector. With India's visitor export earnings projected to reach US \$50 billion by 2028, SATTE 2024 presents a strategic opportunity to support the goals of Indian tourism and explore business opportunities within the industry. Supported by the Union

ministry of tourism, Indian and International Tourism Boards, global travel trade bodies, airlines, hotels, and other stakeholders, SATTE 2024 introduces "ATITHI," an exclusive Reverse Buyer-Seller Meet in collaboration with the Services Export Promotion Council (SEPC). This initiative aims to bolster inbound tourism by mobilizing around 250 international buyers from over 50 countries, thereby enhancing business prospects for stakeholders in the Indian tourism industry. Highlighting the significant partnerships and participation, SATTE 2024 features

Uttar Pradesh as the host state, with Bihar, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Odisha, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, and Uttarakhand as partner states. Noteworthy participation is also expected from northeastern states and various National Tourism Organizations (NTOs) and partner countries such as Saudi Arabia, Dubai, Maldives, Sri Lanka, Singapore, Malaysia, and Thailand, among others. Private play ers such as Air India, Resort World Cruise, MakeMyTrip, and others are set to showcase their offerings alongside renowned names in the travel and tourism sector.

key centres such as Moradabad, Agra, Panipat, Bhopal, Surat, Guwahati, and Tirupur, connecting MSMEs with consumers nationwide through collaborations with respective state governments. Graduates of the Walmart Vriddhi program, integrated into the Flipkart Marketplace, have witnessed a remarkable approximately 55% year-on-year growth. Jason Fremstad, Senior Vice President, Supplier Development, Walmart, lauded the dedication of over 50,000 Walmart Vriddhi graduates, emphasizing the program's robust curriculum, effective delivery, and valuable partnerships. He expressed anticipation for these businesses to reinvest in their communities, generate employment opportunities, stimulate local economies, and contribute to India's economic growth. Joseph Julian, Program Director at Swasti, expressed pride in the partnership's role in digitizing and empowering over 50,000 MSMEs through the Walmart Vriddhi program. He underscored the importance of comprehensive support systems for entrepreneurs and reiterated Swasti's commitment to supporting MSMEs through tailored learning modules.

Naravan Rane, Minister of Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises of India, stated, "As India advances towards achieving a \$5 trillion economy, a substantial portion of this growth will be driven by a competitive and productive MSME sector, serving as a catalyst for economic expansion and job creation. The government actively supports the promotion and development of the MSME sector across all states." He praised initiatives like the Walmart Vriddhi program for facilitating the digital transformation and growth of MSMEs. He commended the Walmart and Flipkart team for providing over 50,000 Vriddhi graduates with opportunities to unlock market opportunities.

# India built best digital economy, finance architecture: Nobel winner Spence

India, major economy with the highest potential growth rate at present

NOIDA, Feb 13: Noting that India is a major economy with the highest potential growth rate right now, Nobel laureate economist A Michael Spence said the country has successfully developed by far the best digital economy and finance architecture in the world.

Spence, who was awarded the Nobel prize in Economic Sciences in 2001, shared his views during an interaction with students and faculty at the Bennett University in Greater Noida on Monday.

"The major economy with the highest potential growth rate right now is India. India has successfully developed by far the best digital economy and finance architecture in the world. It is open, competitive and delivers services of an inclusive kind to a vast array of territory," the Nobel laureate said, according to a statement issued by the var-

Spence also pointed out that the world is experiencing a "kind of regime change in the global economy'

Tracing the evolution of the global economy after World War II, Spence said that the 70-yearold global system is "breaking down" due to pan-



demics, geopolitical tensions, climate shocks, etc. Emphasising that the global system -- built on economic criteria like global supply chain centred around efficiency and comparative advantage considerations -- is undergoing a rapid transition, he pointed out that "in a shock-prone world, it doesn't make sense to have single sourcing".

With the centre of gravity shifting steadily towards the East, there is a fundamental change in the global economy whereby supply chains are getting diversified and global governance is be-

coming more complicated than ever before, he added

Despite the challenging time, he said what gives optimism is the affirmative answer to the question: whether we have counter-measures to enhance human welfare?

He also outlined the enormous progress in science and technology which can contribute to enhancing human welfare, including generative AI, revolutions in biomedical life sciences and massive energy transitions.

He cited the example of competitive pricing of solar energy and quoted the cost of DNA sequencing having reduced from USD 10 million dollar earlier to USD 250 now. However, he added there is downside to this technological growth, and emphasised on its availability to both big and small businesses alike.

"We now have incredibly powerful scientific and technological tools that, if we use correctly, can be used to essentially deliver wellbeing and opportunity to a wide range of people," said Spence, who was recognized for his analysis of markets with asymmetric information. (PTI)

NCLT extends deadline for Go First's insolvency for another 60 days

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: The National Company Law Tribunal on Tuesday extended the deadline for another 60 days to complete the resolution process of grounded airline Go First.

A two-member bench of the Delhi-based NCLT admitted the plea filed by the resolution professional (RP) of Go First seeking an extension of the timeline to complete the corporate insolvency resolution process (CIRP).

Diwakar Maheshwari, appearing for RP, argued that so far three parties have submitted their expression of interest for Go First and deposited the earnest money

These firms are expected to submit resolution plans for Go First which has been undergoing CIRP since May 10, 2023.

This is the second such extension granted by the NCLT. The tribunal had on November 23 last year granted an extension of 90 days, which ended on February 4.

The three firms, including budget carrier Spicejet, Sharjahbased Sky One, and African continent-focused firm Safrik Investments, have shown interest in buying Go First.

The Insolvency & Bankruptcy Code (IBC) mandates completion of CIRP within 330 days, which includes the time taken during litigations.

As per Section 12(1) of the Code, CIRP should be completed within 180 days.

However, the maximum time within which CIRP must be mandatorily completed, including any extension or litigation period, is 330 days, failing which the corporate debtor is sent for liquidation. On May 10, NCLT admitted the plea of Go First to initiate voluntary insolvency resolution proceedings.

Go First stopped flying on May 3. (PTI)

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### REGION

# NILP aims to empower over 30 thousand non-literate individuals

Initiative faces technical challenges amidst efforts to provide basic education and life skills to adults

HT Correspondent TEZPUR, Feb 13: The New India Literacy Programme (NILP), a Government of India-approved scheme for the fiscal years 2022 to 2027 introduced by the Ministry of Education to cover different aspects of adult education in the country, is underway in Sonitpur district, along with the rest of the state. Designed to align with the 2020 National Education Policy, the programme aims to impart basic literacy to the youth and cover non-literates in the age group of 15 years and above across all states and union territories of India.

District-level officials involved in the programme emphasised its significance, noting that the need for it arose from the significant number of non-literates in the country above 15 years old, according to the 2011 census, which was 25.76 crore. "NILP is initiated as an attempt to help youngsters and working adults learn to write and read, which will be put into practice through volunteerism in both online and offline forms.' said Prafulla Keot, the programme coordinator for both Sonitpur and Biswanath districts. Workshops, training, and orientation have been



arranged for over 22 teachers from different schools in both districts to conduct surveys to identify targeted non-literates.

Keot further informed that after identifying non-literates, separate training and orientation programmes on how to engage with non-literates of different age groups would be organised for volunteer teachers. "We have a target of over 30 thousand non-literates in Sonitpur and Biswanath districts. I am optimistic that our teachers/surveyors will soon complete the survey to provide genuine data for enhancing the remaining parts," Keot added learning

other areas to promote continuous

Data have been uploaded through an app called ULLAS (Understanding of Lifelong Learning for All in Society), and besides teaching basic reading, writing, and numeracy, the programme aims to develop other life skills such as financial literacy, healthcare, digital literacy, vocational skills, childcare, and family welfare, among others. The development of vocational skills will facilitate employment opportunities, which would include courses in arts, technology, science, sports,

recreation, and culture, as well as

get for the next five years, which is five crore learners through OTLAS (Online Teaching, Learn-ing, and Assessment System) in collaboration with NIOS, NCERT, and National Informatics Centre,' Keot emphasised. Several training programmes have been conducted to date to involve participants in the nationwide programme, and already, 56 MRPs from both districts have been trained in two phases for survey and teaching-learning processes.

"The New India Literacy Pro-

gramme (NILP) will make efforts

towards achieving the literacy tar-

However, despite the progress, certain challenges have been encountered in conducting the process. The teachers involved as surveyors have alleged that due to problems associated with the ULLAS/NILP website/app, many teachers have not been able to upload their data. "We have manually completed our tasks, but as we are unable to upload the data due to technical issues, our work is vet to be recognised; therefore, technical experts involved in this programme should sincerely rectify the problem for the early completion of the programme in our districts," the surveyors stated.

Illegal poppy cultivation operation dismantled in Barpeta

# Karbi Anglong mourns passing of social worker Reshulo Rengma

HT BureauDIPHU, Feb 13:Reshulo Rengma, a distinguished social worker and senior citizen of Karbi Anglong, breathed his last at his residence in Rengma Colony, Diphu, Karbi Anglong, on Tuesday afternoon.

Born on January 15, 1922, Late Rengma lived a remarkable life, reaching the age of 102 before his passing. He leaves behind a multitude of relatives and is survived by three daughters.

Late Rengma played a significant role in the socio-political landscape of Karbi Anglong. He was notably associated with the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council (KAAC), serving as an executive member since 1997, during the second innings of the Autonomous State Demand Committee. He also held the esteemed position of deputy chairman of KAAC among other responsibilities. He retired from active politics in 2002, leaving behind a legacy of dedicated service.

His mortal remains were placed at his residence, allowing friends, acquaintances, and well-wishers to pay their final respects. Eventually, he was laid to rest in his compound.

# Yuva Sambad prog promotes adventure sports enthusiasm

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 13: On Mon-

day, the NSS Cell of Gauhati University orchestrated a captivating event titled 'Yuva Sambad' at the Phanidhar Datta Seminar Hall within the Gauhati University Campus. The event witnessed esteemed dignitaries including Col Ranveer Singh Jamwal, SM VSM, director of the National Institute of Mountaineering and Adventure Sports (NIMAS) in Dirang, Arunachal Pradesh, who graced the occasion as the chief guest. Jangjilong, regional director of NSS, NER, Guwahati, joined as the guest of honour, accompanied by Captain Kavitha Vasupalli from NIMAS.

Col Ranveer Singh Jamwal captivated the audience with a motivational address, advocating for the pursuit of adventure sports. He elaborated on the educational. physical, and mental benefits associated with such endeavours, inspiring the volunteers to embrace adventure as a part of their personal growth. The event also featured an

Inter-College Elocution Competi-

tion centered around the theme 'Role of Youth for Viksit Bharat @2047', wherein participants showcased their oratory skills. Winners were felicitated with trophies and certificates for their ommendable performances.

Dr Ranjan Kr Kakati, the director of Students' Welfare and programme coordinator of the NSS Cell at Gauhati University, extended a warm welcome to all attendees and emphasised the potential of the North East region as a hub for adventure sports. He urged the youth to consider adventure sports as a viable career path, highlighting the region's natural allure for such activities.

Dr Kakati extended heartfelt gratitude to all participants, NSS volunteers, NCC cadets, as well as Dr Rituparna Borah, NSS P.O., and the GU campus volunteers for their invaluable contributions. Special appreciation was also extended to the esteemed jury members, Dr Baharul Ali and Dr Idris Ghajnabi of Gauhati University, for their unwavering support in organising the event.

### NFR introduces special trains between Kamakhya & Anand Vihar

#### HT Bureau

GUWAHATI, Feb 13: The NF Railway has decided to run a special train between Kamakhya and Anand Vihar to clear the extra rush of passengers. The special train no 02525 (Kamakhya – Anand Vihar) and train no 02526 (Anand Vihar - Kamakhya) will run for 24 trips until July 2024.

Train no 02525 (Kamakhya - Anand Vihar) will depart from Kamakhya

Jn. at 22:45 hrs every Friday from February 16 to July 26, 2024, to reach its destination of Anand Vihar Terminal every Sunday at 08:40 hrs. Similarly, train no 02526 (Anand Vihar - Kamakhya) will depart from Anand Vihar Terminal every Sun-

In the wake of this operation, a

day at 17:20 hrs. from February 18 to July 28, 2024, to arrive at its desti nation of Kamakhya Jn every Tuesday at 03:40 hrs.

Both trains will run via Goalpara town, Gauripur, New Coochbehar, New Jalpaiguri, Katihar, Khagaria, Barauni, Danapur, Pt Deen Dayal Upadhaya, Aligarh Jn & vice-versa to arrive at their respective destinations. The train will run with a coach composition of 01-1st class AC, 02 - AC two tier, 05 -AC three tier, 05-AC three tier economy, 04- sleeper class, and 02- general sitting coaches with one pantry car.

The special train services will benefit waitlisted passengers of other trains on the said route. The details of stoppages and timings of these trains are available on the IRCTC website and are also being notified in various newspapers and social media platforms of NF Railway. Passengers are requested to verify the details before undertaking their journey.

> Annual prize distribution ceremony concludes HT Correspondent BISWANATH CHARIALI, Feb

### DBT sponsored course on blended teaching concludes at Dhing College

#### HT Correspondent

NAGAON, Feb 13: The Advanced Institutional Level Biotech Hub at Dhing College, in association with SCERT, Assam, organised a fiveday DBT-sponsored short-term course on 'Blended teaching and learning for school teachers' at the college from February 6, 2024.

The course aimed to enhance teachers' understanding of blended teaching and learning for school teachers by combining traditional face-to-face instruction with online or digital learning experiences, which apparently help leverage the strengths of both traditional classroom methods and technology-mediated learning to create a more flexible and effective learning environment.

Dr Biman Hazarika, principal of the college, inaugurated the program, while Dr Sanjeeb Kr Nath, coordinator of the Advanced Institutional Level Biotech Hub and head of the department of Botany, elucidated the objectives of the short-term course on blended teaching and learning for school teachers. Chayanika Saikia from DIET, Nagaon, attended the program as the keynote speaker.

Over 38 participants, deputed from various high schools, ME, and lower primary schools by the inspector of schools as well as BEEO, Nagaon, took part in the program.

Chayanika Saikia, lecturer of DIET, Nagaon, Dr Ranjeeta Kakoti, assistant professor in the department of Education at Dr BKB College, Dr Tribeni Saikia from Srimanta Sankardev Vishwavidyalaya, Dr Sikha Bhagawati, assistant professor at Nowgong Girls' College, Dr Sewali Borah from the College of Teachers Education, Nagaon, Dr Nabanita Baishya from Dhing College, and Dr Kangkana Sarma were present at the program as resource persons, a release added here.

### Ajan Peer Dargah hosts Urs



HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 13: On Tuesday, a significant operation was carried out by a team spearheaded by the additional superintendent of police (Crime) from Barpeta, along with the presence of an Executive Magistrate. This operation

**Educational institutes** gear up for Saraswati Puja celebrations

#### mara Police Station.

The enforcement team, acting within the legal framework provided by the Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances (NDPS) Act of 1985, meticulously eradicated a substantial quantity of illicit poppy cultivation. The eradication efforts resulted in the destruction of 305 quintals of cultivated poppy, along with the re-moval of approximately 82,080 poppy plants.

formal case has been lodged, signaling the commencement of a thorough investigation into the circumstances surrounding the illegal cultivation activity. This proactive measure underscores the commitment of law enforcement authorities to combat narcotics-related offenses and uphold the rule of law within the region.

Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College

organises National Women's Day

under the jurisdiction of Kachu-

aimed to uproot an extensive illegal poppy cultivation operation strategically hidden amidst corn fields, spanning an estimated area of approximately 1B-4K-10L of government-owned land in the vicinity of Bhatnapaity Char,

### HT Correspondent

SIVASAGAR, Feb 13: Attending the Urs and annual general meeting at Ajan Peer Dargah in Saraguri Chapori near Dikhowmukh recently, Dr Satyakam Borthakur of Dibrugarh University said that people resort to different faiths and religious practices to perceive the unperceivable and the unfathomable truth. The two Vaishnavite gurus in Assam did that in the 15th century, and the Islamic Sufi Saint Ajan Peer Saheb found glimpses of the truth in their teachings and hence created the priceless Jikirs and Jaries following their ideals. Ajan Peer Saheb's Sufi prayer songs became, in the course of time, part of Assamese composite cultural heritage.

The meeting was inaugurated by Dr Poinuddin Ahmed, HoD, Islamic Studies, Cotton University, The souvenir 'Saraguri Ajan' was released by Dr Sabya Sachi Mahanta, principal, Gargaon College. Harunul Rashid, president of the Dargah Management Committee, presided over the meeting. Nabab Mustakim Ali read out the secretarial report.

### Sonitpur wraps up month long road safety program

HT Correspondent TEZPUR, Feb 13: The month-long road safety program, themed 'Road Safety-Life Safety', organised by the Sonitpur District Transport Department, will conclude on Wednesday. The initiative, in line with similar efforts across the state, witnessed a series of awareness programs held in various public spaces and educational institutions since its inauguration on January 14.

As part of the concluding festivities, an awareness rally coursed through the streets of Tezpur town on Tuesday. District commissioner



Deba Kumar Mishra formally inaugurated the rally from the District Transport Office (DTO) premises, with the presence of key figures including DTO Amal Kumar Baruah, secretary of the Road Safety Committee Abhijit Medhi, president of the All Assam

Motor Transport Association Ratul Sarmah, retired professor Gahan Mahanta, president of Sonitpur District Private Transport Association Dadul Nath, motor vehicle inspector (MVI) Padmalochan Hazarika, retired transport officer Abhijit Baruah, enforcement inspector Krishna Kanta Chetia, and assistant enforcement inspector Parag Baruah, among others.

Preceding the rally, an awareness meeting was convened at the Tezpur Sahitya Sabha Bhawan under the aegis of the district commissioner. DTO Amal Kumar Medhi outlined the aims and objectives of the Road Safety Month, along with the collaborative efforts with the district police administration throughout the program's duration.

Addressing the gathering, additional SP Madhurima Das emphasised the urgent need to address the escalating accidents in the district through regular awareness programs targeting both motorists and the general populace.

DC Deba Kumar Mishra, in his remarks, underscored five crucial safety guidelines: 'avoid over speed', 'use of helmet while riding twowheelers', 'avoid driving under the influence of alcohol', 'use of seat belt while driving', and 'avoid using mobile phones while driving'. He urged parents to resist providing motorcycles to their children upon request, emphasising the importance of responsible driving habits.

<u>HT Correspondent</u> DEMOW, Feb 13: Demow Educational Institutes are gearing up to celebrate Saraswati Puja with fervour and enthusiasm this Wednesday. Ahead of the auspicious occasion, both teachers and students were spotted purchasing necessary puja items from local markets in Demow on Tuesday. Additionally, local artisans in Demow have crafted beautiful Saraswati idols, which have been eagerly acquired by students for the puja festivities.

Interestingly, there has been a noticeable decrease in customers at the ladies' parlours in Demow this year on the eve of Saraswati Puja compared to previous years. This could be attributed to the ongoing HS Final Examination 2024, which commenced on February 12, leaving students with limited time as the HSLC Examination 2024 approaches.

TEZPUR, Feb 13: The spirit of National Women's Day was fervently celebrated at Lokanayak Omeo Kumar Das College in Dhekiajuli, Sonitpur District, as the NCC unit organised an enlightening awareness lecture program on Tuesday.

HT Correspondent

The event, held on Tuesday, featured a range of activities aimed at highlighting the significance of women's empowerment. Among these was a captivating painting competition focusing on the theme women's empowerment, of wherein college cadets showcased their artistic talents to drive home powerful messages.

Dr Sumi Bora, a distinguished faculty member from the department of English, led the charge as the resource person for the session. With her insightful discourse titled 'Women Empowerment in the Contemporary



Context', Dr Bora delved into various dimensions of the empowerment discourse. Through a dynamic PowerPoint presentation, she underscored the crucial need for empowerment in fostering an inclusive society and advocated for a paradigm shift in societal mindsets. Dr Bora also emphasised the pivotal role of economic empowerment in realising true empowerment goals. Prior to her engaging session, Dr

Bora was felicitated by the organising committee with phulam gamosa, symbolising gratitude and

### North East Tourism Conclave sparks vibrant discussions in Guwahati

lits

**Fourism Conclave** 

focus Pr.

EDF

HT Bureau GUWAHATI, Feb 13: NE Focus organised a dynamic gathering at the North East Tourism Conclave hosted at Nedfi House. Guwahati on Monday, with a robust agenda aimed at bolstering the tourism landscape of North East India. Sangeeta Saikia, the conclave organiser and editor of NE Focus, emphasised the paramount importance of tourism, stating, "Tourism is a significant concern." The event delved into not just the promotion of tourism but also pertinent issues surrounding the industry.

Key discussions revolved around strategies for fostering tourism through environmental conservation, preservation of indigenous culinary and cultural traditions across various village communities, with the objective of transforming these locales into attractive tourist hubs. Saikia underscored the necessity for governmental initiatives to formulate comprehensive, long-term policies conducive to sustainable tourism development. Distinguished attendees in-

of the Tourism Department, Government of India, Guwahati; Utpal Barua, chief airport officer at Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi International Airport; Amitabh Dey, principal at the Institute of Hotel Management; Tridip Sharma, advisor at the Hotel and Restaurant Association; Swapna Medhi, lecturer in the Tourism department at Son-College; and Arisit apur Purkayastha, owner of Koyel Trav-



persons. The proceedings were skillfully moderated by Swapnanil Barua, Ranjit Das, and Mowsam Hazarika.

The conclave drew participation from numerous students and faculty members from institutions in-Sonapur College, cluding Pragjyotish College, and Cotton University, amplifying the collective engagement in shaping the future of tourism in the region.

respect for her valuable contributions

Adding to the event's vibrancy, cadet Mamata Boro mesmerised the audience with a soulful rendition, while cadet Angelina Surin and CPL Isha Limbu shared brief insights into the significance of the day. The session concluded with a heartfelt vote of thanks extended by Captain Dr Jyotshna Baruah.

The meticulous organisation of the program was overseen by Lt Dr Pitambar Sedai, ensuring a seamless and enriching experience for the 27 participating cadets.

13: The two-day annual prize distribution ceremony of Royal Public School, Sootea, concluded on Tuesday. The school authority has adopted a green mission from this year. The first-day program began with a Dihanam followed by the distribution of saplings among the school children. The first-day session was addressed by Himangshu Ranjan Bhuyan. The second-day program held with Jatin Kalita, principal of the school in the chair, was addressed by Trinayan Bora, retired headmaster as the chief guest. Anjan Baskota, recipient of Sahitya Akademi's Yuva Puraskar, graced the session as an appointed speaker. In between the programs, Nripen Das, assistant teacher, read out the annual report. A series of cultural programs were performed by the students. Tridip Bora, managing director of the school, offered the vote of thanks.

## Dibrugarh University to hold 22<sup>nd</sup> Convocation on March 9

HT Correspondent DIBRUGARH, Feb 13: The prestigious Dibrugarh University, a leading institution of higher education, is set to hold its 22nd Convocation on March

The event will be graced by the presence of Gulab Chand Kataria, Governor and chancellor of Dibrugarh University, who will preside over the ceremony.

Renowned intellectual and former CEO of Niti Ayog, Amitav Kant, will join as the chief guest

During the convocation, Imran Sah, a celebrated litterateur from Assam, will be honoured with the prestigious D Lit (Honoris Causa) award, while Khiradhar Baruah, a popular science writer, will be conferred with the D Sc (Honoris Causa) for his significant contributions to the popularisation of science in the state.

Dr Paramananda Sonowal, registrar of Dibrugarh University, stated that a total of 1,341



students will participate in the ceremony.

Among them, 72 students will receive their PhD degrees, and 40 students will be presented with gold medals.

Additionally, outstanding graduates in the streams of science, arts, and commerce will be honoured with gold medals.

Furthermore, the student achieving the highest marks in Anthropology will be presented with the Jonali Kropi Memorial Endowment Award and gold medal, adding a special touch to the convocation festivities.

### 4

### THE HILLS TIMES VOL. XXV, ISSUE 35, DIPHU, WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

#### QUOTE OF THE DAY

There is no instinct like that of the heart. -Lord Byron

### Nitish and Bihar's changing political scene

n the recent political theatre unfolding in Bihar, the spotlight has gravitated towards Nitish Kumar, a veteran of Bihar's political landscape, whose journey has been marked by twists and turns, alliances and betrayals. How-ever, the latest episode in Nitish's saga, particularly his victory in the confidence vote orchestrated in the Bihar Assembly, raises pertinent questions about the state of Bihar's politics and the future trajectory of its leadership. Tejashwi Yadav, the emerging force in Bihar politics and leader of the opposition RJD, unleashed a verbal barrage against Nitish Kumar, leaving him visibly rattled. Tejashwi's astute articulation and pointed critiques portrayed Nitish in a vulnerable light, challenging his decades-long political dominance. Tejashwi's jibes, although sharp, were not devoid of substance, as he exposed Nitish's political maneuvers and questioned his integrity. Nitish Kumar's response, while successful in securing the trust vote, appeared feeble and lacking conviction. His attempt to shift blame onto the Congress and Lalu Yadav for his political realignments did little to salvage his image. Furthermore, Nitish's alliance with right-wing and upper-caste political factions has eroded his credibility among his erstwhile support base of Dalits and the economically disenfranchised.

The realignment of political allegiances witnessed during the trust vote underscores the fluidity of Bihar's political landscape. The defection of three RJD members to the NDA camp and the last-minute participation of absent JD(U) MLAs highlights the precarious nature of political alliances in the state. Nitish's victory, therefore, appears more a consequence of political maneuvering than a reflection of unwavering support. The ramifications of Nitish's actions extend beyond the confines of the assembly chamber. His decision to cozy up to the BJP-led NDA coalition raises concerns about the future direction of Bihar's politics. With the specter of caste-based politics looming large and the BJP's attempts to exploit these fault lines, Nitish risks alienating significant segments of Bihar's electorate. In contrast, Tejashwi Yadav's impassioned rhetoric and unwavering commitment to his cause have positioned him as a formidable challenger to Nitish's dominance. Tejashwi's promise to champion the cause of the marginalized and disenfranchised resonates with Bihar's electorate, especially in the run-up to crucial elections

As Bihar braces itself for the electoral battleground, the dynamics of power and influence are poised for a seismic shift. The INDIA bloc led by Tejashwi Yadav represents a potent force that cannot be underestimated. The future of Bihar's politics hinges on the ability of leaders like Tejashwi to galvanize support and mobilize the electorate against entrenched political elites. We can conclude by saying that Nitish Kumar's victory in the trust vote may have secured his position temporarily, but the cracks in his political armour are becoming increasingly evident. The rise of leaders like Tejashwi Yadav signals a new chapter in Bihar's political narrative, one characterized by resilience, determination, and a commitment to social justice. As Bihar navigates the tumultuous waters of electoral politics, the choices made today will shape its destiny for years to come.

# Pakistani voters have given their verdict against army

# President Vladimir Putin's interview with Tucker Carlson is a geopolitical milestone

people on both sides of the bor-

der were upset with Putin for not

Similarly, Putin narrated how

t the moment of writing this column, over 160 A this column, over 100 million views have been garnered on the social media platform X (formerly Twitter) in a span of 24 hours by what's now being touted as the most definitive interview of the decade, that of Russian President Vladimir Putin by the American journalist Tucker Carlson, inside the Kremlin, Moscow. Lasting about two hours and seven minutes, this unscripted, free-wheeling interview breaks many, many grounds in its geopolitical significance, and comes at a time when the Russia-Ukraine (NATO) war is nearing the end of its second year, and doesn't look like it would be over anytime soon.

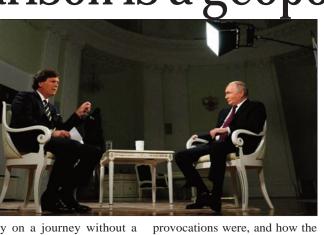
Before the airing of the interview, the usual suspects in the neoliberal American media were busy stirring up hysteria, going to the extent of branding Carlson a traitor for daring to speak to Putin, with some even suggesting imposing sanctions against him. Bipartisan Russophobia notwithstanding, ordinary Americans were indeed hungry for a glimpse of an unfiltered, uncensored perspective from the longtime Russian president. That Carlson managed to se-

cure the interview and got Putin to sit down and talk for over two hours, charting the complexities of over a 1000-year-old Russian history, its legitimate grievances against America, NATO and the collective West, the string of agreements which the US-led West reneged on — including the one in which NATO said it would not expand eastwards and threaten Russian security — is in itself a staggering feat.

From Dostoevsky to the 'Russian soul', Putin's incredible grasp of history and contemporary geopolitical trends put him in a class apart, perhaps along with Chinese President Xi Jinping alone, and none else in the world stage.

According to US geopolitical commentator and former military man Scott Ritter, this was "very much a tour de force by the Russian President where he was introducing an American audience to the nuances of Russian history, into the complexities of the Russian soul. And, if you don't understand Russian history, and you don't understand

the Russian soul, then you're ba-



sically on a journey without a .. The Russian president map. helped create a map, a map that guided not only Carlson, but coming to their rescue sooner. every American viewer through the complexities of what makes the West repeatedly went back Russia tick."

Ritter sums up brilliantly the **DEGREE OF THOUGHT** longue-durée historical per-By: Annie Domini spective so val

ued by not just Russia, but much of the Global mitting that those agreements South, which is in stark contrast were meant to simply buy time, with the convenient imperial amarm Ukraine to the teeth and nesia of the American-led Westeventually use it as a cannonern hegemony, or what it fodder to provoke Russia into a euphemistically calls its 'rulesbloody Slav-versus-Slav war, so based international order' as to destroy the Russian economy through a thousand cuts.

Putin's dwelling on the formative history of the Russian na-Putin also lamented how his tion, the intimate connections of initial earnest entreaties to forits landmass, landscape with the mer American President Bill language, faith and the people, Clinton of letting Russia be a sheds an invaluable light on the part of NATO, or at least a comorigin of the Russia-Ukraine war, mon global security architecture, which Carlson came to appreciwere rebuffed. Putin said his ate in the course of the historycountry has always wanted peace lesson masquerading as an and dialogue, as well as cooperinterview. ation along global security lines, Carlson realized, as he admitonly to be turned down multiple

times.

republics.

Not only that, America-led

NATO repeatedly crossed what

Russia considered its 'red lines'.

pansion since 1991, when the

Soviet Union collapsed, and the

various Soviet republics declared

independence. Russia's demands

were simple: NATO wouldn't

Russian Federation's interna-

tional border would be along the

Not only did the NATO expan-

sion brought within its military

ambit Eastern European coun-

tries like Poland. Hungary and

ted in a later recording posted as a prologue to the interview, that what the Russian president did was not at all a filibuster, or a way to escape direct questioning, and carried out five waves of exbut an exposition of the broadest scale. Putin explained why the so-called Russia-Ukraine war didn't start on February 24, 2022, but that it was only a reaction to the unacceptable reign of come to its borders, and the terror unleashed on the people of the Donbas, the eastern portion of Ukraine with Russian-speakpreferably neutral former Soviet ing majority, since the Euromaidan coup in Kiev in 2014.

Thus, Putin carefully demolished the Western argument that the Russian invasion was 'unprovoked': indeed, Putin underthe scored how deep

states like Bulgaria, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia in 2004. While Russia was livid at these developments, it was too battered from the post-Soviet neoliberal shock to effectively stop the NATO enlargement directly aimed at threatening its geopolitical security. In 2008, proposal to include Georgia and Ukraine into NATO was floated, and that is when Russia drew a line.

While Ukraine had been long cultivated by the West as a fulcrum against Russia, it had relatively neutral governments until 2014, since Ukraine's economy was greatly subsidized by the Russian giant next door, propping it up with cheap energy, agriculture and other sectors.

However, post 2014 Maidan on agreements, including Minsk I and II, with coup, a virulently anti-Russia European leadleadership was installed in Kiev, which gradually included memers, such as the former German bers of the far-right groups such as the Azov that sport Nazi in-Chancellor Angela Merkel adsignia and idolize Nazi-era criminals like Stephan Bandera, among others. These neo-Nazi militias wreaked havoc on the residents of the Donbas region, carrying out executions, bombings, and other atrocities, while disenfranchising them, and discouraging the use of the Russian language.

For eight years, the serial atrocities continued along with arming of the neo-Nazis in the Ukrainian military with heavy weaponry, and state-of-the-art missiles, grooming them to eventually fight Russia. The Western narrative of an "unprovoked' war falls flat when studied under the lens of contemporary geopolitical events as Putin illustrated, a huge contrast with the infantile 'good vs. evil" binaries regurgitated by the Euro-American leaders and their corporate media.

"The origins of Putin's outlook lie in the new, special type of state which emerged with the Soviet Union, alongside its unique relationship to historical time... it has basis, whether consciously or unconsciously, in the Marxist-Leninist outlook ... a training in master-class Soviet education," says Haz Al-Din, an American geopolitical commentator critical

of the establishment. Putin may not be a communist, the Czech Republic in 1999, but but he's nevertheless a dyed-inthe-wool historical materialist, a went on to include post-Soviet

world-statesman with a firm grasp of the past, the present, with a shared vision for the common future. This is aptly summed up in Putin's answer to Carlson's question on what the Russian president thought of the division of the world into two camps, much worse than the Cold War era.

Putin replied that a human brain may be divided into left and right hemispheres, but still needs to work as a whole; else it would be a disease, a serious mental illness. Putin likened the current global situation to such an illness

Putin also effectively countered an attempt by Carlson to rile up Sinophobia, when he asked if China would dominate the BRICS countries, and wouldn't it be a case of replacing one colonial power with another. Putin replied that it's the same 'boogeyman" story concocted by the collective West, and that China's political philosophy isn't aggression, instead it is coopera-

Putin said that with 1.4 billion people, China's rise is like that of the sun, and it's fruitless to resist it, one must adapt to it. With this, Putin firmly underscored the unparalleled significance of the Russia-China ties, calling Xi his 'colleague', showering praise on the Chinese leadership, thereby amply demonstrating that Moscow and Beijing are now joined at the hips.

Historians are gradually coming to terms with the emergence of these two 'civilisation states', which value their people, territorial and historical integrity, and believe in an organic, holistic, continual existence of its land, language, people and traditions. This is a stark contrast of the historical nihilism of the West which sacrifices everything at the altar of capital and colonial plunder, that ultimately ends up depriving the ordinary citizens of these very countries, as the empire turns on itself like the snake eating its own tail. Vladimir Putin laid bare the alternative to Western nihilism and historical amnesia at a time when the President of the United States is not being able to string a coherent sentence together. The contrast is way too glaring for comfort, especially for an American. (IPA Service)

Supreme Court nixes widely accepted into knowledge, truth and wisdom norm to deny bail to accused under UAPA

# meddling in politics

#### **By: Tirthankar Mitra**

The results of Pakistan election held on Thursday make it clear that it has been a vote for the underdog. It is also a vote against the Establishment meaning powerful Pakistan army.. Pakistan Tehrik-e-Insaf (PTI) headed by an imprisoned Imran Khan has emerged on top. Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz, army backing notwithstanding, has failed to reach the top tier of victory stand.

PTI is claiming 180 seats among the 265 constituencies in the country, as telecast in Al Jazeera at the time of writing. But it is likely to be a legal battle as one of its supporters have already moved Lahore High Court To form a government, a party must have 133 seats out of 265 in the National Assembly. In all, 169 seats are required out of a total of 336 seats which include reserve slots for women and minorities. Fact remains that no party has attained an absolute majority. One wonders whether to ask PML-N leader and former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif what was his provocation to deliver a victory speech. Perhaps Sharif feels that his overtures to Asif Ali Zardari and his son Bilawal Bhutto of Pakistan People's Party (PPP) will help his party attain majority. But then seeing is believing.

· It is time for the Election Commission of Pakistan to rise to the occasion. After all, millions have made their voices heard through the ballot box demonstrating their faith in the electoral system of Pakistan.

It has been the army brass who like on earlier occasions played a dubious role The widespread people's participation in the elections is a loud and clear sign that voters disapprove of such meddling in their democratic rights.

State administrative apparatus being involved with manipulation of elections in Pakistan is no unique event. The 2018 elections saw such events though the interference this time was unprecedented.

PTI chief Imran Khan and several leaders of its front ranks are marking time behind the bars. Many PTI activists were rounded up, its symbol, the cricket bat was not allowed. Even many a independent candidate supported by PTI were not allowed to campaign. But thanks to the people's support these intimidatory tactics backfired as the victory of a large number of PTI-supported independents indicate. What was tried to be portrayed as a political outcast emerged with the people's approval. It seemed the imprisonments and similar measures only steeled the voters resolve.

As for the denial of the PTI symbol of the cricket bat reminiscent of Khan's flamboyant sporting career, the voters have supported it in its absence. The invisible cricket bat struck the ball with its middle past the boundary fences openly exemplified the people's ire towards the administration read the men in uniform.

The people's rights have been interloped. It only raised the voters determination to assert democratic rights Heads were bloodied. But they remained unbowed. This is time for Election Commission of Pakistan to to stop any repetition of pre poll scenario. It has to ensure all winning nominees can join the party of their choice. Any shadow of threats and allurements has to be banished. Horse trading, an expression familiar to Indian voters must be prevented.

The administration read the army would indeed be painting itself in darker hues if it is involved in any further attempt to upset the popular will. There are many believers in the Army's ranks subscribing to the belief that power flows from the barrel of a gun. In a democracy, power flows from the verdict of the voters at the ballot box. Any attempt to sabotage such verdict will precipitate a crisis Pakistan can ill afford. (IPA Service)

Mother Goddess Saraswati: Insights

**By: Dipak Kurmi** 

**¬** xploring the symbolism dembodied in the depiction of Mother Goddess Saraswati reveals distinct attributes. Draped in immaculate white attire and gracefully mounted on a white Swan, she epitomizes purity. Buddhi (discriminate intelligence), and Akasa (the space filled with the eternal element of consciousness). The transparent white hue symbolizes the essence of unsullied truths intertwined with nature. Accessing and comprehending these truths necessitates an approach

with a pure and uncluttered mind, devoid of any egotistical preconceptions. Without cultivating a mindset free from the influence of relative perception, discerning the subtle boundary between

truth and falsehood becomes a challenging endeavor. Analogous to diluted milk that appears indistinguishable from its pure form, our minds, clouded by subjective viewpoints, might struggle to recognize the nuanced differences.

However, akin to a Swan selectively consuming the pure milk and rejecting the adulterated water, the symbolism of Saraswati's mount becomes evident in its practical significance. In essence, attaining a genuine understanding of truth necessitates the presence of a pure and untainted mind, allowing it to manifest in its en-

tirety. The presence of the Veena, a stringed musical instrument, in the hands of the Mother symbolizes her role as the custodian of all Sabdas encompassing both spoken and written words carrying profound meanings. The significance lies in the orderly arrangement of letters to give words meaning. This underscores the importance of pleasant demeanor in fostering

positive relationships and harmony. Without such harmonious interactions, life may encounter disruptions. A pertinent Vedic verse comes to mind, highlighting the genesis of words and their meanings: "Prajapatiravajidamasit, Tasyavagdwitiyaasit, Vagvaiparamam Brahman." In essence, it suggests the primordial existence of Prajapati, the creative matrix, accompanied by Vak, portraved as second to Him, as she is initially potential and then manifests as Sakti; and the word itself is Brahmana.

The resonance of a similar concept can be found in the 4th Gospel, stating, "In the begin-ning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." In the context of ancient Indian perceptions, Vak is considered the Sakti, or the Power, of the creator. Acexisting beyond the realm of cording to this viewpoint, the initial motion at the Primal Source, known as pranava, sparked the primal sound Om. This resonance, when further attracted, gave rise to energetic streams emerging from the seeds of creation, resulting in the manifestation of differentiated sounds.

Among these, the audible root syllables, termed as Bija mantra in the Indian sense, encompass the 50/51 alphabets of the Devnagari script. The harmonious symphony of these root syllables played a pivotal role in forming words with names and forms. Impor-

tantly, all these words find their intrinsic existence in Akasa, the space filled with the eternal element of consciousness. In the ancient Indian worldview, Akasa was considered the foremost element to emerge in the universe's creation. This aligns with scientific understanding, which asserts that post the Big Bang, space was the initial entity to surface, laying the foundation for the subsequent evolution of

the excited energy chain. According to this perception, Akasa is believed to cradle the supra-sensual power of sound within its essence. This sonic energy, as it travels through the air, comes into contact with vocal chords, giving rise to audible words for human ears. Metaphorically, the Veena,

Mother Goddess Saraswati's musical instrument, signifies the embodiment of words, portraying the profound connection between sound, space, and the manifestation of language. In her depiction, the Mother holds a sacred book, symbolizing the Veda. This signifies her role as the guardian of eternal truths – the self-revealed design principles intricately woven into nature, steering the course of existential order. Importantly, these truths transcend individual judgment,

personal interpretation. Within this framework, the wisdom encapsulated in Rumi's words holds paramount significance: "Somewhere beyond right or wrong, there is a garden." This underscores the necessity to approach truth with a mindset that transcends conventional notions, urging us to move beyond the constraints of mental limitations. The essence conveyed is that genuine knowledge and wisdom are attainable solely through a pure and untainted mind, liberated from all forms of limitations

The Mother is depicted with a rosary in her other hand, suggesting the significance of persistent contemplation on acquired knowledge for a deeper understanding of the subject matter. This aligns with the verse: "Sastra sunishcit puni-puni dekhi," emphasizing that continual reflection on a subject consolidates our insights. (The writer can be reached at

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### By: K Raveendran

The Supreme Court has issued a rather contrarian ruling on the grant of bail, by proclaiming that people accused under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act (UAPA) do not deserve bail as a rule. Such people must be granted only in exceptional cases, the court clarified. The court further said that delay in hearing of the case is no ground to grant bail.

"The conventional idea in bail jurisprudence vis-à-vis ordinary penal offences that the discretion of Courts must tilt in favour of the oft-quoted phrase 'bail is the rule, jail is the exception' – unless circumstances justify otherwise - does not find any place while dealing with bail applications under UAP Act." a bench comprising Justices MM Sundresh and Aravind Kumar said.

The case related to the bail application of a man accused of promoting Khalistani terror movement. But while establishing the rule that bail must necessarily be rejected under UAPA, the court enunciated a two-prong test to be applied while dealing with bail applications under the Act. These include whether the test for rejection of the bail is satisfied. In this context, the court analysed the particular section of UAPA which imposes restrictions on grant of bail to a person accused of offences under Chapters IV and VI of the Act, over and above those stipulated under CrPC.

The harsh ruling bases its logic on the intent of the legislature while framing a law such as UAPA, which is intended to strengthen national security. The court pointed out that the intention of the legislature, while enacting UAPA, was to make 'jail' the rule and 'bail' an exception. It said the exercise of general power to grant bail under UAPA is 'severely restrictive' in scope, with the courts being required to arrive only at a prima facie satisfaction compared to 'strong suspicion' as in case of discharge, based on material on record.

This ruling, while intended to strengthen national security, raises critical concerns about the thousands of undertrials who find themselves languishing in jails due to an inability to secure bail. The most disconcerting aspect is that a significant number of these individuals belong to vulnerable sections and minorities, adding an extra layer of injustice to an already dire situation.

The UAPA, enacted to combat terrorism and unlawful activities, has often been criticized for its stringent provisions, leading to prolonged detentions without trial. The recent ruling, which narrows the scope of bail in UAPA cases, has the potential to exacerbate the already alarming situation of undertrials in Indian jails.

A significant proportion of these individuals facing prolonged detention are from marginalized communities and religious minorities. The inability to secure bail not only denies them their fundamental right to liberty but also perpetuates systemic inequalities. It is essential to recognize that the impact of such legal decisions disproportionately affects those who are already marginalized in society.

The plight of these undertrials highlights the urgent need for a comprehensive overhaul of the legal and judicial system. First and foremost, legal assistance must be made readily available to those who cannot afford it. Access to competent legal representation is a fundamental right and a cornerstone of a fair and just legal system. By ensuring legal aid for all, regardless of socioeconomic status, we can mitigate the disparities that currently exist in the justice system.

Additionally, the financial burden of securing bail often becomes an insurmountable obstacle for many undertrials. The state must take proactive measures to address this issue by implementing a robust system of financial assistance for those who find themselves trapped in the legal labyrinth. A fair and just society must not allow an individual's financial status to determine their access to justice.

The Supreme Court, as the custodian of justice, should take this opportunity to not only safeguard national security but also protect the rights of the vulnerable sections and minorities. Striking a balance between security concerns and individual liberties is crucial to upholding the principles of justice and ensuring that innocent lives are not adversely affected. (IPA Service)

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### WOMEN

#### Women racing towards liberation – fast, The burden of unrealistic beauty standards is often the heaviest on women is often the heaviest on women magnificent and free By: Ayesha This incident shattered my excitepressure on brides and their families. Similarly, in "True Beauty," Lim Ju ment. On my way back to class, I was The pursuit of these criteria often re-Gyeong utilizes makeup as a means

#### **By: Sameera Iyengar**

There's a marvellous new book of plays out: Ottam aur Anya Natak -Ottam and Other Plays – by Sapan Saran, published by Vaam Prakashan. Each of the three plays in the book has a woman at its centre.

While theatre is rife with portrayals of women as victims or heroines, long-suffering, silent and strong, Saran is not interested in that trope – her protagonists simply aspire to live life on their own terms and determinedly nurture that spirit in a world that is always trying to show them their place.

Ottam, the third play in Saran's book, engages with a topic close to my heart running. "Ottam" is the Tamil word for running. The protagonist Akai lives to run. One may say that running is her life. In a beautiful little scene, Saran captures the utter joy of running: Akai's father is trying to teach her to play the parai, a percussion instrument that belongs to the Paraiyar caste.

Akai, bored with the slowness of the tempo, starts messing around. She tells her father she'd much prefer to run. He challenges her, "Run through the river as I beat my drum". She takes up the challenge and flies off. Anxious for his daughter at first, he gets caught up in her running and soon his drumbeats follow, triumphantly.

For me, this scene evoked memories of running as a young girl - my body launching into space and picking up pace till it found a rhythm with my breath; the wind rushing through my hair and against my face; the way it felt to hit second wind and keep pumping, pumping, pumping, beyond the barriers of my body.

All runners experience this feeling of expansion, where you lose yourself and become much bigger than yourself. I have always felt utterly beautiful and free when I run.

In my life, running coincided with learning Bharatanatyam. My dance teacher did not like my short hair and boyish ways. I just didn't have the right adakkam - a Tamil word for a woman's ability to to contain herself. What happens when society demands adakkam from you, but ottam claims you?

What happens if you are a woman runner with a body that does not fit received ideas of femininity? An androgynous body perhaps, a body too close to perceived masculinity in its strength and expression. In a society taught to think in binaries, only slowly awakening to the fluidities of gender, such a body does not fit. What happens then?

When I was young, I hated standing in airport queues. Twelve years of studying in the US meant an annual roundtrip flight, two security checks each way – 24 flights, 48 checks. I'd stand in the women's line, holding my breath, hoping to get through without incident.

Invariably. I was asked to go

done is gender testing. In her research for the play, Saran discovered how the method of gender verification developed over time. From all women being tested to nude parades for physical inspection of women athletes to the current scenario where only those who arouse suspicion are selected for gender testing.

It is hardly surprising that "suspicious" athletes tend to be those who are "not feminine enough". Here's how it works: the athlete's testosterone levels are checked. If it is "too high" (the norm is invariably the white woman) she is deemed ineligible to compete in women's races and stripped off her medals. She is thrown out of competitive sport, with no place to go.

At the Mumbai book launch, Saran said, "Dutee Chand had to undergo a gender test, and failed it. Yet, she won the case of hyperandrogynism (higher than normal levels of testosterone). She challenged the court and asked: what is the scientific proof that there is a direct relationship between naturally occurring testosterone and performance? They weren't able to produce any scientific proof about it."

A 2017 study, critiqued on grounds of method and bias, found that women with higher levels of testosterone do better in short distance races (up to 800m). But so what? Since these are naturally occurring testosterone levels, why should they disqualify an athlete?

A 2014 study of 693 elite male and female athletes had already found that "16.5 per cent of men had low testosterone levels, whereas 13.7 per cent of women had high levels with complete overlap between the sexes".

I have experienced the joy and freedom of running, but I also enjoy the privileges of caste, class, education, access and an encouraging family. What does competing at the highest level mean to people who are not cushioned in social privilege?

An Indian Express spotlight on the 256 medal winners - individual and team events; India won 107 medals - of the September-October 2023 Asian Games sheds some light.

Women contributed 43% of the medals India won. A third of all medallists (men and women) came from rural areas. Homes headed by daily wagers accounted for 40 of 256 medals, that is, 15%; 244 athletes anonymously shared their household income -50 (or 20%) came from families that earned less than Rs 50,000 a year when they began their chosen sport. Only 33 athletes had parents with a stable income.

In media interviews, athletes talk about their struggle, the support of their families, and a change in their social status when they are selected, when they win medals and acclaim. Successful sportspersons can dream of government jobs and financial security.

Imagine, then, what it means to be dem competition b "not feminine enough"

n a world captivated by aesthetics and appearances, the concept of beauty has evolved into an intricate tapestry woven from societal expectations, media influence, and personal perceptions. While beauty truly rests in the eyes of the beholder, the unfortunate truth is that unrealistic beauty standards often cloud our selfperception, leading us to question our worth and identity

From glossy magazine covers of Vogue, Cosmopolitan, Femina, Elle, Harper's Bazaar, and others to carefully curated social media feeds of actors and beauty influencers, and even within the narratives of popular films and dramas, we are bombarded with images of an idealized beauty that seems both unattainable and homogeneous. These standards, set by society's ever-changing norms, force us into a perpetual cycle of self-doubt and comparison.

As a dusky girl who spent half of my life encountering hurtful comments, jokes, and belittlement, I remember a poignant incident from my childhood that highlighted the harsh reality of these beauty standards. During my fourth-grade year, I participated in the Founder's Day skit. I portrayed one of the fairies, positioned at the back of the stage.

The event pictures were proudly displayed on the notice board, and I eagerly looked for my presence. To my dismay, I found myself absent in most of the photos. In one picture where I was barely visible, I approached my event teacher for an explanation. She attributed it to a possible mistake and suggested I could participate the following year.

confronted by a group of so-called "cool" girls. They cruelly remarked that my absence in the pictures was due to my supposed ugliness. Their words were like daggers, leaving me shocked and wounded. I shared my pain with my teacher, only to receive a superficial response that did little to soothe my hurt. This experience made me realize how the pressure to conform to unrealistic standards not only erodes our self-esteem but also makes us feel inherently worthless.

The burden of unrealistic beauty standards is often heaviest on women and girls. According to a recent survey, 81% of women feel societal pressure to adhere to beauty standards, dictating how they should look, dress, and behave. As societal expectations increase, expressing our true selves becomes a challenge fraught with the fear of judgment.

Common comments such as 'apply some cream to make yourself fair,' perpetuating the fairness ideal pushed by brands like Fair & Lovely, 'don't go out, or you'll become darker,' reinforcing the stigma around darker skin tones, 'don't eat too much, or you'll get fat,' aligning with the narrative pushed by various weight-loss products and slimming teas like Lipton, and 'wear heels to appear taller,' mirroring the emphasis on height often marketed by shoe and fashion brands, are all too prevalent.

We are in 2024, but Indian culture remains fixated on traditional ideals of fairness, slimness, and physical attractiveness, particularly in the context of selecting an ideal bride. This ingrained checklist, still adhered to by groom's families, places significant

sults in demands for dowry and additional gifts. While conforming to societal beauty standards may offer some respite for certain individuals, those deemed unattractive face heightened challenges, subjecting them and their families to emotional trauma and societal taunts.

This unrelenting pressure to be perfect can lead to a host of negative consequences. According to the World Health Organization, body dysmorphia and eating disorders fueled by unrealistic body images promoted by various brands are on the rise. Mental health issues like anxiety and depression are also exacerbated by the constant reinforcement of unattainable beauty standards in advertisements, movies, and dramas. It's crucial to acknowledge that these standards perpetuate harmful stereotypes and undermine the diverse beauty that exists in all individuals.

This toxicity is not limited to any specific culture. South Korea is renowned for its demanding beauty standards, and the popular dramas "My ID is Gangnam Beauty" and "True Beauty" depicted the portrayal of how societal expectations contribute to insecurities and difficulties, particularly for young girls striving to conform to these ideals. Both K-dramas intricately examine the emotional and psychological toll of appearance-related insecurities, bullying, and the pursuit of transformation. In "My ID is Gangnam Beauty," Kang Mi Rae undergoes plastic surgery in an attempt to escape the torment of childhood bullying, only to grapple with the intricacies of her new identity and societal pressures.

to conceal her perceived flaws and navigate the challenges of high school life. Beauty standards are a web that. even if we strive to meet them, subjects us to judgment for every aspect of our bodies, from head to toe. Attempting to conform to unrealistic beauty ideals can be a futile and emotionally taxing endeavor. The pursuit of an ever-shifting ideal can leave us feeling inadequate, constantly chasing an unattainable goal. Moreover, the energy expended in this pursuit often diverts us from more meaningful endeavors, such as personal growth, self-discovery, and cultivatng genuine relationships.

I realized that outer appearance is not everything, and understanding that our value extends far beyond appearances is the first step toward breaking free from the shackles of unrealistic standards. Authenticity is a wellspring of power, it empowers us to appreciate our unique qualities, quirks, and imperfections, all of which contribute to our beauty.

By acknowledging our worth independent of societal judgment, we can reclaim our confidence and strength. Instead of striving to meet someone else's idea of beauty, we can focus on nurturing our well-being, pursuing our passions, and fostering self-love. This transformation is not only empowering for ourselves but also sets a positive example for others, inspiring them to embrace their authenticity as well. As we unburden ourselves from the weight of unrealistic beauty standards, we pave the way for a society that celebrates diversity and individuality in all its forms. (Courtesy: Youth Ki Awaaz)

# Beauty tips to look awesome this Valentine's Day

#### By: Shahnaz Hussain

or couples in love and hopeful singles, Feb-✓ ruary is the Paris of all months. Finally, it is the time of the year when everything around you seems lovely and beautiful. It's Valentine's Day.

Getting ready for Valentine's Day is a hectic task. It requires a lot of things in place. You have to think about clothes, makeup, shoes or sandals. But at the same time, we forget about the basics of healthy skin. We try things from outside rather than caring for food, sleep, and regular skincare routine accurately. Valentine's Day is the most awaited time of the year, whether you've been together three months or three decades. Valentine day is the perfect opportunity for you to bond and reconnect with your partner, girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, or wife.

sweet through online store/e-commerce websites.

There are a lot of Valentine's gift packs in the mar-

ket containing chocolate truffle flavours: milk

chocolate, milk chocolate caramel, and dark choco-

late strawberry. You may choose desi Ladoo /mithai

Especially impressive if you live apart, a surprise

gift might be the perfect way to share the love this

year. Not sure what to buy? Keep it classic - paint-

ings, art objects and flowers like roses will always

be well-received and create a sense of occasion.

Twinned with a scented candle, Valentine's Day

will be truly wrapped up. Take advantage of sweater

weather and escape into the wilderness, where you

can relax by the fire and enjoy some hot chocolate.

Take a scenic hike together and enjoy all the beau-

tiful sights and the fresh air — it's a great way to

bond while getting some much-needed time to un-

If you've got a new boyfriend, a hot date, or a

tried-and-true love, Valentine day gives you the

perfect excuse to pamper yourself to look romantic,

sweet presentable, attractive with flawless looking

Water based moisture is key for glowing skin.

Moisturizers provide a good base before applying

radiant skin with youthful glow

depending on the taste of your sweetie.

It doesn't matter if you are going on a special date for a romantic night out, looking for one or just a walk with friends and family, it brings the biggest date night of the year and the restlessness that comes along to look one's best on the special If you can't be with your sweetie in person this over the face and neck, with a slightly damp year, then you might as well send them something sponge. This helps it to set and last longer.



any makeup. Moisturizers which are formulated with shea butter, dimethicone, ceramides. hyaluronic acid and aloe vera water help provide long-lasting hydration. Hydrate and nourish your skin every night before sleeping.

If your skin is clear, leave out the foundation during the day. Use baby powder or compact power. Pay more attention to the oily areas of the face, like ose forehead and chi

be white. Choose from ivory or pale pink. Blend well.

For the eyes, use a brown eye shadow on the eyelids. Use the same brown shadow under the lower lashes, instead of eyeliner or kaajal. Take a darker brown eye shadow and apply it on the upper lid, close to the upper lashes. The entire effect will be natural. If you want to line the eyes, use an eye pencil. Give your eyes a light touch of mascara. Make sure the lashes do not stick together. Brush them with an eyelash comb.

Wear a sunblock for outdoor events during the day, these acts as a shield and also works as a good under base for your foundation accelerating its performance. Take proper sleep for at least eight hours during night lack of sleep will show on your face no matter how well you fashion your appearance. . Put a drop or two of lavender oil on your pillowcase and try to relax. Sandalwood and Clary Sage are other good options.

For the night and for a more dramatic effect, use a dark brown or dark grey eye shadow on the eyelids close to the lashes and stroke it upwards and outwards. For the smoky-eyed look, line the eyes with eyeliner close to the lashes and then smudg the eveliner slightly with a sponge-tipped applicator. It should not be a harsh line.

men's line. I'd stand my ground, but had to say that I was a woman - it was humiliating. My women friends are shocked when they hear this; at most, they agree, I could be androgynous. The bottom line, however, is that I am "not feminine enough".

There are many such "not feminine enough" women in the world of sports, who do not conform to expected presentations of femininity or, despite their skirts and visible breasts, are too muscular, too strong, too fast... just too much.

The stories of women runners who've had to negotiate this are legion. I think of Flo-Jo (Florence Griffith-Joyner), the fastest woman sprinter ever, a vision in her short skirts and long painted nails and rippling muscles, flying past a field of champion runners. I think of the Williams sisters of tennis.

And of how they always picked on Serena - too black, too unapologetic; Venus was more acceptably feminine. Powerful female athletes without adakkam disturb, even affront, society. And society finds ways to contain them.

One of the weapons by which this is

Imagine the layers of injustice when a Santhi Soundarajan or a Dutee Chand are disqualified from competitive running on the basis of gender testing. Some, like Dutee, are able to fight back, but society yields nothing easily.

Saran understands that the runner's feeling of freedom comes from an inner spring – society can neither give it nor take it away. As long as the runner keeps running, her spirit cannot be broken. Ottam takes this metaphor and runs with

Through the story of Akai, the play revels in women's freedom and desire, confronts the violent machinations of patriarchal society, and rests power in the spirit of the individual woman.

When Caster Semenya, the South African middle-distance runner, winner of two Olympic gold medals and three World Championships, was gendertested, stripped of her honours and disqualified from running, she responded with: "I am woman, I am fast". Ottam celebrates this woman, fast, magnificent, and free. (Courtesy: Scroll.in)

If you want to use foundation at night, choose a water-based one. Add a drop of water for a lighter coverage.

Before applying foundation, apply astringent lotion if your skin is oily, or moisturizing lotion for dry skin. Wait for a few minutes to allow the skin to absorb it. Next, use concealer to cover up pimples and scars, if any. Or, use two shades of foundation. One shade should be as close to your skin colour as possible. The other should be a shade lighter if the blemishes are dark. Take a little light coloured foundation and apply it directly on the pimple or pimple scar. Avoid rubbing or smearing. Pat it into the skin. Then apply your normal foundation on the face and using a moist sponge, spread it evenly, going outwards. Remember the neck too. Blending is important to achieve a smooth finish then apply tinted loose powder on top to "set" the foundation. Or, use compact powder.

Blusher comes next, or you can apply it at the end. Use powder blusher. Pink or peach blusher would suit most skin tones. Apply on the cheekbones and slightly below it. Use your finger tips to dot the area with blusher. Then, blend with the brush, outwards and slightly upwards. Apply highlighter on the cheekbones. Highlighters should not

Who ever heard of a Valentine's Day date ending without a goodnight kiss? Go with a soft pink or berry hue that is no more than two shades darker than your natural lip colour is a good way to keep your lips coloured without going overboard.

Exfoliate your lips the night before date night with a gentle lip scrub to remove dead skin cells to soften your pucker and improve the look and application of your date night lipstick.

For the buttery soft and smooth lips, plain gloss can be enough for the day, or add a touch of gloss over light pink or mauve lipstick. Coloured gloss is also available. Avoid using lip liners and just brush the lips with lipstick, going for shades of pink, from pale pink, to rose or tawny pink. At night, go for rose, coral or bronze, or just stick to pink.

Just don't forget to hydrate your lips with your favourite lip balm, salve, or conditioner after exfoliating. Wear a light flowery or lemony fragrance, nothing too overpowering. Always be kind and confident. I think these two traits together make someone beautiful.

As the last step, touch up your nails, smooth your strands, and spritz on some perfume. You're ready to go! (The author is an international fame beauty expert and is called Herbal Queen of India)

## The mirage of 'Nari Shakti' and 'Lakhpati Didi'

#### **By: Archana Prasad**

n her budget speech, Union finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman has identified the unleashing of 'nari shakti' (women's power) as one of the biggest achievements of the Modi government since it came to power in 2014. She claimed that "the empowerment of women through entrepreneurship, ease of living and dignity for them has gained momentum in these ten years".

One of the examples of this model of nari shakti, which has created a hype in the mainstream media, is the claim that the government has enabled the creation of one crore 'Lakhpati Didis' or women whose household income is above one lakh per year, through self help groups (SHGs) under the Deendayal Antyodaya Yojna-National Rural Livelihoods Mission (DAY-NRLM).

The much hyped scheme, in-

ter on August 15, 2023, aims at training women for the production of led bulbs, repairing and operation of drones for agriculture, plumbing and other non-traditional skills. The ministry in turn makes third party agreements and helps these women with branding and marketing their products. Some of the main partners of NRLM and the Ministry of Rural Development are Patanjali, Flipkart, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, etc.

The scheme ties women with credit lines and MUDRA loans, many of which are being serviced by the non-commercial banks under the aegis of priority sector lending.

The intention to build links between agribusinesses and women is illustrated through the 'Namo Drone Didi' programme that was announced in November 2023 and has been allocated Rs 500 crore in the

augurated by the prime minis- interim budget. This scheme is Hence, it is not surprising that set to enrol women in the promotion of digital agriculture by providing 15,000 women's groups 'kisan drones', which they can rent out to farmers. In this sense, women's SHGs will become agents of corporate giants who aim to dominate the agricultural markets. It appears that programmes like 'NAMO Drone Didi' and 'Lakhpati Didi' are being used to trap women's SHGs into corporate networks,

plug, too.

especially transnational agribusiness giants who are firm allies of the Modi government. While the interim budget is

trying to sell the idea that women have an opportunity to become wealthy, the government has squarely ignored their basic needs. By stating that 'outcomes' not outlays are important, the finance minister has absolved the government of all responsibility for providing women basic services.

while lofty claims are made about allocations and achievements, the government's record on expenditure of these schemes is absolutely abysmal. For example, the finance minister has linked women's dignity to the joint ownership of houses under the PM Awas Yojana (Rural).

However, the budget of the scheme shows that revised estimate for the scheme in 2023-24 was about 50% of the budget estimate, implying that very little money was spent for the programme.

Similarly, in the Har Ghar Jal programme, which has been marketed as pro-woman, the actual government expenditure in 2022-23 was 16% lower than the previous year. Furthermore, the budgetary estimate for 2024-25 is even lower. The utilisation of funds in the flagship Swachch Bharat Mission (Gramin) for open defecation free villages re-

mains at 60-70%, even if the led to a neglect of the systemic outlays remain the same in each year.

Schemes and subsidies that are essential for wellbeing of women are seeing low government spending and allocation cutbacks. Some examples of these are nutrition (food subsidy and PM POSHAN), education (scholarships), widow pension, and employment (MGNREGA). The onus for these is slowly being shifted on the state governments without adequate support from the Union government. In short, the Union government has shrugged off its responsibility for providing conducive living conditions for women in the country. Instead, it is arguing that women are responsible for their own 'empowerment' by enhancing their capabilities and should fund their own de-

ings. This individualised notion of women's empowerment has

velopment through their sav-

discrimination and violence that has been faced by women, and this is also reflected in the interim budget. The proportion of the gender budget in total budgetary spending has remained at about 5-6% during the two tenures of the Modi government. The money allocated to the Ministry of Women and Child Development has remained at around 0.5% of the total budgetary expenditure.

Furthermore, in the wake of rising violence against women, the government's commitment to invest in infrastructure for support to victims is also questionable. The funds for Mis-Shakti, combining sion schemes for protection and empowerment of women, are not even 0.1% of the total budgetary expenditure and 70% of the Nirbhaya fund remains unspent. The lack of political will for augmenting ing this manuwadi govern-infrastructure for protection of ment. (*Courtesy: The Wire*)

women has resulted in weak and tardy implementation of legislations against domestic violence and sexual harassment. This pattern is compatible with the continuous targeting and moral policing of women by the hindutva brigade.

The pro-corporate and neoliberal policies of the government have created the conditions for the growth of this right-wing ideology. In this situation, the image of the 'Lakhpati Didi' is part of the larger hegemonic project of 'Vikasit Bharat', which is being used to legitimate an authoritarian government.

It is an attempt to weaken the resistance of the democratic women's movement and fracture its social base. The women of India need to intensify their resistance and demystify the mirage of nari shakti and work towards oust-

### WORLD

### Israel says about 100 hostages remain in Hamas captivity after dozens were freed during a cease-fire in Nov

# Israeli forces rescue 2 hostages in dramatic Gaza raid that killed at least 67 Palestinians

RAFAH, Feb 13: Israeli flict, Gaza's Health Ministry forces rescued two hostages early on Monday, storming a heavily guarded apartment in a densely packed town in the Gaza Strip as airstrikes carried out to cover the raid killed more than 60 Palestinians, including women and

children. The rescue in Rafah briefly lifted the spirits of Israelis shaken by the plight of the dozens of hostages held by Hamas. The nation is still reeling from the militant group's cross-border raid last year that started the war.

The overnight bombardment brought devastation in Rafah, which is packed with some 1.4 million people, most of whom fled their homes elsewhere in Gaza to escape fighting. Associated Press footage showed a large area of flattened houses, tattered tents and lines of bloodied bodies brought into nearby hospitals.

Israel's offensive has killed more than 28,000 Palestinians in the territory, displaced over 80% of the population and set off a massive humanitarian crisis.

More than 12,300 Palestinian children and young teens have been killed in the con-

PARIS, Feb 13: The govern-

ments of Poland, France and

Germany vowed on Monday

to make Europe a security and

defense power with a greater

ability to back Ukraine, amid

concerns that former U.S.

President Donald Trump

might return to the White

House and allow Russia to ex-

pand its aggression on the con-

tinent. The foreign ministers of

the three countries met in the

Paris suburb of La Celle-Saint-

Cloud to have talks about

Ukraine, amid other issues.

They discussed reviving the

so-called Weimar Triangle, a

long dormant regional group-

ing that was designed to pro-

mote cooperation between

France, Germany and Poland.

Polish Prime Minister Don-

ald Tusk, who met with French

President Emmanuel Macron

in Paris and German Chancel-

lor Olaf Scholz in Berlin on

Monday, said he wanted to

said Monday. About 8,400 women were also among those killed. That means children and young teens make up about 43% of the dead, and women and minors together make up three quarters.

The ministry, which does not distinguish between combatants and civilians, provided the breakdown at the request of the AP. Israel claims to have killed about 10,000 Hamas fighters but has not provided evidence.

In Hamas' cross-border raid on Oct. 7, an estimated 1,200 retrieve them. people, mostly civilians, were killed, and militants took 250 people captive, according to Israeli authorities.

Israel has described Rafah as the last remaining Hamas stronghold in the territory and signaled that its ground offensive may soon target the town deal with Hamas. on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip.

Rear Adm. Daniel Ĥagari said Israel says about 100 special forces broke into a hostages remain in Hamas second-floor apartment in captivity after dozens were Rafah under fire at 1:49 a.m. freed during a cease-fire in Monday, accompanied a November. Hamas also holds minute later by airstrikes on the remains of roughly 30 othsurrounding areas. He said ers who were either killed on Hamas militants were guard-Oct. 7 or died in captivity. ing the captives and that The government has made members of the rescue team



shielded the hostages with freeing the hostages a top aim of its war, along with destroytheir bodies as the battle ing Hamas' military and goverupted. erning capabilities. But as the The army identified those fighting drags on, rifts have

rescued as Fernando Simon emerged in Israel over how to Marman, 60, and Louis Har. 70, who were abducted from Israeli Prime Minister Ben-Kibbutz Nir Yitzhak on Oct. jamin Netanyahu says persist-7. They also hold Argentinian ent military pressure will citizenship. They are among bring about the captives' freejust three hostages to be resdom even as families of the cued: a female soldier was hostages and many of their rescued in November supporters have called on the

The rescue, which Hagari government to make another said was based on precise intelligence and planned for Israeli military spokesman some time, is a morale booster for Israelis but a small step toward winning the release of the remaining hostages, who are believed to be spread out and hidden in tunnels. Har's son-in-law, Idan Begerano, who saw the released captives at the hospital where they were airlifted, said the two

communicating well and aware of their surroundings.

Begerano said Har told him immediately upon seeing him: "You have a birthday today, mazal tov." The men held long, tearful embraces with their relatives at the hospital, according to video released by Netanyahu's office.

The airstrikes hit jampacked Rafah in the middle of the night, and dozens of explosions could be heard around 2 a.m. Ashraf al-Qidra, spokesman for the Health Ministry, said at least 67 people, including women and children, were killed in the strikes. Al-Qidra said rescuers were

still searching the rubble. An Associated Press journalist counted at least 50 bodies at the Abu Youssef al-Najjar Hospital in Rafah.

Mohamed Zoghroub, a Palestinian living in Rafah, said he saw a black jeep speeding through the town followed by clashes and heavy airstrikes.

"We found ourselves running with our children, from the airstrikes, in every direction," he said, speaking from an area flattened by the bombardment. (AP)

# **President Arif Alvi may not administer** oath to new Pakistan prime minister

ISLAMABAD, Feb 13: Pakistan President Arif Alvi may not be administering the oath to the new prime minister as his successor will be elected before the next federal government is formed, a media report said on Tuesday.

The News International reported that the oath of the members of the newly-elected National Assembly could be held on February 26, three days before the deadline for summoning the House for its inaugural session, while a similar exercise would be conducted the following day. The members, who have been elected for both



houses, would no longer be members of the provincial assembly if they take oath in the national legislature. Well-placed parliamentary sources told the newspaper that the election of the Senate's 53 members, chairman/deputy chairman, and consequently election of the president of the country has to be held before March 8, the time-space will be limited for conducting the polls for the slot of the president. The sources said if the election of the president is held a week earlier, a new president will administer the oath to the new prime minister instead of incumbent Alvi.

The sources pointed out that once the members of the national and provincial assemblies take the oath, they would be eligible to cast their votes for the election of the Senate members.

The sources have given the schedule for the whole process and told the paper that the members of the assemblies will have to submit their expense details by February 18 and notification of the elected members will be made by February 22.

The session in the case of the National Assembly could be held on February 26, while the provincial assemblies could be summoned on the same or the following day. Once the oath is administered, they would become regular members of their respective houses. The process of Senate election will be initiated and that will take four days.

As soon as the Senate oath will culminate, the schedule for the president's election will be started. On the other hand, a five-day schedule for the election of speakers, deputy speakers, and prime minister in case of the National Assembly and chief ministers in the provincial assemblies will commence, the sources said.President Arif Alvi had declined to administer the oath to Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif on August 14, 2022, and the Chairman Senate had to perform the function after the National Assembly passed a no-confidence motion against then prime minister Imran Khan. Alvi, who avoided it under the pretext of his health, was present in the presidency during the oath-taking and he watched it through a CCTV system of the tall building.Alvi, 74, was a senior member of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party before former prime minister Khan made him the country's President in 2018.

The sources reminded that the caretaker prime minister and cabinet members will stay in their respective offices till the moment a new prime minister takes oath, according to the paper. (PTI)

## Biden forms task force to avoid mishandling of classified documents during presidential transitions

WASHINGTON, Feb 13: President Joe Biden on Monday launched a task force aimed at addressing the "systemic" problem of mishandling classified information during presidential transitions, days after a Justice Department special counsel's sharply critical report said he had done just that.

The Presidential Records Transition Task Force will study past transitions to determine best practices for safeguarding classified information from an outgoing administration, the White House said.

dures to prevent the removal of sensitive information that by law should be kept with the National Archives and Records Administration.

counsel Robert Hur listed dozens of sensitive documents found at Biden's home in Wilmington, Delaware, and at his former Washington office. The papers were marked as classi-

information.

The majority of the documents, Hur's report magnified by rampant over-classification stated, appeared to have been mistakenly re-

documents as they cleared out the offices of the Penn-Biden Center in Washington in 2022, and more were discovered during subsequent searches by Biden's lawyers and the FBI.

Biden promptly reported the discoveries to federal authorities, which prompted the special counsel probe. That's unlike former President Donald Trump, who is accused of resisting efforts to return classified government records that he moved to his Florida residence before leaving office in 2021 and of obstructing the investigation into them in a separate special counsel investigation.

In even the best of circumstances, presidential transitions can be chaotic as records of the outgoing administration are transferred to the National Archives and thousands of political appointees leave their jobs to make way for the incoming administration.

Officials of multiple adninistrations have said there is a systemic problem with mishandling of classi-

cials, particularly around transitions, across the government.

push came after Trump

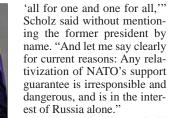
shocked many in Europe over the weekend by appearing to invite Russia to invade any NATO member not spending enough on its own defense.

Poland, France and Germany vow to make Europe

stronger as fears grow over Russia and Trump

"You didn't pay? You're delinquent?"" Trump recounted telling an unidentified NATO member during his presidency. "'No, I would not protect you. In fact, I would encourage them to do whatever the hell they want. You gotta pay. You gotta pay your bills.""The Republican frontrunner's words at a campaign

rally were particularly shock-



"No one can play, or 'deal," with Europe's security," the chancellor added. Earlier Monday, Scholz inaugurated a new ammunition factory, underlining Europe's efforts to ramp up weapons production.

Tusk also urged European nations to invest more in military projects in order "to achieve as quickly as possible... in the next dozen or so months, much greater air defense capabilities, much greater production capabilities in terms of ammunition."

Asked about Trump's remarks, Tusk said they "should act like a cold shower for all -line NATO coun

estimate this increasingly real

threat which Europe is facing.

Tusk in Paris, said Europe's

will "to further supply and

meet Ukrainian needs is cru-

Macron, speaking alongside

### men were thin and pale, but One dead, five injured in shooting at NY City subway station, shooter at large

NEW YORK, Feb 13: One person was killed and five wounded following a dispute between two groups of teenagers at a New York City subway station on Monday at the start of the evening rush hour, authorities said.

The gunfire broke out on an elevated train platform in the Bronx at around 4.30 pm, a time when stations throughout the city are filled with kids coming home from school and many workers are beginning their evening commute.

A 34-year-old man was killed, police said. The wounded included a 14-year-old girl and 15-year-old boy, and three adults, aged 28, 29 and 71. Some of the victims were believed involved in the dispute and others were waiting for the train, authorities said, describing four of the injuries as serious.

"We don't believe this was a random shooting. We do not believe that this was an individual indiscriminately firing into a train or a train station," NYPD's chief of transit, Michael Kemper, said at a news conference. "This incident today occurred as a result of two groups that started fighting while on a train."

The gunfire erupted when the train pulled into the station, Kemper said, striking people on the platform.

The doors opened up and at least one of the individuals in that group, or in the two groups, took out a gun and fired shots," Kemper said. "People started running off the train onto the platform and more shots were fired on the platform.

A hunt was on for at least one shooter, who fled the scene. "The train was coming and there were two kids yelling," witess Efrain Feliciano (61) told the Daily News. "There were at

It will also assess the need for changes to existing policies and proce-The report from special

fied or later assessed to contain classified fied information by senior government offi-

tions with its key European partners.

"There is no reason why we should be so clearly militarily weaker than Russia, and therefore increasing production and intensifying our cooperation are absolutely indisputable priorities," Tusk said in arguing for the European Union to become "a military power" in its own right. The diplomatic tries like Poland, which experienced both German and Soviet occupation during World War II and later spent decades under Soviet control Anxieties run high there over the ongoing war just across Poland's eastern border. Speaking alongside Tusk in

Indonesia's presidential election

cial," after leaders of the 27 EU member nations sealed a deal to provide Ukraine with Berlin, Scholz blasted Trump's 50 billion euros (\$54 billion) comments. "NATO's promise in support for its war-ravaged of protection is unrestricted -economy. (AP)

least six shots.'

"I saw sparkles as the bullets hit the wall," Feliciano said. "A woman was holding a child screaming."

Video from television news helicopters showed a subway train stopped at the station and orange evidence cones on the platform, which is three stops north of Yankee Stadium. Trains were still running through the station on an express track, but weren't stopping as police investigated.

Fear of violence on the subway system spiked after a string of incidents in recent years, but overall, crime in New York City has been plummeting since a surge at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic. (AP)

moved from government offices, though he also detailed some items that Biden appeared to knowingly retain. He concluded that criminal charges were not warranted in the matter.

"I take responsibility for not having seen exactly what my staff was doing," Biden said last week after Hur's report was released. He added that "things that appeared in my garage, things that came out of my home, things that were moved were moved not by me but my staff"

Biden aides first discovered some of the

Former Vice President Mike Pence turned over some classified documents discovered at his home last year. And former officials from all levels of government discover they are in possession of classified material and turn them over to the authorities at least several times a

"Previous presidential transitions, across administrations stretching back decades, have fallen short in ensuring that classified presidential records are properly archived at NARA," the White House said. (AP)

### Australia to ban doxxing after pro-Palestinian has high stakes for US and China activists publish information about hundreds of Jews



JAKARTA, Feb 13: When Indonesians cast their votes on Wednesday for a new president in one of the world's biggest elections, the stakes will also be high for the United States and China.

The Southeast Asian nation is a key battleground economically and politically in a region where the rival global powers have long been on a collision course over Taiwan, human rights, US military deployments and Beijing's aggressive actions in disputed waters, including the South China Sea. Outgoing President Joko Widodo's foreign policy avoids criticism of Beijing and Washington but also rejects alignment with either power. The delicate balancing act has won considerable Chinese trade and investment for in pressuring the Nether-

Indonesia, including a USD 7.3 billion highspeed railway that was largely funded by China, while Jakarta has also boosted defence ties and intensified military exercises with the US. These policies would likely

continue if election frontrunner Prabowo Subianto, the current defence minister whose vice presidential running mate is Widodo's eldest son, wins, according to analysts.

"None of the major structural features of defense and foreign policy, I think, will change,' said Evan Laksmana, a Southeast Asia security expert at the International Institute for Strategic Studies in Singapore. Subianto adheres to a policy of neutrality and has publicly praised the US and China. He cited America's historical role

lands to recognise Incountry he was alluding donesian sovereignty in to.Baswedan said human the 1940s, during a rights and environmental forum in November at protection should underthe Centre for Strategic pin Indonesia's foreign and International Studies policy. "If we have no think tank in Jakarta. values, then there is a "This is part of history cost-benefit relationship,

and we cannot forget this where we will only supdebt of honour," said port countries that are profitable for us," he Subianto, who also extolled China's imporsaid. The US and China tance to Southeast Asia. have both seen how the "China is a great civilisaemergence of a new tion. It has contributed a leader in the region can lot and now it is very, threaten their interests. very active and con-Rodrigo Duterte, after tributing a lot to our capturing the Philippine economy. presidency on an anti-

Former Education crime platform in 2016, Minister and Jakarta became one of the most vocal critics in Asia of Governor Anies Baswedan, a presidential US security policy while candidate who is trailing nurturing close ties with Subianto in most inde-Chinese leader Xi Jinping and Russian Presipendent surveys, said he would shift what he dent Vladimir Putin. called Widodo's "trans-Duterte threatened to actional" foreign policy evict American military to one anchored on prinpersonnel who were in ciples if he triumphs in the Philippines for com-

the elections bat exercises. He later "When a country inmoved to terminate a devades another country. fense agreement with we can say this is against Washington that allowed our basic values. Even thousands of Americans though we are friends, if to enter the country for rights were violated, we largescale combat drills, can reprimand them," but he ended that effort Baswedan told The Asas he appealed to the US sociated Press in an into provide vaccines at terview last month the height of the coronavirus pandemic. (AP) without saying which

MELBOURNE, Feb 13: The Australian government said on Tuesday it will outlaw doxxing — the malicious release online of personal or identifying information without the subject's permission - after pro-Palestinian activists published personal details of hundreds of Jewish people in Australia.

Attorney-General Mark Dreyfus said the proposed laws, which have yet to be drafted, would involve issuing take-down notices to social media platforms and imposing fines for the intimidation tactic.

The government was responding to Nine Entertainment news reports last week that pro-Palestinian activists had published the names, images, professions and social media accounts of Jewish people working in academia and the creative industries.

Pro-Palestinian activists distributed a nearly-900 page transcript that leaked from a private WhatsApp formed last year by Jewish writers, artists, musicians and academics, Nine newspapers reported last week. The transcript was accompanied by a spreadsheet that contained the names and other personal details of almost 600 people, purportedly the group's membership.

Author Clementine Ford, who was one of several activists who posted links to the leaked information, said that it shouldn't be considered doxxing.

"This chat demonstrated extremely organised moves to punish Palestinian activists and their allies," Ford posted on Instagram. Dreyfus said the new laws would strength Australian protections against hate speech, but provided scant detail about how they would work.

"The increasing use of online platforms to harm people through practices like doxxing, the malicious release of their personal information without their permission, is a deeply disturbing development," Dreyfus, who is



Jewish, told reporters.

"The recent targeting of members of the Australian Jewish community through those practices like doxxing was shocking but, sadly, this is far from being an isolated incident," Dreyfus added.

There has been an increase in reports of antisemitism in Australia since Israel's war against Hamas began in October.

The Australian government's online safety watchdog defines doxxing, which is also known as "dropping dox" or documents, as the "intentional online exposure of an individual's identity, private information or personal details without their consent".

Asked for his definition, Dreyfus said doxing was the "malicious release, publicly, of personal information of people without their consent". "We live in a vibrant multicultural community which we should strive to protect," Drevfus said.

The government's plan to outlaw doxxing was welcomed by the Executive Council of Australian Jewry, which represents Australia's Jewish community.

'We look forward to working with the government to ensure the full extent of the harm caused is understood and that the new laws effectively protect Australians from this shameful and dangerous practice," council president Daniel Aghion said. (AP)

Jailed ex-Thai PM Thaksin gets parole, capping a reconciliation with military that ousted him

BANGKOK, Feb 13: Thailand's former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra, who last year returned from more than a decade of self-imposed exile to serve a prison sentence for misdeeds committed while in office, has been granted parole and could be released this weekend, the country's justice minister announced on Tuesday.

Parole for Thaksin would be a symbol of reconciliation between his populist political party and the country's conservative establishment, a rivalry that defined Thai politics for nearly 20 years and led to two military coups.

Justice Minister Tawee Sodsong told reporters ahead the weekly Cabinet meeting in Bangkok that Thaksin qualified for early release because he is in the eligible category of inmates who have serious illnesses, are disabled or are aged over 70. Thaksin is 74 years old.

Tawee did not confirm the date that Thaksin will be released, but it is widely expected he could be released as soon as this weekend. He is currently confined to a police hospital in Bangkok where he is serving time for convictions related to corruption and abuse of power while in office, convictions he decried as politically motivated. Opponents have charged that serving his sentence in a hospital was a special privilege, suggesting that it was part of a part of a political deal between his party and the military. Thaksin had been in exile since 2008, but voluntarily returned to Thailand in August last year and reported to prison to begin serving an eight-year sentence. He arrived back in his homeland the same day Srettha Thavisin of the Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai party secured the post of Prime Minister with the support of military-linked parties.

He was moved almost immediately to the hospital on grounds of ill health and about a week after that, King Maha Vajiralongkorn reduced his sentence to a single year. Thaksin, a telecommunications billionaire who used his fortune to build a populist political party, served as prime minister from 2001 to 2006, when he was ousted by a military coup. (AP)

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### Northeast

# PM Modi to virtually address people of Tripura on Feb 24 Modi to address 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Tripura (Developed India Developed Tripura)', a reach-out programme

AGARTALA, Feb 13: Prime Minister Narendra Modi will address the people of Tripura virtually from Delhi on February 24 as part of the 'Viksit Bharat Viksit Tripura (Developed India Developed Tripura)', a reach-out programme, chief minister Manik Saha said on Tues-

day. The Prime Minister has given the HIRA model (Highways, I-way, Roadways, Airways) to the people of the state to boost the communication system, Saha said

"The Prime Minister, who has been giving whatever we ask for will be addressing the people of Tripura over Viksit Bharat Viksit Tripura programme virtually from Delhi on February 24," Saha said

perity



He said Modi has been "Under the Act East pol-

trying to usher in 'Ram icy, the Maitri Setu con-Rajya' where people used necting Bangladesh has to live in peace and prosbeen inaugurated in South Tripura's Sabroom. A Spe-The Prime Minister has cial Economic Zone is

given as many as six nabeing undertaken at Sabtional highways to the room. The state's face will northeastern state, the

bridge is made operational as it will pave for direct connectivity to Chittagong port in Bangladesh," he said

Claiming that the northeastern state is reaping the harvest of a double-engine government, the chief minister said a massive infrastructure building is taking place in the northeastern state.

"Rs 440 crore has been sanctioned to implement various projects including building embankments on both sides of the River Haora, beautification of the surroundings of the Ujjayanta Palace (in Agartala)." Saha said. He said that taking a cue

from the Narendra Modi government, his administration does not believe in be transformed once the playing politics when it

aware of it.

It is because of their

comes to the development of the state and its people. The chief minister said his government believes in solving problems through

dialogue or discussion. "There was a problem on Monday but we have solved the problem amicably," he said, apparently referring to the rail and road blockade demanding Roman script for the Kokborok language exam.

The agitation which began on Monday morning was called off in the evening after the state government assured the students that they would be allowed to write Kokborok language papers in the upcoming class 10 and class 12 exams in both Bengali and Roman scripts. (PTI)

# 1 killed, 2 injured in shootout in Manipur

IMPHAL, Feb 13: A 25-year-old village volunteer was killed and two others were injured in a gunfight between two warring communities in Manipur's Imphal East district on Tuesday, police said.

The shootout took place at Pukhao Shantipur bordering Kangpokpi district, a senior officer said. The deceased was identified as Sagolsem Loya.

He was taken to a private hospital in Imphal where he succumbed to his injuries, the officer said.

Intermittent gunfights had been reported at Pukhao and surrounding hill areas since Sunday night. More than 180 people were killed in Manipur since the ethnic violence erupted on May 3 last year after a 'Tribal Solidarity March' was organised in the hill districts to protest against the Meitei community's demand for Scheduled Tribe (ST) status.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts. (PTI)

# EC team visits Sikkim, reviews preparedness for LS, assembly polls

tion Commission of India (ECI) team headed by senior deputy election commissioner Dharmendra Sharma visited Sikkim and held meeting with state government officers to review the preparedness for Lok Sabha and state assembly polls to be held later this year, an official said on

Tuesday. The EC team held a meeting with the chief secretary, DGP, special DGP, chief electoral officer, state police nodal officer, home secretary and other senior officials.

In the meeting, the overall preparedness of the state for the conduct of general elections was discussed in detail, he said. On Monday, the EC team also held a meeting with all district collectors and superintendents of police to review the preparedness and plan of action of the district administration.

All DCs and SPs made a detailed presentation on the matters relating to the electoral roll, printing of EPIC, identification of critical/vulnerable polling stations, availability and training of

GANGTOK, Feb 13: An Elec- manpower, arrangements for establishment of strong rooms, training and despatch centres, counting centres, election expenditure monitoring, the official said.

> The DCs and SPs were directed to focus majorly on election works and ensure that timely action is taken to dispose of the forms received during the continuous updation of electoral rolls.

The EC team also held a meeting with the state nodal officers of various enforcement agencies which monitor election expenditures.

The EC officials directed the nodal officers to strengthen their monitoring mechanism to curb the movement of cash, liquor, drugs, freebies and other materials which can be used as inducement to the voters during the elections.

They also asked these agencies to share intelligence among themselves for an effective network of information exchange which would help in better coordination of their enforcement activities. (PTI)

### Centre open for peace talks with HNIC: Dy CM Tynsong



SHILLONG, Feb 13: Meghalaya deputy chief minister in-charge of home (police) Prestone Tynsong on Tuesday said the Centre is still opening the door for talks with the proscribed Hynniewtrep National Liberation Council (HNLC).

'Therefore, we are still inviting them (HNLC) on behalf of the Meghalaya state government to please not discontinue the peace talks," Tynsong told reporters.

He also asked the HNLC to decide maturely saying, "Again, I also request you to resume the talks, the door is open. Think about it again, please be mature and think about the future.'

Referring to a recent social media post by the HNLC as 'drama', Tynsong said, "As I have

Organisation communities living in Manipur to protect land.

belonging to the indigenous communities need to think of what kind of war is being waged against the indigenous people of the state. The crisis unfolding in the state is a war being

waged against the indigenous people and not against the Meitei alone, Talking on the side-Nando also said. lines of the celebration

of land in Manipur

to wage war against the indigenous community non-stop for the last nine months, he said. Nando Luwang then said the central government remains as a mute spectator even as the ple. Otherwise, all in-

people of Manipur are facing the crisis alone for will perish together, he the last nine months. (NNN)

The AMCO president SHILLONG, Feb 13: The United Demoalleged that even as a cratic Party (UDP) and the Meghalaya Vetwar is being waged to erinary Services Association (MVSA) have break Manipur for the demanded action against the Border Security last nine months, most of Force (BSF) personnel for alleged harassthe legislators belonging ment of an officer of the state animal husto the indigenous combandry and veterinary department. munities seem to be un-

The incident reportedly took place at Muktapur village under Amlarem block in West Jaintia Hills district on February 11.

AMUCO stresses on protection UDP, MVSA demand action against

In a statement, UDP general secretary Jemino Mawthohon on Monday said the party strongly condemned the highhandedness of the BSF personnel against Seiboklang Buam, the government officer.

"Following the news item on social media which has gone viral, the officer was manhandled and interrogated. The BSF personnel also threatened to shoot the officer at Zero Point along the border of India and Bangladesh," he said.

"This act on the part of the BSF personnel, who is supposed to provide security along the border area, has put the entire se-



**BSF personnel for assaulting officer** 

curity force in bad light. This shameful act on the part of the BSF personnel is highly unbecoming and uncalled for," Mawthoh added.

The UDP leader also said that the party has not taken this lightly and will apprise the director general of BSF and the BSF's vigilance department to investigate into the matter and take appropriate action against the personnel who have gone out of the way to harass the officer of the state government. "Such incidents could have easily been ture," it stated. (NNN)

avoided to gain the trust of the border resi-dents and the border sentinels should exercise restraint while dealing with the local population residing along the border areas, he stated.

Meanwhile, the MVSA has asked the BSF to promptly issue an apology for alleged misconduct towards Buam.

The demand was made following an emergency central executive committee meeting of the association held in Shillong. In a statement, the association strongly condemned the actions of Rejender Kumar and his colleague.

The MVSA has decided to bring the matter to the attention of the highest BSF authority, the Meghalaya Frontier Headquarters, emphasizing the distress caused to their member.

"The association insists on a formal, written apology from the concerned BSF authorities, along with assurances that such mistreatment will not happen again in the fu-

### **Privilege & Ethics Committee discusses** petitions against Kuki MLAs

**IMPHAL, Feb 13:** The much awaited meeting of the Privilege and Ethics Committee of Manipur legislative assembly to discuss on the petitions filed against 10 Kuki MLAs was convened at the committee room of Manipur Legislative on Tuesday, sources said. The meeting convened

against the 10 Kuki MLAs who raised the

demand for separate administration,

Okram Joy, a former minister also at-

tended the meeting that commenced from

the matter related to the allegations of vi-

olating the ethics of the Manipur legisla-

tive assembly by the 10 sitting MLAs

hailing from the Kuki-Zo community who

raised the demand for 'separate adminis-

tration'. What had transpired in the meet-

committee meeting was convened to dis-

cuss the complaint he had filed to the com-

mittee for initiating befitting action against

Talking to the reporters after the meet-

ing, Joy observed that the state assembly

owes to take legal action against the 10 sit-

ting members of the house of the state as-

sembly He demanded that the Privilege

and Ethics Committee should investigate

the conduct of the 10 MLAs and submit

However, petitioner Joy said that the

The meeting was convened to discuss

11 am, the sources added.

ing could not be ascertained.

the 10 sitting MLAs.

the findings to the Speaker of the state assembly so that the house can discuss what action could be initiated against them.

He alleged that the act of the 10 Kuki MLAs including two ministers, is one of the biggest crimes committed against the state of Manipur and they must be pun-



IMPHAL, Feb 13: The All Manipur United Clubs' (AMUCO) has stressed on the need for a decisive stand of the indigenous

held at its office in Im-

Nando Luwang said that

there is a strong need for

a firm stand of the in-

digenous communities to

protect the land for the

sake of future genera-

phal's

AMUCO

AMUCO celebrated its 31st foundation day on Monday.

ignorance, the non-indigenous people are able To bring together the legislators belonging to the indigenous communities, the Meitei legislators should take a lead role and take a firm decision to protect the land and its indigenous peo-

digenous communities

tions He said that legislators added

Kwakeithel,

president

clarified earlier, I will again clarify if HNLC is hesitant that senior most leaders including chairman or commander-in-chief may get arrested, we have already given an assurance that we will give a safe passage. If HNLC prefers a different location for discussion other than Meghalaya, we are open to it too. But when I said this, it is not for them to write on social media that we are inviting Prestone for talks because that cannot be taken as official. Officially, it is not I, who is inviting them. It is the Indian government and the state government who are inviting HNLC for talks."

Tynsong confirmed that there has been no official communication from the HNLC in regards to its decision to the government's request for resumption of the talks.

"I have nothing to say, I can't talk on their behalf, but from the government side, the door is still open. We keep requesting them for continuation of talks." he stated. (NNN)

Nagaland olympic and paralympics games inaugurated at the packed Nagaland Cricket Stadium in Chümoukedima on Tuesday. UB Photos

### Nagaland facing acute power shortage State dependent on import of 90 % of power supply at present

HT Correspondent DIMAPUR, Feb 13: The Nagaland power department on Tuesday said the power shortage in the state has reached an alarming stage as the hydro generating stations in the northeastern region are not able to

generate to their full potential. It said several thermal power stations in the region have also shut down for maintenance, adding to the acute power shortage. The state at present is dependent on import of 90 per cent of its power supply

The department said power shortages are a perennial problem in the Northeast during the lean seasons every year as the region is largely dependent upon hydropower. It also added that the shortages are much more acute this year.

"The shutdown of a major thermal power station for maintenance has worsened the power availability situation," it said.



The department urged all con-

The department said though availability and supply of power ability is about 100MW only durhas been increasing every year, the ing the peak hours, adding that the cost of power purchase is also inrate of increase in demand has been much more. creasing year by year.

It cited that the peak demand of the state during the 1990s was only sumers to not only judiciously use about 60MW, but today the peak electricity, but also diligently coopdemand has increased by 300 per erate with it for prompt payments of their monthly electricity bills. It also said it has been requesting all village councils through the district administration to help and assist it in clearing all vegetation such as trees and bamboo near power transmission and distribution lines, as maximum interruptions are caused by such vegetation.

The department appealed that no organisation should disrupt power installations, as it would only lead to more power instability.

For a long-term solution, the department said it is in the process of initiating several hydropower generation projects within the state, including new transmission and distribution lines and sub-stations for better power service.

Seeking cooperation in the interest of the people, officials of the power department said that keeping in mind the ongoing HSLC and HSSLC exams all measures are being taken to improve the power stability and ensure stable supply.

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### Nagaland to host wrestling as part of Khelo India University Games

by committee chairman and MLA Sapam ished by the state assembly while asserting Nishikanta was attended by its members, that the MLAs are to protect the integrity MLA Ashab Uddin, MLA Okram Surof the state as elected representatives of jakumar and MLA RK Imo. the people One of the petitioners of the complaints

He said that the demand raised by the 10 MLAs is against the Privilege and Ethics of the Manipur legislative assembly and punishable under the rule 92 of the conduct of business of the house of the Assembly. The Privilege and Ethics Committee of the state Assembly must investigate into the acts of the MLAs thoroughly and punish them as per the findings of the investigation, he insisted.

The committee should submit the report to the state Assembly that will decide the course of action to be initiated against the MLAs, he added

Based on the complaints, the Privilege and Ethics Committee of the Manipur assembly has served show cause notices to the 10 Kuki-Zomi MLAs who had demanded a separate administration for a group of ethnic communities after violence erupted in the state on May 3 last year. The violence has so far claimed lives of more than 200 people besides rendering and displacing thousands of people of both the communities in conflict after their houses were torched. (NNN)

### 3 held with heroin worth ₹ 90 lakh in Mizoram

AIZWAL, Feb 13: In the biggest drug haul in Mizoram this year, officials of the state excise and narcotics department seized 3.64 kg of heroin in Aizwa on Tuesday morning, an official said

The seized heroin worth over ₹ 90 lakh in the local market was smuggled from Myanmar. he said.

The official said that this is the biggest drug haul in the current year. Three persons identified as Nangzagina (50), Roluahpuia (53), both from Ngur village in Champhai district and Faizur Rahman Barbhuiya (39), a resident of Bagha Bazar in Assam's Cachar district have been arrested for possessing the contraband,

One mini truck used for transporting the heroin was also seized by the department, he said.

The three accused were booked under relevant sections of the Narcotic Drugs & Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 and were produced before a magistrate on Tuesday, the official said. (PTI)



DIMAPUR, Feb 13: Nagaland will be co-hosting wrestling as part of the Khelo India University Games scheduled to be held from February 22 to 26 at IG Stadium in Kohima

Assam is the main host of the fourth edition of the Khelo India University Games. However, other northeastern states will also cohost various disciplines wherein Nagaland has been assigned with wrestling

About 240 athletes from universities across the country will participate and about 74 officials from Sports Authority of India (SAI), All India University (AIU) and National Sports Federation will officiate and provide technical support.

The Khelo India University Games is a national-level multidisciplinary sports event aimed at promoting sports and fitness among university students in India. (NNN)

he said.

### NATION

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### **Ex-Maharashtra CM Ashok Chavan joins BJP**

'New journey in political life'



MUMBAI, Feb 13: Former Maharashtra Chief Minister Ashok Chavan on Tuesday made his political move by joining the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in Mumbai, just a day after parting ways with the Congress.

The 65-year-old Chavan was warmly welcomed into the BJP fold at the party's Mumbai office in the presence of key figures, including Maharashtra Deputy Chief Minister Devendra Fadnavis.

Regarding his new phase in his political career, Chavan, who spent nearly four decades in Congress, said today signifies the commencement of his fresh political journey.

Son of the former Maharashtra Chief Minister and Union Home Minister S B Chavan, his choice to align with the BJP emerges amidst speculation that he might be given the Rajya Sabha nomination.

When asked about any communication from senior Congress leaders Sonia Gandhi and Rahul Gandhi, Chavan chose to evade a direct response

Addressing concerns raised by Shiv Sena (UBT) leader Sanjay Raut regarding the Adarsh scam, Chavan defended himself, stating, "The Bombay High Court's decision favoured me. I view it as a political mishap. Although certain agencies have contested the court's ruling, I have endured enough and consider it a non-issue now."

Former Chief Minister and Shiv Sena (UBT) president Uddhav Thackeray has also raked up the Adarsh housing scam to target Chavan and said on Monday that if the BJP sends him to the Rajya Sabha, it will amount to disrespecting martyred soldiers.

Thackeray on Tuesday again took a jibe at Chavan and said that instead of going to the BJP, he should have gone and met farmers in Marathwada, who have been affected by the unseasonal rainfall and hailstorm.

Addressing a public rally in Sonai in Ahmednagar district, Thackeray took a potshot at Chaan and said that the Adarsh scarr was forgotten but Chavan's move has brought it back into limelight. His involvement in the Adarsh Housing Society scandal, where a high-rise structure was allegedly erected on disputed land without due approvals, has been a contentious period in his political narrative. Despite speculations linking the scandal to his exit from the Congress. Chavan maintains that his decision was self-directed and not influenced by past controversies. He said he had made a new beginning of his life. "In the last 38 years of my political life, starting a new journey. I would like to do some good work and go ahead with progressive thoughts. "Politics is a way of service to society. Some people have criticised my decision. I will not make any personal remarks against anyone," he said

erencing past collaborations with Fadnavis during their respective tenures juxtaposed as Chief Minister and opposition leader. He pledged to bolster BJP's presence in Maharashtra, citing his

dedication to enhancing the party's electoral prospects. Reflecting on his decision to

switch allegiances, Chavan highlighted his alignment with the inclusive ethos of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas" propagated by PM Modi and affirmed his intent to abide by the party's directives and contribute positively to the na-

tional growth trajectory. When asked about whether more people from the Congress could join the BJP, he said, "I have not made any calls to other Congress leaders. BJP leaders, like Fadnavis, will take that decision. I have only joined the party today."

Queried about him attending a party meeting on Sunday and announcing his resignation the next day, Chavan said, "I was thinking about it for a long time. I wanted to be a part of nation-building. It was not an easy decision. I had to think a lot about it. The decision is taken in the interest of Maharashtra, my own district and the nation. If some good things are taking place, I should be a part of it."

"It is true that Congress did a lot of things for me and gave me several opportunities, but nobody can deny that I have also done a lot for the party. It is unfair to be critical of me," he said.

On the farmers' 'Delhi Chalo' march, Chavan said it was true that the cultivators were facing some issues

"But their issues will be addressed for sure. The government wants to stop farmers' suicides. The prime minister is capable, and he can make other leaders, like the agriculture minister, to find solutions," he said.

Fadnavis commended Chavan's entry into the BJP, recognising his extensive political experience and anticipated contribution towards fortifying the ruling coalition

Punjab farmers set off for Delhi, face teargas at Punjab-Haryana border CHANDIGARH, Feb 13: The tance between Fatehgarh Sahib and Shambhu border is around 35-40 Haryana Police hurled tear gas

shells at farmers who tried to break km. barricades set up at the state's bor-Convoys of tractor trolleys by farmers could be seen heading toder with Punjab at Shambhu near Ambala as farmers demanding a wards the Shambhu border on the law on minimum support price national highway. Elderly, youth and women could be seen sitting in A few farmers were detained as the tractor trolleys. well near the Shambhu border, of-

Security personnel deployed in the Haryana side also asked a group of youths approaching the border from the Punjab side to stay away from the barricades near the Shambhu border.

Authorities in Haryana have fortified the state's borders with Punjab at many places in Ambala, Jind, Fatehabad, Kurukshetra and Sirsa using concrete blocks, iron nails and barbed wire to scuttle the proposed march. Riot control vehicles, including

water cannons, have also been deployed at many places at Punjab and Haryana borders. Security personnel were keeping an eye through drones as well.

The Harvana government has also imposed restrictions under Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (CrPC) in as many as 15 districts, prohibiting the assembly of five or more people and banning any kind of demonstration or march with tractor trollevs.



Sarwan Singh Pandher -- general the Haryana Police have been desecretary of the Kisan Mazdoor ployed across various districts. Sangharsh Committee, on Tuesday In Delhi, security has been intendecried the heavy barricading sified with multi-layer barricades, along the borders of Punjab and concrete blocks, iron nails and Haryana in view of the 'Delhi walls of containers at border points.

Chalo' march, saying the state bor-On Monday, tractor trolleys set ders have been turned into "interout from different parts of Punjab to join the protest march. He also accused the Manohar An excavator was also among

Lal Khattar government of harassthe convoy of tractor trolleys, with a farmer in Amritsar saying it "It does not seem Punjab and would be used to break the barri-Haryana are two states. It seems cades

they have become the international The Samyukta Kisan Morcha border," Pandher told reporters in (Non-Political) and the Kisan Maz-Fatehgarh Sahib district ahead of door Morcha had announced that farmers would head to Delhi on In Haryana, 64 companies of Tuesday to press the Centre to accept their demands, including the

enactment of a law to guarantee a Minimum Support Price (MSP) for crops

Referring to the deadlock with the Centre over their demands, Pandher said they did not want a new committee concerning their demands, saying any committee would have meant putting the issue on the backburner.

"We do not want to break any barricades. We want resolution of our issues through dialogue. But if they (the Centre) do nothing then what will we do? It is our compulsion," said Pandher while speaking to reporters in Fatehgarh Sahib district on Tuesday

Pandher said while the media has blamed the farmers for blocking roads, the government itself has blocked roads.

"We grow foodgrains and we feed the country and they have grown a crop of nails" for us," Pandher said while referring to the security arrangements made by the Harvana authorities to block farmers' entry into the national capital.

'We will not indulge in any confrontation with the government. The government may fire a bullet or lathi-charge us. Jawans of police and paramilitary forces are also our brothers," said Pandher, adding that their march will be peaceful. (PTI)

## paramilitary personnel and 50 from India, Qatar enjoy historically close relations: PM on Doha visit

national borders".

ing farmers in Haryana.

the farmers' march to Delhi.

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: India and Qatar enjoy historically close and friendly relations and the multi-faceted ties between the two countries have continued to deepen in recent years, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday ahead of his visit to Doha.

marched toward Delhi.

The Haryana Police hurled tear

gas shells when a group of youth,

who were part of the farmers'

'Chalo Delhi' protest march, tried

to break barricades set up at the

Shambhu border in Ambala, offi-

barricade and tried to throw it off

the Ghaggar river bridge, the police

lobbed several rounds of tear gas

They also used a drone later on

The farmers decided to begin

their march after a meeting with

two Union ministers over their de-

mands, including legal guarantee to

MSP for crops, on Monday evening

Many farmers along with their

tractor trolleys began the march

around 10 am from Fatehgarh

Sahib and are moving towards

Delhi via Shambhu border. The dis-

to drop a teargas shell.

remained inconclusive.

When a few youth broke an iron

ficial sources said.

cials said

shells

Modi said he was looking forward to meeting Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, "under whose leadership Qatar continues to witness tremendous growth and transformation". The prime minister said this in a departure statement ahead of his two-nation visit to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar. Modi is scheduled to travel to Doha on Wednesday afternoon after concluding his two-day visit to the UAE. The announcement on Modi's visit to the

Qatari capital came on Monday hours after seven out of eight jailed former Indian Navy personnel returned home, nearly three-and-half

## ED conducts fresh raids at multiple locations in Kolkata

KOLKATA, Feb 13: Teams of the Enforcement Directorate (ED) began raids at multiple locations in the metropolis on Tuesday morning in connection with its ongoing probe into the multi-crore ration scam in West Bengal, a senior official said.

Accompanied by central forces, the ED teams conducted the raids at Salt Lake, Kaikhali, Mirza Galib Street, Howrah, and a few other places, he said.

ones who are being questioned include cautioned the protesting farmers to be The

months after a Qatari court handed them a death sentence that was subsequently commuted to jail terms ranging from three to 25 years.

Qatar has released all the eight Indians. The former Indian Navy personnel apparently faced charges of espionage, but neither the Qatari authorities nor New Delhi made the charges against them public.

Modi's visit to Qatar on February 14-15 will be his second trip to that country as the prime minister. "India and Qatar enjoy historically close and friendly relations," Modi said.

"In recent years, our multi-faceted ties have continued to deepen in all spheres, including high level political exchanges, growing trade and investment between two countries, strengthening of our energy partnership, and cooperation in culture and education," he said.

The prime minister said the presence of over

800,000 strong Indian community in Doha is a

"testament to our strong people-to-people ties." Besides holding talks with the Amir, Modi is scheduled to meet other high dignitaries in Qatar as well. In his statement, Modi said he is looking forward to further advancing India's comprehensive strategic partnership with the UAE

"Over the last nine years, our cooperation with UAE in diverse sectors such as trade and investment, defence and security, food and energy security and education has grown manifold. Our cultural and people-to-people connect is stronger than ever," he said.

"I look forward to meeting Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed Al Nahyan, the President of the UAE, in Abu Dhabi and hold wide-ranging discussions on taking forward our Comprehensive Strategic Partnership," Modi said. (PTI)

Stationary coach catches fire PUNE, Feb 13: A railway coach parked at the washing yard of Pune railway station caught fire in the

wee hours of Tuesday, officials said. Nobody was injured in the incident. The cause of the blaze is not

known, a Fire Brigade official said. According to Railway officials, some coaches were parked at the washing yard, and one of them caught fire in the early hours.

"The incident occurred around 2 am. Fire tenders rushed to the spot. We immediately separated two other coaches from the affected one and doused the flames," said the fire brigade official. (PTI)

## MSP law cannot be brought in a hurry; farmers should come forward for talks with govt: Arjun Munda

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: Union agriculture benefits and drawbacks of such a law)," minister Arjun Munda on Tuesday said a Munda said. He also asserted that the Modi governlaw guaranteeing Minimum Support Price (MSP) on crops cannot be brought in a

ment does "solid work" keeping in mind the welfare of all stakeholders and will not make any announcements in a "hurry" which could later turn out to be a failed ex-

"They want us to announce certain ings. The government is not there for making announcements but to do work. Announcement is made only after a mature discussion. For a mature discussion, we need to keep in mind the interest of every stakeholder," he said, and added that agriculture is a state subject.

MSP was established in July 2022, eight months after the government promised to set up such a panel while withdrawing the three contentious agri-laws. To date, it has held 37 meetings/workshops. Stating that the Centre is open for dia-

logue anytime to resolve the concerns of farmers, Munda said, "they (farmers) will give the date now". "We have told them we are ready for talks... If they don't want to talk and creating a problem is the motto, then I would advice farmers to be careful about such people who want to create a situation for political benefit. "I want to appeal to the farmers that there can be some elements amongst them who want to create some situation to defame farmers. They should be careful about them," he said.

He emphasised his commitment to a proactive and constructive approach towards development, ref-

Welcoming him, Fadnavis said, "Many leaders in the country have arrived to an opinion of joining the BJP as the country is progressing under the leadership of the Prime Minister. He (Chavan) told us that he is not keen on any post in the party, I want to contribute to the growth of the country."

Chavan was a chief minister of Maharashtra twice and his role in the BJP will be decided after discussing it with the central leaders. he said

"Chavan's stature is of national level and hence decisions regarding his new responsibilities will be finalised after discussions with the central leadership," he said.

"I want to charge the Congress that they cannot keep their leaders with them. The internal environment in the Congress is chaotic. Some of them start opposing the national issues while criticising the BJP. They need to do some intro-

spection." Fadnavis said. (PTI)

businessmen and people closely related to those earlier arrested in the scam.

"These raids are connected to the ration distribution scam. We have got information about the involvement of these people after questioning those who have already been arrested in the case,' the ED official told PTI.

He said raids are being conducted at the premises of three people, including a foreign exchange trader who hails from Bangaon in North 24 Parganas district.

"In this scam, funds have been transferred to different accounts abroad. This particular businessman is from Bangaon and shares a good rapport with arrested TMC leader Shankar Adhya," the official said. Adhya was the former chairman of the Bangaon Municipality, and the central probe agency had earlier claimed that he owns at least 90 forex trading companies registered under the names of his family members. Raids are underway at the businessman's office in Sector V of Salt Lake and his two flats on EM Bypass, the official said. The ED has arrested state forest minister Jyotipriyo Mallick, who was earlier the food minister, for his alleged involvement in the scam.

Sleuths of the agency have also been conducting searches to trace absconding TMC leader Shajahan Sheikh in connection with the scam. (*PTI*)

"aware and alert" about some elements which could defame their protest for political benefits. Munda is part of the ministerial delegation that held two rounds of discussion with the farmers' groups, including Samyuka Kisan Morcha (non-political). Kisan Mazdoor Morcha in

hurry without consulting all stakeholders

and urged the protesting farmer groups to

In an interview with PTI, Munda also

have a structured discussion with the gov-

ernment on the issue.

Chandigarh, to resolve their concerns. However, as the talks remained inconclusive, farmers' groups have started their 'Delhi Chalo' march on Tuesday.

"In the two rounds of discussions, we agreed to many of their demands. But there was no agreement on certain issues. The talks are still on," Munda said.

He said the Centre has agreed to meet many of their demands that can be done at the administrative level.

However, a policy guaranteeing an MSP requires a holistic approach taking into consideration the views of all stakeholders, including the state governments, the minister said.

"Humein MSP ke baare mein yeh dekhna hai kanoon kis tarah banana hai aur ismein kya labh aur kya nuksaan hai. (On MSP, we need to see what kind of law we have to come up with and what are the

"Suppose we do something at a national level, the same people will tell tomorrow that you did not take states into confidence. That will also be not proper," Munda said.

During the course of the discussion with protesting farmers, the minister said farmers were requested to either be part of the Sanjay Aggarwal-chaired committee that is already looking at strengthening the MSP system, or be part of a new committee.

... we will form a committee and asked them be a part of it. For that also, they were not ready," he said, adding that the whole issue should be not be seen in isolation.

The government is ready for a holistic time-bound discussion with clear terms of reference "but they were not ready for this also," the minister said.

The Sanjay Aggarwal-headed panel on

Munda emphasised that the government is committed to farmers' welfare and has increased the agriculture budget from ₹ 27,000 crore to ₹ 1.24 lakh crore annually in the last 10 years.

Besides a legal guarantee for MSP, the farmers are demanding the implementation of the Swaminathan Commission's recommendations for farmer welfare, pensions for farmers and farm labourers, and debt waiver, among others.

The farmers are also seeking withdrawal of police cases and "justice" for victims of the Lakhimpur Kheri violence, reinstating the Land Acquisition Act 2013, withdrawing from the World Trade Organization, and compensating families of farmers who died during the previous agitation. (PTI)

# JEE-Main results: 23 candidates bag 100 score in first edition of exam

Central Control Room was

opened to monitor and facilitate

the smooth conduct of the exam-

"2 national coordinators, 18 re-

gional coordinators, 303 city co-

ordinators, 1,083 observers, 150

technical observers, and 162

deputy observers were deployed.

Live CCTV Surveillance was

ination on the ground.

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: Twenty three candidates have bagged the perfect 100 score in the engineering entrance exam JEE-Main 2024 with a maximum of them being from Telangana, the National Testing Agency announced on Tuesday.

Over 11.70 lakh candidates had appeared for the first edition of the crucial exam.

Among the candidates who secured an NTA score of 100, seven are from Telangana, two from Haryana, three each from Andhra Pradesh, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, two from Delhi and one each from Gujarat, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. All of them are males.

According to NTA officials, NTA score is not the same as percentage of marks obtained but normalised scores.

NTA scores are normalised scores across multi-session pa-



pers and are based on the relative performance of all those who appeared for the examination in one session, a senior official explained.

The marks obtained are converted into a scale ranging from 100 to 0 for each session of examinees, the official added. According to the officials, a

planned in all examination centres to curb malpractice in the examination," the official said.

"The NTA also made arrangements for live viewing of remote locations of all examination centres from the Control Room located in the NTA premises of New Delhi. Recording of CCTV Systems was also done," the official added. Mobile network jammers were installed at all the centres to prevent students from cheating during the exam by using mobile phones or any other electronic device.

"The latest 5G jammers were installed at all examination centres for the first time," the official explained. The examination was held in Assamese, Bengali, English, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Malayalam, Marathi, Odia, Punjabi, Tamil, Telugu, and Urdu.

The exam was also conducted outside India in Manama, Doha,

Dubai. Kathmandu, Muscat, Sharjah, Singapore, Riyadh, Kuwait City, Kuala Lumpur, Lagos/Abuja, Colombo, Jakarta, Moscow, Ottawa, Port Louis, Bangkok, and Washington DC.

It was conducted in Abu Dhabi, Hong Kong, and Oslo for the first time. While the first edition of the exam was conducted in January-February, the second edition is scheduled in April. Based on the results of JEE-Mains Paper 1 and Paper 2, the candidates will be shortlisted to appear for the JEE-Advanced exam, which is a onestop exam to get admission into the 23 premier Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs).

After both sessions of JEE (Main)-2024 Examination, the ranks of the candidates will be released taking into consideration the best of the two NTA Scores in accordance with the policy already made. (PTI)

Months after ED arrest, Senthil Balaji quits as minister



CHENNAI, Feb 13: After remaining as a minister without portfolio for months following his arrest by the ED, V Senthil Balaji has quit the MK Stalin-led state Cabinet

A Raj Bhavan release said Governor RN Ravi, who had earlier opposed the continuance of Balaji in the Cabinet, has accepted Stalin's recommendation in this connection.

Based on a letter from the CM dated February 12, recommending acceptance of the resignation of the jailed DMK leader, the "Governor has approved the recommendation and accepted the resignation of Thiru V Senthil Balaji, Minister, from the Council of Ministers," the release said.

Balaji, a DMK strongman from Karur, was arrested on June 14, 2023, by the Enforcement Directorate here in a cash-for-jobs scam when he was Transport Minister in an earlier AIADMK regime. He is currently lodged in the Puzhal prison.

His multiple bail petitions have been dismissed by the courts so

Two days after his arrest last year, the portfolios held by Balaji then--Electricity, Non-Conventional Energy Development and Prohibition and Excise, Molasses were re-allocated to others in the Stalin-led Cabinet.

Governor Ravi had then objected to Balaji being minister without a portfolio, saying he was facing criminal proceedings.

Balaji represents the Karur segment in the Tamil Nadu Assembly. (PTI)

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5'

### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### NATION

# SC refuses to stay new law on appointment of CEC and ECs, issues notice to Centre

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: The Supreme Court on Tuesday refused to stay the operation of the new law that provides for appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioners by a panel which does not include the Chief Justice of India.

A bench of Justices Sanjiv Khanna and Dipankar Datta issued notice to the Centre on a plea filed by an NGO, Association for Democratic Reforms, and listed the matter along with other pending petitions on the issue for hearing in April.

The plea challenged the constitutional validity of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023

Advocate Prashant Bhushan, appearing for the NGO, submitted the law is contrary to the constitution bench judgement of the apex court which had directed the inclusion of the CJI in the panel mandated to pick the CEC and ECs.

He said two election commissioners are about to superannuate, and if the operation of the law is not stayed, the plea will become infructuous.

"Sorry, we cannot grant you interim relief in the matter. The matter of constitutional validity never becomes infructuous. We know our parameters for granting interim relief," the bench told Bhushan, when he insisted on an interim stay.

Bhushan, however, again urged the court to grant a stay, especially on Section 7 of the Act, by which the panel is constituted for appointment of the chief election commissioner and election commissioners, saying that the issue is important as general elections are around the

### Supplying drinking water to rapidly growing Bengaluru a 'big problem': Dy CM Shivakumar

BENGALURU, Feb 13: Supplying drinking water to a rapidly growing city like Bengaluru is a "big problem" and a "major solution" is needed to address it, Karnataka deputy chief minister D K Shivakumar told the Legislative Assembly on Tuesday. He said almost 20 percent of Bengaluru's water needs are met through tankers

The deputy chief minister, who is also in-charge for Bengaluru City Development, was responding to Jayanagar BJP MLACK Ramamurthy's question about Cauvery water not being supplied to slum dwellers in his constituency, during the Ouestion Hour.

"Bengaluru is growing rapidly. Every



corner. Justice Khanna said, "It's not a matter which can be decided like this. A legislation of Parliament cannot be stayed like this. We have to examine the issue in terms of power of judicial review. We will hear this petition along with other

pending petitions on the issue." Election Commissioner Anup Chandra Pandey is set to retire on February 14, while Chief Election Commissioner Rajiv Kumar will demit office on February 18, 2025. On January 12, the top court had issued notices on two separate petitions challenging the constitutional validity of the law and they are listed for hearing in the month of April. Section 7 of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service and Term of Office) Act, 2023 states- "Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners shall be appointed by the President on the recommendation of a Selection

House of the People - Member; (c) a Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister Member.

The NGO's plea said the law was enacted in 2023 in order to fill the vacuum under Article 324(2) of the Constitution of India.

"However, the impugned section restores the earlier position of law i.e. appointment of Chief Election Commissioner and Election Commissioner would be done solely by the executive. The selection committee is dominated by the members from executive i.e. Prime Minister and Union Cabinet Minister to be nominated by the Prime Minister," it said.

acted in 2023, particularly its Section 7, is violative of Article 14 (equality before law) of the Constitution, basic features of the Constitution, and overrules the 2023 constitution bench decision, without altering the basis.

The petition, filed through Committee consisting of — (a) the Bhushan, said on March 2, 2023, Prime Minister — Chairperson; (b) the Leader of Opposition in the

the members of Election Commission in the hands of the executive would be seriously detrimental to the health of democracy and for the conduct of free and fair elections.

"It thus directed that in order to fill the vacuum (in absence of a legislation), the appointment to the posts of the Chief Election Commissioner and the Election Commissioners shall be done by the President of India on the basis of the advice tendered by a committee consisting of the Prime Minister. the leader of the opposition in the Lok Sabha and, in case, there is no such leader, the leader of the largest party in the opposition in the Lok Sabha having the largest numerical strength, and the Chief Justice of India," the plea said.

It said soon after the verdict, Parliament passed a legislation which virtually overruled it by providing for a selection committee dominated by the executive. This, it said, restored the previous law where the executive picked the CEC and ECs, thereby undermining the rule of law and threatening democracy.

"Apart from this, the Act was passed in Lok Sabha at a time when the majority of the opposition Members of Parliament were suspended by the speaker of Lok Sabha. Such an important legislation has been passed without any debate or discussion....," it said. It stressed on the importance of insulating the poll panel from exec-

"The composition of the selection committee under the Act amounts to excessive interference of the executive in the appointment of the Election Commission and is detrimental to the independence of the Election Commission," it said. (PTI)

### **Centre broad-based Community Radio Station licencing** policy, introduced grant, says Anurag Thakur

tral government broad-based the policy in granting licences to fa-

Also, the government introduced the central sector scheme of extending a grant for Rs 7.5 lakh to an organisation for setting up infrastructure for the CRS, he said.

"We have come a long way from 140 CRS before 2014 to

dialect and regional language,

"I personally feel and the government feels that vernacular is very important and that is why the new education policy encourages learning through the local languages," he said.

Considering that the community radio represented the voice of the community and had a wider impact, the government decided to broad-base the policy by bringing non-profit organisations like civil society and voluntary organisations etc., under its ambit to allow greater participation by the civil society on issues

relating to development and social change, Thakur added. On major policy changes, he 'Vikshit Bharat'.

Tracing the journey of the community radio, he said it was started in 2002 under the leadership of former Prime Minister A B Vajpayee and the government then approved the policy for the grant of licences for setting up CRS to well-established educational institutes such as the IITs and IIMs.

The first CRS was inaugurated by former Deputy Prime Minister L K Advani in 2004, he noted. The Sangam Radio of Andhra Pradesh was the first CRS notfor-profit organisation in 2005. In his special address, Union Minister of State for Information

and Broadcasting L Murugan said the first Community Radio Station was launched at Anna University two decades ago. CRS played a crucial role in communicating the government's programmes and achievements to the common man and as per the vision of Modi to regard border villages in the country as "first villages" the Centre provided infrastructure for Rs 2.500 crore in the frontier villages to strengthen the community sys-

## **ASI to undertake plastering** work at Bibi Ka Maqbara

CHHATRAPATI SAMBHAJINAGAR, Feb 13: the first wife of Emperor Aurangzeb, near Kham river. The Archaeological Survey of India (ASI) will undertake plastering work on the minarets of Bibi Ka Maqbara in Chhatrapati Sambhajinagar to give the monument a fresh look, an official said on Tuesday.

The work will commence after April and may take six to 12 months to complete, the ASI official said. The 17th-century monument, which resembles

Agra's Taj Mahal, was built for Dilras Banu Begum,

Each of the four minarets is nearly 31 meters tall, and these have blackened over the years, and the plaster has come loose in some places, the official said.

"The minarets will be cleaned and checked for seepages. Plastering work will be undertaken wherever necessary," he said.

The cost estimates are being prepared and will be sent for final sanction, he added. (PTI)

#### Contd. from Page 1...

### Population malady his state's

movement," Sarma said. Citing the instance of door-to-door garbage collection system in Guwahati, he said, People don't cooperate in even handing over the garbage and also refuse to pay for the garbage collection. "But in cities like Indore, people systematically hand over the garbage and are willing to pay a fee for the collection facility", he added. (PTI)

### Manipur to 'deport' those who

case of deportation, there are legal implications that need to be considered," he said. A Manipur government official had, last year, said 2,187 people were staying in the state after Myanmar's military ousted the elected government of Aung San Suu Kyi there in February 2021.

The Centre has initiated steps to stop a free movement regime along the India-Myanmar border.

Coordinating Committee (COCOMI), a joint body of several Imphal valley-based organisations, said the chief minister's statement shows that the government has acknowledged the issue of illegal immigrants who settled in the state.

'This is the core of today's conflict. We can learn from Assam's NRC experience. The first thing to do is to identify the illegal immigrants," COCOMI spokesperson Khuraijam Athouba told PTI.

Notably, Manipur has been witnessing recurring bouts of violence since ethnic clashes first erupted in May last year. More than 180 people have been killed since then.

Meiteis account for about 53 per cent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal valley, while tribals, which include Nagas and Kukis, constitute 40 per cent and reside mainly in the hill districts.

The clashes have occurred over a number of grievances that both sides have against the other, however, the flashpoint of the crisis has been a move to give Meiteis Scheduled Tribe status, which has since been rolled back and an attempt to turf out tribals living in protected forest areas. (PTI)

## Ranjan Gogoi receives Assam Baibhav

their significant contributions across various domains.

The ceremony not only celebrated the outstanding accomplishments of these individuals but also highlighted the state's commitment to honoring excellence and fostering a culture of meritocracy and service to society. Assam chief minister Himanta Biswa Sarma, Assam Governor Gulab Chand Kataria and a host of other dig-

nitaries attended the ceremony. (With PTI inputs)

## Mizoram, Assam CMs agree not

Mamit - share a 164.6 km long border with Assam's Cachar, Karmganj and Hailankandi districts.

The border dispute between the two neighbouring states is a long-standing issue, which mainly stemmed from two colonial demarcations.

Mizoram claims that 509 square miles area of the inner line reserved forest, notified in 1875 under the Bengal Eastern Frontier Regulation (BEFR) 1873, falls within its territory. Assam, on the other hand, regarded the border shown in a map prepared by the Survey of India in 1933 as its constitutional boundary.

Vast areas within the inner line reserved forest now fall under Assam.

Similarly, a certain extent of the area, as per the 1933 demarcation, is now on the Mizoram side. There is no ground demarcation of boundaries between the two states.

### The two states have held several rounds of talks to resolve the boundary dispute. (PTI) PM Modi holds talks with UAE

ties. Discussions also covered regional and global issues, the Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement.

"I thank you for this grand welcome of me and my team. As you said, I feel that whenever I have come here, I have always felt that I have come to my home and family." Prime Minister Modi said in his opening remarks at the bilateral meeting with the UAE President.

We have met five times in the last seven months. Today, there is a mutual partnership between India and UAE in every sector," he said.

The two leaders witnessed the exchange of eight agreements including a Bilateral Investment Treaty, MoU on cooperation in the field of electrical interconnection and trade and an Intergovernmental Framework Agreement between India and UAE on the India-Middle East Economic Corridor.

The Bilateral Investment Treaty (BIT) will be a key enabler for further promoting investments in both countries. India has signed both a Bilateral Investment Treaty and a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement with UAE, the statement said.

The Treaty is expected to improve the confidence of the investors, especially large investors, resulting in an increase in Foreign Investments and Overseas Direct Investment (ODI) opportunities and this may have a posive impact on employment generation.

CHENNAI, Feb 13: Considering that Community Radio Sta-Thakur said. tions (CRS) represented the community's voice and had a wider impact on people, the cen-

cilitate the setting up of more CRS across the country, Union Minister for Information and Broadcasting Anurag Thakur said on Tuesday.

481 now. Of them, 117 are func-

### the constitution bench of this court held that leaving the appointment of

## The plea said the new law enutive interference.

year, the city's population is rising by 10 lakh. Water is a big problem, but for the sake of Bengaluru's respect and pride, we want to prioritise drinking water. We will set it right," Shivakumar said.

Noting that the government has not raised water tariffs in the city since 2013, he said, "While all other rates like power tariff have been raised and expenditure has gone up, the water tariff hasn't gone up, it has been eleven years, due to politics and various other reasons. There is a big problem.'

Shivakumar, also the Water Resources Minister, said he has issued an order allocating an additional six tmc ft of Cauvery water to Bengaluru for drinking purposes. (PTI)

tioning in the southern region,' the Minister said in his virtual keynote address at the two-day Regional Community Radio Sammelan (South) being held here under the aegis of the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting to celebrate 20 years of Community Radio in India.

All the 117 Community Radio Stations of southern States /UTs are participating in the regional Sammelan which was inaugurated on "World Radio Day.'

The Sammelan was a celebration of the important work being done by this sector in giving voice to the voiceless apart from the content disseminated in local

said now one organisation could have more than one CRS in a district and the initial period of licence has been increased from five to ten years while the permissible advertisement duration has been increased to 10 minutes from 7 minutes. The advertisement tariff has also been revised to Rs 74 per 10 seconds from Rs 52 per ten seconds, he said. The CRS played an important

role in disseminating information about government initiatives that benefit the people at grassroots level, Thakur emphasised and added that these efforts are crucial for realising Prime Minister Narendra Modi's vision for

With the present 481 CRS set to increase by another 200, youngsters and entrepreneurs could involve themselves in setting up CRS, he said. (PTI)

Therefore, many other impacts

The best mitigation measure for

the project is the avoidance of any

developmental project in the iden-

tified tiger corridor area, the WII

the proposed reservoir is 4.28 sq km (about 17.85 per cent of the

corridor area of 24 sq km).

The total submergence area of

"This 17.85 percent of the area

will be affected at the full reservoir

without any anthropogenic inter-

vention, the area has to be left

alone, and status quo has to be

maintained without any develop-

If the project is unavoidable due

to other considerations and has to

be approved, then mitigation

measures proposed in both the

Wildlife Management Plan have to

The WII proposed regular mon-

itoring of compliance conditions

and mitigation measures through

an independent committee com-

posed of members from NTCA,

WII. the Forest Research Insti-

be undertaken, it said.

mental activities in the corridor,'

of the project on the natural sys-

tems may remain unforeseen as of

today, it added.

report said.

the report read.

The approval is expected to increase investments in India and is likely to help in realizing the goal of Atmanirbhar Bharat by encouraging domestic manufacturing, reducing import dependence, increasing exports etc, the government had said on February 1, after the Cabinet gave its approval for signing and ratification of the Treaty between India and the UAE.

Other agreements signed on Tuesday include an MoU on cooperation in Digital Infrastructure Projects, a Cooperation protocol between the National Archives of the two countries.

An MoU for cooperation in the field of heritage and museums, an agreement on interlinking of the instant payment platforms - UPI (India) and AANI (UAE) and an agreement on inter-linking domestic debit/credit cards - RuPay (India) with JAYWAN (UAE) were also inked.

Prime Minister congratulated President Sheikh Mohamed bin Zayed on the launch of UAE's domestic card JAYWAN, which is based on the digital RuPay credit and debit card stack. The leaders witnessed a transaction made using the JAYWAN card.

The leaders also discussed the strengthening of their partnership in the energy sector.

They appreciated that in addition to the UAE being among the largest sources of crude and LPG (Liquefied petroleum gas), India is now entering into long-term contracts for LNG (Liquefied natural gas).

Modi in his opening remarks said the UAE and India are partnering with each other in every area of cooperation

Modi, who will inaugurate the Bochasanwasi Shri Akshar Purushottam Swaminarayan Sanstha (BAPS) Mandir, the first Hindu stone temple in Abu Dhabi, on Wednesday, said: "The BAPS temple in the UAE is an example of your affinity for India.<sup>3</sup>

Prime Minister thanked President Sheikh Mohamed for his personal support and for his graciousness in granting the land for the construction of the BAPS Temple in Abu Dhabi.

Both sides noted that the BAPS Temple is a celebration of UAE-India friendship, deep-rooted cultural bonds and an embodiment of the UAE's global commitment to harmony, tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

Modi said the construction of the BAPS temple in Abu Dhabi would not be possible without the support from the UAE's leadership.

He also thanked him for attending the Vibrant Gujarat Global Summit in January.

He also thanked the UAE for its support for the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEEC).

The corridor was announced in New Delhi during the G20 summit in September.

The IMEEC is being seen as an alternative to China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI).

The IMEEC will connect India, the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Israel and Europe. Modi said this will not only connect the region but also open the doors for economic development. Modi also thanked the President for the grand diaspora event.

This is the third visit of the Prime Minister to the United Arab Emirates and the fifth meeting between the

two leaders during the past eight months, which reflects the depth of the bilateral partnership, the Ministry of External Affairs said on X.

"Marhaba UAE! PM @narendramodi sets foot in the city of Abu Dhabi. Received with special warmth by UAE President HH @MohamedBinZayed at the airport, and accorded ceremonial welcome," it posted on X.

"Immensely grateful to my brother, HH @MohamedBinZayed, for taking the time to receive me at Abu Dhabi airport," Modi posted on X.

Ahead of the visit, RITES Limited signed an agreement with Abu Dhabi Ports Company and Gujarat Marlevel. If we have to save this area itime Board with Abu Dhabi Ports Company. These would help in building port infrastructure and further enhance connectivity between the two countries, the statement said. (PTI)

### USD 2 trillion per year needed

scaling up five times by 2035 relative to 2022 - to limit warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius. In 2015, countries agreed in Paris to limit the average temperature rise to well below 2 degrees Celsius, and preferably to 1.5 degrees Celsius, compared to pre-industrial levels (1850-1900), to avoid worsening climate impacts.

Long-term data shows earth's global surface temperature has risen by around 1.15 degrees Celsius as compared to pre-industrial levels (1850-1900).

The business-as-usual scenario will take the world to a temperature rise of around 3 degrees Celsius by the end of the century, scientists have warned.

To limit global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius, countries together need to cut down the emissions of planetwarming greenhouse gases like carbon dioxide and methane by 43 per cent by 2030.

At the 28th UN climate conference on climate change in Dubai, nearly 200 countries, for the first time, agreed to transition away from fossil fuels in a "just, orderly, and equitable manner" to avert the worst impacts of climate change.

Climate finance will be the main focus of this year's UN climate conference in Baku's capital Azerbaijan, where nations have to set a new post-2025 target for raising funds to help developing nations cut emissions and handle the impacts of climate change.

This is tough because rich nations have repeatedly failed to meet their 2009 promise to raise USD 100 billion annually by 2020 to support developing countries. (PTI)

### Dam project in Uttarakhand's tiger corridor gets nod despite conservation concerns from complete," the report said.

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: The Centre has approved a proposal for the use of nearly 400 hectares in the Dudhwa-Lagga tiger corridor in Uttarakhand's Nainital district to construct the Jamrani Drinking Water Multipurpose Project, despite the lack of a recommendation from the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA).

The project involves building a 480-metre-long and 150.60-metrehigh gravity dam across the Gola river in Jamrani village in the hill state

It envisages the creation of a reservoir with a maximum capacity of 208.6 million cubic metres (MCM) and live storage of 142.72 MCM, which will be utilised to provide drinking water supply to Haldwani (42.7 MCM), irrigation of 57,065 hectares (9,458 ha in Uttarakhand and 47,607 ha in Uttar Pradesh), and generation of 14megawatt hydropower.

The Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife (NBWL) discussed the proposal in its 77th meeting on January 30 and granted in-principle approval to it.

An NBWL member said the project is critical for drinking water supply to Haldwani town and proposed reducing the dam's height and dropping the construction of a powerhouse

The NBWL member secretary



mentioned that the NTCA had not recommended the project and sought its comment on a site inspection report.

The NTCA member secretary did not respond to PTI's queries on the project.

The environment ministry accorded environmental clearance for the Jamrani Dam Multipurpose Project in December 2019 with a condition to obtain a no-objection

certificate from the NTCA. In December 2022, the NTCA requested the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) to assess the ecological impacts of the proposed dam. The WII team set up for this purpose submitted the report to the NTCA in May last year.

The report presented two decision-making scenarios: keeping the Dudhwa-Lagga tiger corridor intact and conserving this as of utmost importance or balancing the interests of both development and conservation values. "Should the first objective be

chosen, then the proposal has to be rejected, and if the second objective is chosen, then stringent compliance conditions have to be stipulated," it said.

Tiger Conservation Plan and in "Mitigation is not a panacea that will overcome all ill effects of developmental projects. In fact, avoidance is also considered the very first mitigation step/measure. Despite all technological and scientific developments, our understanding of complex natural processes in the Terai landscape, tute, and the state forest departwhich has taken millions of years ment. (PTI) to evolve, is still primitive and far

### ENTERTAINMENT

#### WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024



# **Reports of SRK's** involvement in release of Indians from Qatar 'unfounded', says his office

MUMBAI, Feb 13: Matters involving diplomacy and statecraft are best executed by "our very able leaders", Shah Rukh Khan's office said on Tuesday, dismissing speculation that the star was involved in the release of eight jailed former Indian Navy personnel from Qatar.

Qatar on Monday released the Indian Navy veterans who were sentenced to death and whose sentences were commuted to jail terms of varying duration. Seven of them have returned home. Speculation that Shah Rukh, who enjoys massive popularity in Qatar and recently met the country's prime minister Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani in Doha during an event, played a role in the release of the jailed Indians was rife on Tuesday. Former MP Subramanian Swamy's claim in a post on X that the actor had intervened in the matter circulated widely on social media platforms.

Shah Rukh was trending on X for much of the day. "Regarding the reports concerning Shah Rukh Khan's purported role in the release of India's naval officers from Qatar, the office of Mr Shah Rukh Khan says that any such

assertions of his involvement are unfounded...," his office said in a statement

'... The execution of this successful resolution solely rests with the Indian government officials," it said, unequivocally denying Shah Rukh's participation in the matter.

"All matters involving diplomacy and statecraft are best executed by our very able leaders," the statement, also posted by his manager Pooja Dadlani on Instagram, said.

"Mr. Khan like many other Indians is happy that the naval officers are home safe and wishes them all the best," it said. The actor, 58, recently attended the Asian Football Club final in Doha, where he was the special guest of honour. (PTI)

# **BEING FAMOUS AFTER 'TITANIC' RELEASE** WAS HORRIBLE, SAYS **KATE WINSLET**

LONDON. Feb 13: Oscar winner Kate Winslet says she chose to do smaller projects after the global success of "Titanic" as life became "quite unpleasant" with fame.

The 48-year-old star reflected on the media pressure and body image scrutiny she was subjected to after the release of James Cameron's 1997 romance-tragedy epic.

"I felt like I had to look a certain way, or be a certain thing, and because media intrusion was so significant at that time, my life was quite unpleasant.

"Journalists would always say, 'After 'Titanic', you could have done anything and yet you chose to do these small things' and I was like, 'Yeah, you bet your life I did! Because, guess what, being famous was horrible'," Winslet told Porter magazine. Despite the unpleasant aspects, "It's not a burden, any of it," she said. "('Titanic') continues to bring peo-

ple huge amounts of joy. The only time I am like, 'Oh God, hide,' is if we are on a boat somewhere," the actor quipped.

This is not the first time Winslet



has talked about her popularity following "Titanic", which also starred Leonardo DiCaprio. In 2021, she recalled going "into self-protective mode right away" after the film because she felt "bullied" by the UK media. (PTI)

# Deepika Padukone to present honour at BAFTA Awards, actor expresses gratitude

MUMBAI, Feb 13: Actor Deepika Padukone is currently on cloud nine as she has been chosen as a presenter at the upcoming BAFTA Awards. The list also includes former England football star David Beckham, singer Dua Lipa, Cate Blanchett, Adjoa Andoh of 'Bridgerton' fame, 'Wonka' Oompa Loompa Hugh Grant and 'Emily in Paris's' Lily Collins.

Taking to Instagram, Deepika shared a post on her stories that she captioned, "Gratitude." The 77th BAFTA Film Awards ceremony, set to take place Sunday, February 18, at London's Royal Festival Hall, which serves as the eremony's venue for the second year in a row after several years at Royal Albert Hall. In India, the awards will be streaming live on Lionsgate Play. Attendees will include 'Saltburn' star Barry Keoghan, 'Maestro' actors Bradley Cooper and Carey Mulligan, 'Oppenheimer' lead Cillian Murphy and directors Greta Gerwig, Christopher Nolan, Celine Song and Yorgos Lanthimos, as per Variety.Last year, Deepika made India proud as she was one of the presenters at the Oscars 2023. On the film front, Deepika was recently seen in the aerial action thriller film 'Fighter' opposite Hrithik Roshan. Helmed by Siddharth Anand, the film also starred Anil Kapoor, Karan Singh Grover and Akshay Oberoi in pivotal roles and received good responses from the audience. She will be next seen in the sci-fi action thriller film 'Kalki 2898 AD' alongside south actor Prabhas. Helmed by Nag Ashwin the film also stars Amitabh Bachchan and will hit the theatres on May 9, 2024. (AGEN-CIES)



# AKSHAY KUMAR'S **'SARFIRA' TO RELEASE ON JULY 12**



MUMBAI, Feb 13: Superstar Akshay Kumar's upcoming Hindi adaptation of "Soorarai Pottru"

has been titled "Sarfira", the makers announced on Tuesday. The movie, which is set to release in theatres on July 12, is directed by Sudha Kongara, who also helmed the Suriya-starrer Tamil hit that won five National Film Awards, including best feature film and best actor.

Kumar shared the news on his official Instagram page along with a teaser video.

"Dream so Big, they call you Crazy! #Sarfira releasing only in cinemas on 12th July, 2024. #MaarUdi," the 56-year-old actor posted.

According to the makers, "Sarfira" is a uniquely Indian story of "grit, determination and jugaad, of an underdog challenging the socio-economic fabric of a system entrenched in class, caste and power dynamics". It also features Paresh Rawal, Radhika Madan and Seema Biswas in pivotal roles.

The film is written by Kongara and Shalini Ushadevi, with dialogues by Pooja Tolani. It is produced by Aruna Bhatia of Cape of Good Films, South superstars Suriya and Jyotika's 2D Entertainment, and Vikram Malhotra-led Abundantia Entertainment. "Soorarai Pottru" revolved around Nedumaaran Rajangam or "Maara" (played by Suriya), who sets out to make the common man fly and in the process takes on the world's most capital intensive industry with the help of his family, friends and sheer will power. (PTI)

# **Prime Video sets premiere date for** 'Ae Watan Mere Watan'

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: Prime

Video sets premiere date for 'Ae Watan Mere Watan' starring Sara Ali Khan Sara Ali Khan-starrer "Ae Watan Mere Watan" will start streaming on Prime Video from March 21, the platform announced on Tuesday.

Billed as a historical thriller drama, the upcoming Hindi film is directed by Kannan Iyer from a story he wrote with Darab Farooqui.

"Ae Watan Mere Watan" is a Dharmatic Entertainment production and is backed by Karan Johar, Apoorva Mehta and Somen Mishra. According to the makers, the

movie -- set during the Quit India Movement in 1942 -- is a fictional tale that draws inspiration from freedom fighter Usha Mehta.

Prime Video revealed the premiere date of "Ae Watan Mere Watan" on the occasion of World Radio Day with a motion poster, featuring Sara's voice as Usha, urging the country to unite against the British Raj through a clandestine radio.

Aparna Purohit, head of Originals, India and Southeast Asia, Prime Video, described the film as "homage to the innumerable indomitable heroes" whose sacrifices defined India's path to freedom. "The story struck a deep chord



with us and we instinctively felt the need to bring it to life.

'Ae Watan Mere Watan' further cements our long-standing relationship with Dharmatic Entertainment and underscores our collective commitment to telling stories that are not only entertaining and immersive but have a robust emotional core," Purohit said in a statement.

Johar said "Ae Watan Mere Watan" has been a dream in the making

"At Dharmatic Entertainment, we have always taken pride in bringing forth stories that are told from the heart and 'Ae Watan

Mere Watan' exemplifies that.

"Kannan and Darab have taken inspiration from a poignant point of India's history and woven a rich story with a strong emotional core that is further enriched by Sara's exceptional portrayal of a young revolutionary," the producer added.

"Ae Watan Mere Watan" will also be available on the streamer with dubs in Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam and Kannada.

Actors Sachin Khedekar, Abhay Verma, Sparsh Shrivastav, Alexx O' Neil and Anand Tiwari also round out the cast of the film, which also has a special guest appearance by Emraan Hashmi. (PTI)

#### VEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2024

### **S**PORTS

# **'DAD'S ARMY' AUSTRALIA TEST SIDE LOOKS JADED: VAUGHAN**

LONDON, Feb 13: Former captain Michael Vaughan feels Australia looked jaded in the recent home Test series against the West Indies and said England stand a great chance in next year's Ashes if a "Dad's Army" is fielded by their arch-rivals.

Vaughan said most of the players in the current Australian Test side are ageing and the need of the hour is to infuse fresh talent in order to continue dominating world cricket.

Australia drew the recent two-Test series against the West Indies, who have a poor record Down Under. Playing in only his second Test, Shamar Joseph single-handedly guided West Indies to a narrow eight-run win at Brisbane, returning with stunning figures of 7/68 in the second innings.

"There was not much optimism in Australia that it would be a great Test summer because the two touring teams, Pakistan and West Indies, had poor recent records Down Under. But it was actually very competitive, as proved by the Windies pulling off that stunning win at the Gabba," Vaughan wrote in a column for 'The Telegraph'.

"I could see Australia being quite a jaded team by then. David Warner has become the first of that

Tamim Iqbal



set of great players to retire, and the rest are in their thirties now, so the age profile is a concern for them. "Time passes and minds start to turn to what comes next in life. This group of players has won everything going, so what motivates them? I know well from ex-

perience after 2005 how quickly things can unravel when a Dad's Army team plays in the Ashes. You can look over the hill very quickly," he added. Vaughan said the unexpected

loss in Brisbane at the hands of the West Indies has raised England's that game was a sign for me that

hopes in the Ashes next year. "Australia remain a very good side. Pat Cummins is an outstanding leader. and when they need a big session to turn a game, they usually find it. That was why I was staggered when they lost in Brisbane, and

England have a great opportunity in the Ashes in 2025/26," he wrote.

Vaughan feels apart from inducting fresh faces, Australia also need to rotate their bowling line-up. "They need to start rotating their great bowling line-up to bring in some fresh faces and a fresh mentality to the group. They have no replacement for Nathan Lyon, who will be 38 by that series and is already suffering muscle injuries.

"There's no one waiting in the wings to do anything like the job Lyon does in Australian conditions. Todd Murphy is a promising bowler who can do it in India when it's ragging. In Australia, if Lyon got an injury, they would be worried." Warner's retirement from Test cricket has robbed Australia of a "mongrel" in the Australia side ahead of 2025 Ashes Down Under.

Warner retired from Test cricket at the age of 37 after the threematch series against Pakistan this summer. "Another factor with Warner's departure is that Australia just seem a really nice team to play against. There's no mongrel, no Aussie larrikin in the team. There used to be about eight of them, then it went down to one in Warner. I'm not sure any of them are like that now," Vaughan wrote. (PTI)

# Brazilian soccer's crisis deepens after missing out on Paris Olympics

### left out of BCB's central contracts list

DHAKA, Feb 13: Out-of-favour Bangladesh opener Tamim Iqbal has been excluded from the BCB's central contracts list for 2024, putting a question mark on the veteran cricketer's international future.

Former captain Tamim, who had retired from international cricket in July last year, had reversed his decision within 24 hours after Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina asked him to continue.

Tamim's decision to quit the game was because of his worsening relationship with the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) president Nazmul Hassan, who had questioned the left-handed batter's professionalism.

BCB's move to leave Tamim out of the central contract list on Monday is an indication he is no longer in their scheme of things for 2024.

SAO PAULO (BRAZIL), Feb 13: Brazilian soccer fans were already in a funk after a year that saw a string of poor results, a coaching void and a political tug of war at the country's federation.

Things got even worse Sunday after Brazil failed to qualify for the Paris Olympics thanks to a loss to archrival Argentina, meaning the two-time defending champion will not be part of the tournament this summer.

"It is sad, but it is more of an embarrassment," striker John Kennedy said after the 1-0 loss. 'We should have wanted to win

more than we did." Brazil also failed to qualify for the 1992 and 2004 editions of the Olympic tournament, but those blips didn't coincide with a crisis for the senior national

place in South American qualifying for the 2026 World Cup and its biggest star Neymar has been out with a serious knee injury since October. Some fans and analysts had

hoped 17-year-old striker Enteam. Brazil is only in sixth drick — who is set to join Real Neymar play together on the America. (AP)

Madrid this summer — would provide some cause for optimism by showcasing his talent during the Olympic qualifying tournament. And many supporters had been hoping to see Endrick and the 32-year-old

Olympic team in Paris and lead Brazil to an unprecedented third straight gold medal.

But the Brazilian teenager scored only twice in seven matches in Olympic qualifying. Argentina's World Cup-winning midfielder Thiago Almada netted five. The Olympic soccer tournament features mainly Under-23 players and does not carry nearly the same status as the World Cup or contintental championships — such as the Copa America that starts in June – but missing out completely still stings the pride of many Brazilians. Especially those who are viewing Endrick as the country's next big star, and had been expecting him to show that he could help lead the senior team's attack alongside Vinicius Jr. and Rodrygo at the Copa

# Deflated India eye better show against mighty Dutch in women's FIH Pro League

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ROURKELA, Feb 13: Their morale hitting rock-bottom after slumping to their fourth defeat, India await another tough contest in the women's FIH Pro League when they take on the undefeated Netherlands here on Wednesday. It has been rough sailing for the Indian women's hockey team of late. After failing to qualify for the Paris Olympics, the side has also been faring poorly in the ongoing Pro League matches in

Bhubaneswar and Rourkela. The Savita Punia-led side has played five matches in the Pro League so far, out of which it has lost four and won one.

The home team's campaign started with three successive defeats against China (1-2), the Netherlands (1-3) and Australia (0-3) before it beat the USA 3-1. The Indians then slumped to their second defeat at the hands of

China (1-2) here on Monday. A herculean task awaits India in their next tie as they are up against the formidable Netherlands, who are leading the standings with 27 points from nine matches. The Indians are currently placed fifth in the nineteam league with just three points from five games.

'We haven't got the results we wanted but I believe we have what it takes to put on a good show and get a few points on our side. I think we are playing well in patches so if we can be more consistent, we can definitely go on to win more games," India captain Savita said.

The Indian forwardline has met with partial success so far with the likes of Sangita Kumari, Vandana Katariya, Deepika, Navneet Kaur and Salima Tete registering their names on the scoresheet.

But it the penalty-corner conversion, which after letting them down in the Olympic Qualifiers in Ranchi, is pulling them down further in the Pro League.

In the five matches so far, the Indians have earned 21 penalty corners but have failed to find the net even once.

On Wednesday, the likes Gurjit Kaur, Deepika and Udita will have to be really accurate and innovative with set-pieces if India hope to upset the Dutch.

The Indians also need to tighten their penalty-corner defence to avoid conceding soft goals. India chief coach Janneke Schopman wants her players to take their chances.

"The Netherlands are a quality side but we are not short on talent or ability. We will be patient while keeping the intensity of our hockey high and try to convert any scoring opportunities we have," the Dutch said.

After Wednesday's match, the Indian women will play two more games in the Odisha-leg of the Pro League -- against Australia on February 17 and USA on February 18.

After the ongoing matches in Bhubaneswar and Rourkela, the team will travel to Antwerp, Belgium for the next leg of the Pro League in May. (PTI)

BCB handed out central contracts to 21 cricketers, out of which Shoriful Islam and new captain Najmul Hossain Shanto got the all-format deals. Right-arm pacer Taskin Ahmed has been dropped from the Test contract after he reportedly opted out. He has, however, retained his ODI and T20I contracts. Besides Tamim, Ebadot Hossain, Afif Hossain and Mosaddek Hossain have also been excluded from the central contracts list. (PTI)

### Almeria holds Athletic Bilbao to 0-0 draw in Spain

MADRID, Feb 13: Athletic Bilbao's hopes of qualifying for the Champions League took a painful hit on Monday when the Basque club could only draw 0-0 at lastplace Almeria despite playing with a man advantage for most of the second half.

A win would have taken Athletic above Atletico Madrid into fourth place in La Liga but Ernesto Valverde's team struggled against a defensive home side.

"We feel it's not enough because we had the ball for so much of the game," said Athletic's Óscar de Marcos. "It's frustrating not to have more clear chances when the game was in our favor.'

Missing top scorer Gorka Goruzeta and in-form winger Nico Williams, Athletic played against 10 men after winger Largie Ramazani was sent off in the 53rd minute. Raul Garcia hit the post for Athletic in what was his 600th league appearance, but the team's stuttering start to the year will concern Valverde.

After winning nine of its 11 games between the start of November and mid-January, Athletic has picked up only four of 12 points since. Almeria, meanwhile, could celebrate what was just its seventh point of the season — all from draws. The south coast club has not won a league match all season and has lost 17. It sits 13 points from safety. (AP)

# Dattaji Rao Gaekwad: The Man who matched Hazare stroke for stroke

NEW DELHI, Feb 13: An acci-40 Tests from the 1970s to the 80s, dental Indian captain who matched was more successful with a tight dethe peerless Vijay Hazare stroke for stroke with a cover drive to die for, Dattaiirao Gaekwad should have played more than 11 Tests, given the talent this remarkable player from Baroda possessed.

On Tuesday, Gaekwad died in his hometown Baroda at the age of 95. Statistically, he was the oldest living Indian Test cricketer since the death of Deepak Shodhan in 2016. A nightmare for the Bombay (Mumbai) teams of the 1950s, those cover drives, unfortunately, never really came off when he played at the highest level from 1952 to 1961. His son Aunshuman, who played

fensive technique compared to his father. But in those first two and half decades post independence, not every cricketer could always be

judged by the prism of statistics. A Test average of less than 20 spread across nine years came at a time when the national team was losing more than winning. He also led India in four of the five Tests during their disastrous

tour of England in 1959. For the naysayers, his elevation smacked of nepotism as he was perceived to be close to Fatehsinh Gaekwad, the erstwhile Maharaja of Vadodara, who was the manager of the national team and also his patron since he was 11 years old.

Wisden, still considered the holy grail of cricket, wasn't exactly charitable about his leadership, documenting that his captaincy "lacked verve and personality" while summing up the series.

In an interview, he had once recalled that his first call-up to the national team seemed too good to be true, and he would always wear the cap and blazer in his room.

Those were the days when the touring teams, apart from four or five Tests, would also play at least 25 to 30 first class games, and Dattaji did fairly well against the county

of his fabulous domestic perform-However, when it came to hanances, would always be overshadowed by Hazare, perhaps the best dling the legendary Freddie Trueman's pace on uncovered damp Indian batter in the 50s

If Dattaji scored a hundred in that pitches, or Alec Bedser's swing, it became a bit too much for him. Ranji final, Hazare got a double The solace was that none other hundred. In the semi-final against than the best British cricket writer of Holkar, Dattaji scored a match-winthat generation, Christopher Martinning 145. Jenkins, termed his cover drives He was a nightmare for the Bom-

bay teams in the 50s and once Closer home, when he played for smashed a double hundred but it Baroda, he was in a league of his was Hazare's 126 that was remembered more by old timers. own. He was one of the biggest architects of his side's maiden Ranii

The right-hander made his debut against England at Leeds in Trophy title in 1957-58 with a hundred against Services, which had 1952 and his final international India pacer Surendranath in the game was against Pakistan in ranks. But then Dattaji, despite some Chennai in 1961. (PTI)

PSL HIT BY PULLOUTS OF **OVERSEAS CRICKETERS** 

KARACHI, Feb 13: Several high-profile international cricketers have pulled out of the Pakistan Super League (PSL) due to the overlapping of dates with other franchise-based tournaments and many cricket boards denying permission to their players to compete in domestic T20 competitions.

The PSL begins in Lahore on February 17 and all the six franchises have been hit hard with several players opting for the Bangladesh Premier League, ILT20 and SA20 leagues.

PSL side Multan Sultans have lost several players they had initially signed up for the upcoming season, with England pace bowler Reece Topley being the latest to pull out due to an injury.

The England and Wales Cricket Board (ECB) also said it had not issued a no-objection certificate (NOC) to Topley to play in the PSL.

Some other boards are also having second thoughts about giving no-objection certificates for PSL.

Multan will also be without Pakistan fast bowler Ehsanullah, who has failed to recover from an elbow surgery he suffered last year after the PSL.

Peshawar Zalmi have also lost a big name in Lungi Ngidi of South Africa, while Quetta Gladiators will be without Sri Lanka's Wanandu Hasaranga.

West Indies cricketers Shai Hope, Matthew Forde and Akeal Hosein, South Africa's Tabraiz Shamshi and Rassie van Der Dussen, England's James Vince and Afghanistan's Noor Ahmed and Naveen ul Haq, among others, will also skip the entire tournament.

A PSL franchise owner has asked the Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) to revisit the tournament window. as it is not possible to get big players when three leagues are happening on after the other. (PTI)

# Guardiola urges Haaland to 'relax' after concerns about Manchester City striker's body language

COPENHAGEN, Feb 13: Manchester City manager Pep Guardiola called on Erling Haaland to "relax" and stay positive after being concerned by the prolific striker's on-field demeanor before he scored the first goals of his comeback from injury.

Guardiola was critical of his players' body language during the 2-0 win over Everton in the Premier League on Saturday, which saw Haaland score twice in the second half after a frustrating first 45 minutes for the Norwegian.

"In that moment, he has to be positive," Guardiola said Monday, a day before Haaland and City take on FC Copenhagen away in the first leg of the Champions League's round of 16. "When he scored a goal, he reacted but he doesn't need to score because he helps us for many things.

"He is defined by goals but it is not just scoring a goal. As much it's how he is clapping, encouraging his mates and the first intense



press. This is what we need from game back. Erling." Not that the 23-year-old

Haaland ever goes too long without scoring. He was the top scorer in his first year in the Premier League with 36 goals last season, and has 40 goals in 35 games in the Champions League.

Haaland has just returned from nearly two months out with a foot injury, and scored in his third

"If he doesn't score tomorrow, the day after or next week, it's not a big issue," Guardiola said. "He's so strong. It comes from nature. He's coped perfectly because he's so strong mentally. He scores one goal and wants a second and a third. "You see his numbers at his age. In the Champions League not even (Lionel) Messi or Cristiano

(Ronaldo) had these numbers at his age." City won the Champions League for the first time last season at the end of Guardiola's seventh year in charge, completing a treble of major trophies along with the Premier League and FA Cup. Before that, City had lost in the

2021 final to Chelsea, tripped up in the semifinals in 2022, and lost straight years from 2018.

The dominant force in English soccer for the past decade, City fueled by the riches of its Abu Dhabi ownership — is now among the most feared teams in Europe and Guardiola believes the best legacy he will leave the club is convincing the players, staff and leadership that it can be the best in Europe. "I had the feeling when I arrived eight years ago that this competition was too much for us," Guardiola said. "Our defeats, our bad moments, our steps to grow up, they have helped us to put us in the position we are in: two

Champion League finals and one semifinal in the last three years.

"All the organization at the club now believes we can (win the Champions League) and this I believe is the best legacy that we give to the club, to the team. That Man City can compete." On paper, City is the heavy fa-

vorite against a Copenhagen team that hasn't played a competitive match in more than two months during the Danish league's mid-

season winter break. To regain some match sharpness, the Danish champions have been playing in the Atlantic Cup - a tournament in the Algarve in Portugal featuring clubs from leagues that aren't currently active. Games against fellow Scandinavian teams Elfsborg, Brondby and Molde cannot compare to facing the European champions and Guardiola isn't sure what to expect at Parken Stadium on Tuesday except for a traditionally hostile atmosphere. (AP)

"delightfully crisp".

in the quarterfinals for three

### **SPORTS**

# Warner leads Australia to victory in his final test match, completing a 3-0 sweep over Pakistan

HAMILTON (NEW ZEALAND), Feb 13: Rachin Ravindra took three wickets and slammed the brakes on South Africa's scoring to give New Zealand a slight edge Tuesday on the first day of the second cricket test.

Ravindra claimed the key middle-order wickets of Zubayr Hamza, Keegan Petersen and David Bedingham and bowled 21 overs at a cost of only 33 runs to swing the day just in New Zealand's favor.

New Zealand faced an unexpected obstacle late in the day when Ruan de Swardt posted his maiden half century and the burly allrounder Shaun von Berg, making his test debut at 37, shared an unbroken partnership of 70 for the seventh wicket.

De Swardt was 55 not out and von Berg was unbeaten on 34 as South Africa reached 220-6 at stumps.

On a day of unusual decisions, New Zealand left out regular spinner Mitchell Santner, who took six wickets in the first test, included four seamers and ended up leaning heavily on Ravindra's left-arm spin.

South Africa captain Neil Brand also made the unexpected decision to bat on winning the toss, becoming only the second captain in the last 11 tests at Seddon Park to do so. The pitch appeared green at first and there was some help early for the seamers as Matt Henry, Will O'Rourke and Neil Wagner shared wickets in the first session. South Africa was 64-3 at lunch.

O'Rourke, who claimed his first test wicket, said "it was pretty challenging, probably a little bit slower than what we were expecting.'

Ravindra came into his own after lunch when he helped New Zealand slow South Africa's scoring rate. He bowled his first 13 overs, including six maidens, at a cost of only 15 runs. When he left the attack at the approach of the second new ball, he had taken 3-33 from 20 overs. He came back to



bowl the last over of the day.

His were key wickets. Bedingham made 32 and 87 as South Africa's leading scorer in the first test; Petersen made 45 and 16 and

Hamza 22 and 36. All made starts again on Tuesday but Ravindra prevented them going

minutes for 20 when, frustrated, he tried to slog sweep Ravindra and sliced the ball off the top edge to substitute fielder Santner at backward point. The pressure New Zealand applied by

slowing the scoring rate was crucial. There were five consecutive maidens heading into the drinks break in the middle session and, as Hamza's innings showed, there was a paucity of scoring chances. Petersen was 2 when he was caught by

Tim Southee at slip, pushing well forward to a ball from Ravindra which turned away.

Bedingham's wicket fell in the sixth over after tea for 39. He had batted 2 1/2 hours and appeared to be the biggest threat to New Zealand from the middle order.

His was an unlucky dismissal; he closed the face and jammed a ball from Ravindra hard onto his front foot from which it bounced to Will Young at short leg. New Zealand appealed, mostly for an attempted run out but the replay showed the ball had carried to Young without touching the ground.

De Swardt and von Berg then joined to form an unlikely rearguard. Their batting wasn't always orthodox, they played and missed often and had a measure of luck which South Africa deserved after Bedingham's dismissal, but they held on to stumps. There was delay near the end when de Swardt was hit and needed attention.

But on a day of unexpected decisions, it was fitting there were unlikely heroes: Ravindra for New Zealand, bowling 21 overs on a day meant for seamers, and de Swardt and his older partner doing better than the rest of the South Africa order.

New Zealand leads the two-match series 1-0 and needs only to draw this match to beat South Africa in a series for the first time. Ravindra scored a maiden double century last week in the first innings of the first

rankings and from 388 to 452 in the

Chloe-Tryon is another South

Africa all-rounder to gain in the latest

weekly rankings update, moving up

one place to 20th among batters. She

advanced seven places to 43rd among

bowlers and reached the top 10 for

Anneke Bosche (up 13 places to

Australia too had several players

68th among batters) and Masabata

all-rounders for the first time.

all-rounders' rankings.

# Joseph, Hunter win ICC Player of the Month awards



sensation Shamar Joseph on

Tuesday became the first West

Indian to win the Men's ICC

his heroics in the Australia Test

Ireland's explosive young bat-

ter Amy Hunter claimed the ho-

nour in the women's category

after her dominance against

The ICC revealed the award

winners for January on Tuesday

after shortlists were announced

Joseph enjoyed a stellar start

to his West Indies career.

Brought into the side for their

Test series against Australia, the

24-year-old made an instant im-

pact, removing Steve Smith

with his first ball in international

His first outing in Test

cricket saw him claim five

wickets in the first innings in

Adelaide, taking the prized

Marnus

of

Labuschagne and Cameron

Green and Smith. However, it

will be his efforts in the second

Test in Brisbane which will

Defending a modest 216 to

prevent an Australian victory in

the second innings, Joseph

grabbed 7/68 - four of which

were bowled – to skittle the

home side out eight runs short

The win saw the West Indies

claim a historic 1-1 draw, with

Joseph sealing the Player of the

Series award for his impressive

debut. This latest accolade

means he is the first West Indian

to win the men's award since its

Joseph, said, "To get such an

award on the world stage feels

special. I totally enjoyed every

inception in January 2021.

long be remembered.

series.

Zimbabwe

last week.

cricket.

wickets

of the target.

moment of that experience playing for West Indies in Australia especially the magic of the final day at the Gabba. Taking the Player of the Month award for wicket to win the match was a dream!

"It was a truly memorable moment for me, and I just want to continue to work hard and deliver more match-winning performances for the West Indies with the ball; and when required also with the bat."

Hunter is another of the young talents lighting up the international stage. After a subdued ODI rubber to start the month, Hunter followed up with an explosive series of knocks in the T20I series in Harare.

The first T20I match saw the 18-year-old wicketkeeper-batter smash a glittering 101 not out in just 66 balls from atop the order as the away side won by 57 runs.

Hunter hit a further 77 and 42 runs in the second and third outings respectively as Ireland comfortably secured the series win away from home.

Across her three T20Is during the month, her 220 runs came at an impressive strike rate of 144.73, helping her become the first Ireland player to win the award since Arlene Kelly won last August.

Hunter said, "It's been an amazing start to the year, with two convincing series wins against Zimbabwe. I am pleased to have been able to contribute to the team's success and hope to continue to do so."

Joseph overcame other top performers in Tests during the month: England's Ollie Pope and Australia's Josh Hazlewood, while Hunter won ahead of top Australian duo of Alyssa Healy and Beth Mooney. (PTI)

Nagal, Nardi storm into Bengaluru Open second round

# Ben Stokes has changed says Ollie Pope

RAJKOT, Feb 13: England captain Ben Stokes has changed the game of cricket in a "lot of respects", says batter Ollie Pope, as the maverick all-rounder gears up for his 100th Test appearance in a couple of days' time.

Stokes, who has carved a niche for himself by playing some of the most outstanding knocks in the history of the sport in high pressure situations, has also produced a fine example of himself as a leader by inventing a new approach to Test cricket known as 'Bazball'.

Having also played a vital role in England's white-ball revival, Stokes is on the cusp of joining the list of players in Test cricket his-

but what he's done (since) he's been captain, he's been amazing and there's so many special moments that he can look back on his career," he added. Pope said Stokes' man-manage-

ment skills sets him apart from the other leaders.

"I was there in the eleven when he took (on) the captaincy role. He made it pretty clear that I was the man for the No 3 job and that just gave me a lot of confidence," Pope said

"His man management was excellent. He seemed like he's got as much time for everyone in the squad whether that be the physios or the doctors, as he does for his

Hamza had faced 99 balls and batted 142

Mandhana jumps two places to world cricket in a lot of respects, no. 4 in ICC Women's ODI batting rankings



test. (AP)

tory who have played more than 100 games.

"He has probably changed the game in a lot of respects, he has just got a way of bringing out the very best of him when the team needs it. Even in the Ashes at Lord's, which I remember thinking about 'how does he obviously take it to a new level when all the pressure is on him'," Pope told the media here at the SCA Stadium after England's training session on Tuesday.

England will take on India in the third Test from Thursday.

"The amount of times he's done that over his career of 99 Tests so far is unbelievable," Pope said.

"It's unbelievable. For anyone to play 100 Tests is an unbelievable achievement. He's obviously had his highs and his lows in his career, ter," Pope added. (PTI)

eleven on the pitch as well," the England batter said.

Along the journey, Stokes also has had to manage a knee injury which has kept him away from sharing the bowling workload in grab the fourth position in the latest the ongoing five-match series. ICC Women's ODI Player Rankings The England captain was seen

for batters. bowling full tilt on Tuesday after-The 27-year-old from Mumbai surnoon but Pope was categorical in passed South Africa's Laura declining that Stokes is preparing Wolvaardt, who slumped to fifth to bowl in the remainder of the seplace after a lacklustre show in the ODI series against Australia.

England's Nat Sciver Brunt, Sri

Lanka's Chamari Athapaththu and

"Not that I know of, I don't think so," Pope said.

ries

"He's just getting back to bowl-Australia's Beth Mooney occupy the ing. He's getting his knee right, top 3 positions in the batting chart, that's why he had surgery, just to which also has India skipper Harmanmake sure when he is back bowlpreet Kaur static at the 10th place. ing he's going to be bowling Mandhana, who is set to represent the Royal Challengers Bangalore in the quickly and as well as he can. But I think he's just preparing as a bat-Women's Premier League, last played ODIs in the bilateral series against



DUBAI, Feb 13: India opener Smriti Australia. She had made 63 runs at an Mandhana has jumped two spots to average of 31.50.

In the bowling chart, which is headed by England's Sophie Ecclestone, spinner Deepti Sharma slipped a place to number four. The Indian, however, moved a place to the fifth spot in ODI allrounder list.

Among bowlers, South Africa's Marizanne Kapp has climbed seven places to take the second position after grabbing four wickets in the last two ODIs against Australia.

An all-round performance of 75 Klaas (up two places to 24th among and 3/12 in the second match in North bowlers) have also gained. Sydney that helped South Africa register their first ever ODI victory over moving up in the rankings after completing a 2-1 win with all-rounder Australia also helped Kapp retain eighth position in batting and consol-Tahlia McGrath progressing four idate her top ranking in the list of allplaces to 30th among batters. (PTI)

BENGALURU, Feb 13: Sumit Nagal's power and precision was too hot to handle for Geoff Blancaneaux as the second seeded Indian entered the second round of the Bengaluru Open 2024 with a smooth win here on rounders. Kapp increased her points Tuesday tally from 658 to 668 in the batting

Nagal, who won the Chennai Open on Sunday, waltzed past his French opponent 6-2, 6-2 in an hour and 28 minutes.

He will face Coleman Wong of Hong Kong in the next round on Wednesday.

Nagal, who recently broke into ATP top 100, was more than a match or Blancaneaux as the latter struggled to keep pace with the Indian.

Nagal opened the first set with a break in the opening game to go 1-0 up as Blancaneaux found it tough to tackle his returns.

In fact, it was a trend continued throughout the first set as Nagal won a whopping 17 points on the return, forcing his opponent to make an unforced error or serve him up a dolly.

The 26-year-old, leading 4-2, notched up another break in the seventh game through Blancaneaux's unforced error on his backhand.

Leading 5-2, Nagal closed out the set without much fuss 6-2. There was no let up of intensity in the second set as well. Nagal broke Blancaneaux in the first game itself to pin his opponent on the backfoot. Nagal's pin point forehand volley gave him a 30-40 lead and in the next point Blancaneaux slammed a forehand wide of the sidelines to hand his rival the break. (PTI)

# It's not that you won't see rank turners going forward: Kuldeep Yadav

Kuldeep Yadav on Tuesday said that rank turners might come into play in the ongoing Test battle against England but admitted that sporting tracks, like the ones seen in the first two games, are "good for cricket".

The two sides have assembled here for the third Test starting at the Saurashtra Cricket Association (SCA) Stadium from Thursday, with the series poised at 1-1.

"Overall, everything is important. The fast bowlers also come into play, like you saw in the last match. So (good wickets) are good for cricket. It is not (the case) that you will not get to see rank turners going forward. Hopefully, in the future you will see (turning tracks)," Kuldeep said while addressing a media conference ahead of India's training session on Tuesday.

A depleted India were pushed by an aggressive England, who beat them comfortably in the first Test, but the hosts bounced back in the second. Both the matches were played on pitches that were not predominantly spin-friendly and had something for everyone.

"I have no idea. I haven't played on

RAJKOT, Feb 13: India spinner rank turners. I did not play in the last series (Border-Gavaskar series in February-March last year) at home," he replied when asked why there were no rank turners for the first two Tests.

"I do not know what our approach or thinking would be. It is basically the team management's decision. Obviously, all of you also want to watch good cricket. For good cricket, it's important (that the wickets are good)," he

Kuldeep chose to side-step when asked whether rank turners should be there or not.

"I do not know that, I enjoy playing, whenever I get an opportunity to play, whether it is on a flat track or on a rank turner...batting too is important for us, not just spin bowling," he said.

"When we say it is going to be a batting (friendly) wicket, we do not mean that 700-800 runs will be scored here, but it will be a better wicket compared to playing on a rank turner,' he said.

Kuldeep admitted that England's aggressive approach with the bat has been unusual to deal with in Test cricket

... in Test cricket, you are not used to



having someone with such an attacking you are more involved in the game. As game, how you are going to bowl and batting approach. But at the same time, a spinner you are more focused on the what your approach will be," he said.

"Sometimes in Test cricket, you are not overly worried if the batter would attack much and you focus on how to dismiss them.

"But here the approach is different, they are in attacking mode so you have to plan on how to restrict them because (if they are) playing more shots, then more opportunities are being created to take a wicket," he added.

India have been depleted further with KL Rahul set to miss the third Test, but Kuldeep said it is an opportunity for young players in the side to prove their mettle.

"...that gives a chance to a newcomer who can get the opportunity. I am sure they have done really well in domestic cricket and it is their time to show what they have got. It is good for Indian cricket and for the individuals as well," he said.

Kuldeep, however, hoped that allrounder Ravindra Jadeja will be back into the side to play on his home turf after suffering a hamstring injury in the first Test.

"He is doing his routine (work). He did one session yesterday (Monday) and I think he is available," Kuldeep said. (PTI)

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