

# TOP NEWS OF J&K

JAMMU, FRIDAY, MARCH 01, 2024

Daily Evening Newspaper



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## BRIEFLY

### Rains, fresh snowfall prompt closure of educational institutions for two-days in Doda

BHADARWAH, Mar 1 (Agencies): Amid relentless and heavy rainfall in plains and fresh snowfall in higher reaches, district administration in J&K's Doda has taken a precautionary step by announcing the closure of all educational institutions across the hilly district for two days.

This decision has been prompted by the challenging weather conditions that have gripped the region and a warning of possible snow avalanches issued JKDMA (Jammu and Kashmir Disaster Management Authority), said an official.

"In an effort to ensure the safety and well-being of students, DC Doda Harvinder Singh has directed the closure of all educational institutions for two days, both government and private, across the district. However the practical examinations will be conducted as per schedule," said Dr Nazir Ahmed, Cluster Head of Schools.

"After two and half month, classwork in all the schools of winter zone of Jammu Province was supposed to be resumed from today, but harsh weather conditions that will further intensify by tomorrow morning as per the Meteorological department, administration was left with no other option but to suspend the class work for two days," Dr Nazir added saying that schools will reopen on Monday.

Meanwhile due to landslide at Pakki Hatti, the movement of traffic also got blocked on Batote-Kishtawar highway NH 244.

### Two drug peddlers arrested in Baramulla

SRINAGAR, Mar 1 (Agencies): Continuing its efforts to eradicate the menace of drugs from the society, Police have arrested drug peddlers in North Kashmir's Baramulla district and recovered contraband substances & cash from their possession.

A Spokesperson said that a police party headed by SHO PS Boniyar during naka checking established at Bernate link road Boniyar, Baramulla intercepted two persons who tried to flee away but were apprehended.

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## District administration Leh asks social media users to refrain from spreading fake news, instigating messages



LEH, Mar 1 (Agencies): The district administration Leh has advised people particularly social media users to refrain from the misuse of social media.

In a bid to maintain public order and security, the District Administration Leh has issued a stern warning against the dissemination of fake news and instigating

messages by citizens on social media platforms particularly WhatsApp.

An order in this regard has been issued by the District Magistrate, Leh Santosh Sukhdeve, under Section 144 of the CrPC due to concerns about fake news & instigating messages on social media, especially WhatsApp.

"Whereas, it has been

made to appear to me by inputs from District Police Leh and also otherwise that fake news and instigating messages are being shared on social media platforms, especially WhatsApp groups, which may lead to breach of peace and order in the district and may result in law-and-order situation, and Whereas, it is desirable that any such possible breach of peace and public tranquility should immediately be prevented".

"Now, therefore, I, Santosh Sukhdeve, IAS, District Magistrate, Leh, in exercise of powers vested in me under section 144 of CrPC, 1973, hereby prohibit the individuals in

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## Tejinder Singh posted as DIG, Rajouri-Poonch Range

JAMMU, Mar 1 (Agencies): Government of Jammu and Kashmir, Home Department, on Friday posted Tejinder Singh, IPS, as DIG Rajouri-Poonch Range.

Tejinder Singh would be relieving Sunil Gupta of the additional charge of the post.

"In the interest of administration, it is hereby ordered that Shri Tejinder Singh, IPS, upon repatriation to the Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir, is posted as DIG, Rajouri-Poonch Range, against an available vacancy, relieving Shri Sunil Gupta, of the additional charge of the said post,".

## 44 killed in fire at 7-storey commercial building in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka

DHAKA, Mar 1 (Agencies): A massive fire that ripped through a seven-storey commercial building in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka overnight has killed at least 44 people and injured 22 others, the health minister said on Friday.

The fire on Thursday night engulfed the Green Cozy Cottage building in the capital's Baily Road area that houses several restaurants and shops.

The fire broke out around 9.50 pm on Thursday at a popular restaurant named 'Kacchi Bhai' on the building's first floor and quickly spread to the upper floors that had more restaurants and a garment shop, according to fire service officials.



Health Minister Samanta Lal Sen said around 2 am that 33 bodies were brought to

Dhaka Medical College Hospital (DMCH) and 10 others to the Sheikh Hasina National

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## SC refuses to entertain Asaram's plea for suspension of sentence in rape case on health grounds

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): The Supreme Court on Friday refused to entertain a plea of self-styled godman Asaram, serving life term in a rape case, for suspension of the sentence because of his deteriorating health condition.

A bench of Justice Sanjiv Khanna and Justice Dipankar Datta asked senior advocate Mukul Rohatgi, to



approach the Rajasthan High Court for relief after he said Asaram was willing to accept the public prosecutor's statement that he could avail treatment at Madhavbaug

Heart Hospital in Maharashtra's Khopoli in police custody.

The bench asked Asaram to submit an application before the Rajasthan High Court for his treatment at Madhavbaug Heart Hospital and it would be considered in accordance with the law.

Justice Khanna also flagged deliberate attempts made by Asaram to delay the

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## 97.6 pcs of Rs 2000 banknotes returned by Feb 29: RBI



NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): After the Reserve Bank of India's

announcement of the withdrawal of Rs 2000 notes from circulation on

May 19, 2023, as of now, the total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation has been declined to Rs 8470 crore at the close of business on February 29, 2024, RBI said.

"The total value of Rs 2000 banknotes in circulation, which was Rs 3.56 lakh crore at

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## Police attach illegal properties worth Rs. 24 lakhs of notorious drug peddler in Baramulla

BARAMULLA, Mar 1 (Agencies): Continuing its action against drug peddlers, Baramulla police attached properties worth approx. Rs. 24.00 lakhs belonging to notorious drug peddlers, a resident of Basgran Uri, District Baramulla, said police.

The drug peddler was identified as Mohd Zahid Shah (Geelani), son of Peer Hussain Shah.

"The action was taken under Sections 68-E and 68-F (1) of the NDPS Act of 1985 and is linked with case FIR No. 54/2022 u/s 8/21 Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Act, 1985 of PS Uri," further said police.

The property was identified as illegally acquired during an investigation and inquiry conducted by the police. The property was prima

facie acquired from illicit trafficking in narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances by the drug peddler, the police further added.

This operation reaffirms the commitment of the police to combat the drug menace. Local people of the area hailed the initiative of the police.

Earlier, the Baramulla

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## Panic after low-intensity blast on Jalandhar-Jammu rail track

HOSHIARPUR, Mar 1 (Agencies): A low-intensity blast on Jalandhar-Jammu railway track injured the gateman and triggered panic in the area on Thursday.

Reports said that a low-intensity blast took place near Gate No. 71 on the Jalandhar-Jammu railway track which injured the gateman and triggered panic in the area. Soon after the blast, the traffic on the Jalandhar-Jammu rail section was suspended.

Prima facie it seems the explosive was a country-made cracker

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## Govt sanctions three day leave for Jammu-based migrant, PM Package employees

SRINAGAR, Mar 1 (Agencies): Government of Jammu & Kashmir Friday sanctioned three days Special Casual Leave on 7th, 9th and 11th March 2024 in favour of Jammu based Migrant and Prime Minister's Package employees working in Valley on eve of Mahashivratri.

"Sanction is hereby accorded to the grant of three days Special

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## Moderate to heavy rains, snow forecast; night temp records rise in J&K

SRINAGAR, Mar 1 (Agencies): Amid forecast for moderate to heavy rain and snowfall, night temperature recorded a rise and barring Gulmarg, the mercury settled above sub-zero at all meteorological stations in Jammu and Kashmir on Friday. A meteorological department official said that Srinagar recorded a minimum of 4.5°C against previous night's 2.1°C. It was below normal by 3.0°C for the summer capital of J&K for this time of the year, the MeT official said.

MeT has also issued an advisory cautioning about the disruption of surface and air transport in the valley. It said widespread moderate to heavy rain/snow is

expected in Jammu and Kashmir till the afternoon of March 3 with its peak activity on March 2. "The above system is most likely to cause heavy to very heavy rain/snow over Pirpanjal Range of Jammu division and middle & higher reaches of Kashmir Division (Anantnag-Pahalgam, Kulgam, Sinthan Pass, Shupiyar-Pir Ki Gali, Sonamarg-Zojila, Bandipora-Razdan Pass, Gulmarg and Kupwara-Sachna Pass)," read the advisory. The weather activity may lead to disruption of surface and air transport including Jammu-Srinagar highway and other major roads of middle and higher reaches of J&K. It urged the people in

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## Tragic accident claims life of fuel tanker driver in Ramban

JAMMU, Mar 1 (Agencies): Driver of a tanker died after his vehicle rolled down into a deep gorge on Srinagar-Jammu national highway near Money Morh area of Ramban district on Friday, officials said.

An official told that the oil tanker was traveling from Jammu towards Srinagar.

He said the driver, in a rash maneuver at Monkey Morh, lost control and the vehicle rolled down 1500 feet from the highway.

The body of the driver has been recovered, but his identification is not known yet and further

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## EDITORIAL

CHECK  
CORRUPTION

India is a country with high values, morals and traditions, but one of the biggest problems it faces is corruption. Which is being seen at different levels. This is a problem which is harming the country internally. Which is having a negative impact on the progress of our country and it is being seen not in any one area but in all the areas. Be it politics, administration or any department. It is prevalent everywhere.

Various works are also being done by the Government of India to remove corruption but if we talk about it then the main cause of corruption is illiteracy. An uneducated person uses corrupt and illegal methods to satisfy his needs. We cannot tackle corruption through government efforts alone. For this, today's youth, politicians and all those people who are suffering from this should come forward.

India is a democratic country. We see that whenever elections are held in our country, no educational qualification or criteria have been set for political parties and leaders. To remove corruption, it is very important for us to elect a capable leader who is educated. People should be made aware about what corruption is and how to deal with it. Today India is dealing with a serious problem like corruption. Where people will have to come together to deal with it and contribute to making India corruption free. For which we have to educate ourselves and the people around us.

At present, corruption is increasing rapidly across the country through social media. Day by day the citizens of the country are becoming victims of increasing corruption on this social media. People loot money from people by luring them with jobs through social media. These types of cases are seen every day across the country. The government is making a lot of efforts to stop the increasing corruption in the country.

In all the government works done in the country, corruption is seen somewhere or the other. People are often caught taking bribes in government offices. People who take bribe and give benefits of government schemes are increasing corruption in the country. The government is punishing people who give bribes and people who take bribes. But still people are continuously increasing this corruption.

We should give harshest punishment to both the person taking bribe and the person giving bribe. To stop the corruption spreading at various levels in the society, we must come together and face it. Those who are caught while taking bribe, they also get released after giving bribe. This corruption disease is spreading like termites all over our India. To overcome this, the bribe givers should be given the harshest punishment, so that they do not even try to defame India again.

People associated with corruption are defaming the name of our country India to fulfill their selfish interests. Therefore, it is very important that we crush this poisonous snake of corruption and at the same time the government will have to join hands with us and take effective steps to remove this corruption. Only then will we be able to fulfill India's dreams by freeing India from corruption. The central government is mainly making efforts to stop corruption.

Apart from this, we should also help the government in stopping corruption. Wherever corruption is taking place in the country, one should contact the helpline issued by the government and complain against the people spreading corruption.

## Cong's slide in Himachal sign of a deeper malaise

By: Parsa Venkateshwar  
Rao Jr

The defeat for the Congress in the election to the lone Rajya Sabha seat from Himachal Pradesh has a bizarre turn to it. Congress' candidate Abishek "Manu" Singhvi did not lose to Harsh Mahajan, a former Congressman who had left the party in 2022, in terms of getting a lesser number of votes. There was a tie when six Congressmen cross-voted and three Independents went with Mr Mahajan, at 34 each. It was the lots that went against Mr Singhvi. Being a former Congressman of prominence, Mr Mahajan must have influenced the six rebels to vote for him. The mystery, of course, is that of the three Independents.

The fact that they voted together instead of in their individual capacity makes for a strange reading.

The BJP has not hesitated to poach members from the ruling party in a bid to form its own government anywhere in the country. The party has played political rugby without apology. That it fielded Mr Mahajan, a former Congressman, for the Rajya Sabha seat is a ploy in itself, and it must have calculated that it could steal votes from the Congress' side. But it seems to have overplayed its hand.

After gaining the Rajya Sabha seat, it made the claim that the Congress had lost its majority in the state, which is not the case. The two sides stand with 34 members on each side. And the BJP is now dependent on the support of six Congressmen and three Independents. And if the six Congress members have been disqualified under the anti-

defection law, then the BJP is left with its own 25 members and the three Independents, which takes the number to 28, still well behind the Congress' 34.

The aggressive approach is part of the BJP culture, but the fact remains that the BJP has no majority in the House. Of course, the expectation is that it will draw away more Congress members. It is futile to blame the BJP for violating the norms of democracy because the party is not for playing by the protocols of the game.

The blame for the crisis then falls squarely on the shoulders of the Congress Party. Quite clearly, the party, after having won the election a year ago, is not able to keep its flock together. There are innumerable reasons for the discontent in the party. The choice of the leader has always been a sore point. The Congress has always tried to break the dominance of the local cliques, and empower and enthrone someone from outside the circle. But in the day-to-day management of affairs, the chosen chief minister cannot hope to depend on the central leadership. In the case of Himachal Pradesh, the dominance of the Virabhadra Singh family remains unchallenged. And chief minister Sukhwinder Singh Sukhu is on a weak wicket. The resignation of public works department minister Vikramaditya Singh, son of Virabhadra Singh, is a case in point, despite the later withdrawal. The stated reason for his unhappiness is that his father's statue has not been set up at Mall Road in Shimla. This might be just a pretext, and the real reasons must be quite different. But it does show how power battles

are fought inside the Congress.

Many of the sage advisers of the Congress -- from outside the party, and including many in the media -- is that the legislature party should choose the chief minister, and that he/she should not be handpicked by the central leadership. At most times, the factional tussles at the legislature party level are so intense that they turn to the central leadership to pick the chief minister. And once someone is chosen, the dissident groups get into action. In a strange way, this is an example of a party that does not have organisational discipline. To have strong and vocal backbenchers is a positive thing. But the backbenchers don't seem to stop with keeping the government on its toes. They are looking for ways of overthrowing the leadership and the government.

The endemic rebellion shows that there is chaos, and there is no strong central leadership. Ironically, the critics of the Congress have always blamed the tyrannical rule of the family, the Nehru-Gandhis.

What seems to plague the Congress is that it has lost its ideological glue, which is rooted in the outdated concepts -- in today's context -- of secularism and socialism. Many Congress members are not wedded to these principles, and they are only too ready to throw them out. The Congress may have to rebuild the party on these principles, or find other principles which are more relevant. The Congress as a power machine is breaking down because it does not have a monopoly over power across the country which it had once. The country's political geography has changed radically, and

the party is now excluded from large tracts.

The BJP on the other hand is governed no doubt by disingenuous Hindutva with all its negative connotations, which are eating into the vitals of the social fabric and creating an atmosphere of aggression in place of trust. At the same time, the party is willing to grab and appropriate any politician to enlarge its numbers. So, it is a combination of political mercenaries and a toxic ideology that is carrying it forward.

The BJP has, however, realised that ideology has its limitations and that is why it is willing to bargain with anyone and everyone.

In many ways, this is politics as usual. It does not pay to bemoan the fact that there is horse-trading because when politics is reduced to power stakes, the trading is inevitable. The Congress with all its fissiparous characteristics remains the only party with the semblance of a national organisation, and which can fight the BJP. There was a time when political observers lamented the fact that there was no effective opposition to the Congress under Nehru and Indira Gandhi. The wheel of fortune has turned, and there is a lament, not yet loud, that there is need for a real opposition to Narendra Modi.

The wheel will, of course, turn once again, and in the course of time the BJP will lose its dominance in the country despite their frenzied claim of 1,000 years of Ram Rajya. The Himachal Pradesh episode should not be magnified beyond proportion because the Congress in Karnataka had aced the BJP in getting the fourth seat to the Rajya Sabha.

## BJP's 370-seat target overly optimistic

By: JULIO RIBEIRO

I am convinced that Narendra Modi is going to be the Prime Minister for another five-year term. What I seriously doubt is whether his prediction that the BJP will win 370 seats (and the NDA will get 400) in the Lok Sabha elections will come true.

It is incumbent on the party firmly backed by the majority community to suppress its tendency of misusing its powers to humble the Opposition.

In Maharashtra, which sends 48 MPs to the Lower House, it seems that the Congress, the Sharad Pawar-led NCP and the Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena faction will each win a few seats in their respective spheres of influence. The BJP has made major inroads into rural constituencies. Along with its new-found friends, the Shinde faction of the Sena and the Ajit Pawar-led NCP, it will win a few more than the Opposition, but certainly not the figure it quotes.

The Hindi-speaking belt is firmly on its side, but here, too, the going is not going to be so smooth that it can afford to let its guard down. The farmers' renewed agitation is confined mainly to Punjab, a state where the BJP has little influence. Jat farmers of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh have been weaned away by the bestowal of the Bharat Ratna on the tallest Jat leader, former PM Chaudhary Charan Singh. The award ahead of the Lok Sabha elections was one very clever move.

What was far from clever, though, was the attempt to

tamper with the result of the Chandigarh mayoral poll. It resulted in prosecution being ordered against the presiding officer by the Supreme Court, whose judgments in the electoral bond case and the Chandigarh episode have alerted the party in power to refrain from venturing into such escapades.

The fate of the presiding officer should serve as a warning to officials wanting to prove their loyalty to the powers that be. The apex court's decision on the electoral bond scheme has cast a shadow over the willingness of corporates to blindly help the party in power. They should revert to the system followed by the Tata Group and the Aditya Birla Group to donate to all political parties by crossed cheques, properly accounted for. That system was working seamlessly till the electoral bonds were invented. It is natural for the party in power, particularly one riding a wave as the BJP is at present, to get the bulk of the donations made by corporates. But it is not normal for a ruling party to ensure through government agencies controlled by it to choke the funding of Opposition parties. The 'freezing' of bank accounts of the Congress by the income tax (I-T) authorities in the run-up to the General Election was a very ham-handed and mean method of ruffling feathers and it was not appreciated by even BJP supporters. Mercifully, the Income Tax Appellate Tribunal intervened and restored sanity.

Modi was on a roll after he took over the role of the high priest and inaugurated the Ram Jan-

mabhooni Temple in Ayodhya. Even normally tepid followers of religion, in this case of the religion of India's majority Hindus, were positively affected by the pomp and splendour associated with the January 22 function. Modi's popularity went up by a few notches.

This glorious moment was repeated a few days later when he persuaded Qatar to free eight former Navy personnel, who had initially been sentenced to death (later commuted to imprisonment) for suspected spying. Our Prime Minister succeeded in his mission, thus displaying the strength of the country's soft power in the Muslim world of West Asia.

Unfortunately, the comparatively petty-minded acts of trying to change the mandate in the Chandigarh mayoral poll and the I-T Department's action against the Congress have neutralised the gains that Modi had generated.

It is incumbent on the party, now firmly backed by the majority community in its stronghold of Hindi-speaking states, to suppress its tendency of misusing its powers to humble the Opposition. Educated voters have realised that their favoured party is needlessly needling its political opponents and making obvious attempts to lure Opposition bigwigs with threats of investigations by Central agencies like the ED, the CBI and the income tax authorities. Once they cross over, their sins are forgiven. Some of them are even made ministers or Rajya Sabha MPs!

One cannot be sure if the use of

such tactics will be halted once electioneering begins in earnest. The Congress and its allies in the INDIA bloc have woken up to the realisation of the likely fate of their leaders if the BJP gets the 370 seats that Modi has quoted. In Delhi, Haryana and Gujarat, AAP and the Congress have reached an understanding. Though late in the day, it may help them salvage a few seats.

The south, which includes Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana and Karnataka, is not going to go the BJP way. In Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the BJP is likely to draw a blank. Karnataka will contribute the biggest number to the BJP's kitty, but even that will not make a difference.

In the east, West Bengal is still Mamata Banerjee territory. It has 42 seats to offer. The BJP has made sizeable gains in Bengal, but not enough to dislodge Mamata.

In the North-East, the regional players go along with the ruling party for their own survival. But after the Sangh Parivar's activities in Manipur, the Baptist Christians of Nagaland, Mizoram, Meghalaya and the hill districts of Manipur have been having second thoughts on this score. Only Odisha and Tripura can be counted upon to partner the BJP. In any case, the number of Lok Sabha seats in the North-East is extremely small.

The north, except Punjab and Himachal, is solidly with the BJP. But with the INDIA bloc coming to its senses, it is possible that the BJP will not reach the figure of even 303, its tally in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. The figure of 370, quoted by Modi, is far too optimistic.

## CEO Kupwara organizes Medical Assessment Camp for Visually impaired children

Top News Report

KUPWARA, Mar 1: Inclusive Education Wing of Chief Education Officer (CEO) Kupwara under the banner of SAMAGRA SHIKSHA J&K (UT) organized Medical Assessment Camp for Children with Special Needs (CWSN) for Visually impaired & Hearing impaired Children in collaboration with DSSC ( Doctor Shahs Sight Centre Kupwara) for Visually impaired CWSN were assessed by Dr Faisal Qayoom Shah Consultant & Dr Bilal Ahmed Mir Consultant Ophthalmologist assisted by medical technocrats with latest and modern equipments and Hearing impaired CWSN were assessed by CREASOUL Hearing and SPEECH



Clinic Budgam wherein 26 Visually impaired students and 33 students with Hearing impairment from Kupwara, Drugmulla & left out from Kralpora Education Zones were assessed and recommended for supportive devices so as enable them to continue their studies parallel to normal students for their happy and independent liveli-

hood, strive and thrive for the society as well. The initiative of Education department for proper care and such steps for these special section of people which are part and parcel of our society was highly appreciated by the locals of area especially parents of CWSN. Appropriate seating and heating arrange-

ments were put in place under guidance of ZEO Kupwara M M Lone for smooth & successful Conduct of camp in extreme cold climate. CEO Kupwara Abdul Majeed Dar & District Coordinator Inclusive Education Javid Wani told media that it was 4th consecutive Medical Assessment Camp throughout the District under Inclusive Education Component of Samagra Shiksha for the benefit and betterment of special class of our student community and appealed parents / guardians of CWSN to care and guide their children for their bright and happy future. The medical camp concluded in a pleasant atmosphere and all mea-

sures were taken for the safety of our special Children. This initiative will definitely encourage our children to continue their studies and is a major step to achieve the aim of Inclusive Education. CEO Kupwara thanked Doctors team lead by Dr Shah Faisal Ophthalmologist for their services with men and machinery and working for the full days in assessing the VI & HI students to the best of the satisfaction of CWSN and their Parents and in organizing these successful Camps at different designated venues throughout the District. CEO Kupwara further told that Education Department has special focus on these children for their upliftment and independent livelihood. He got appointed as

## Lecturers' Forum extends congratulations to Ravikant Rathore

Top News Report

KISHTWAR, Mar 1: The District Kishtwar Unit of All J&K +2 Lecturers' Forum bids farewell to Ravikant Rathore, Senior Lecturer Zoology who bid goodbye to the department after rendering decades of meritorious services in the School Education Department in various capacities. He served a large part of his services in far-flung areas of the district and set an example of dedication, devotion and affection towards his duties and profession. He also put in his services in prime institutions of the district including HSS Boys Kishtwar and HSS Girls Kishtwar. Mr Rathore belongs to a noble family in Kotwal Mohallah in the heart of Kishtwar town. He got appointed as



teacher and then rose to the status of Sr. Lecturer and finally left the department from HSS Girls Kishtwar. However, he was perturbed with the department for unjustified treatment to him. He should have been elevated to the rank of Principal. The department didn't order his elevation despite clear directions of Central Administrative Tribunal (CAT) Jammu Bench which is really an irony and a wrong precedent. Even despite contempt cases against the

department, he could not get his right due to him. It is really an irony. Today, Rathore retired from his active service after reaching the age of superannuation which is a milestone which everyone wishes to accomplish. He deserved much from the department. All J&K +2 Lecturers' Forum wished him a great life ahead with the hope that he would continue his duties in the society. He would continue to be one of the advisors of the district Unit of All J&K +2 Lecturers' Forum.

## In Kulgam, a village without water supply for 1 year, residents aghast



Top News Report

KULGAM, Mar 1: A Banimullah (Herpora) village in south Kashmir's Kulgam district is without water supply for the past 15 months. With around 100 households, Banimullah village is just 8 km from the main town. But, according to locals, the village is without water supply for the 15 months. "We are being deprived of the basic necessity at a time when people in other parts of the world enjoy all modern facili-

ties. But residents are made to suffer on daily basis," said a resident, Altaf Ahmad. "Are not we humans? Don't we deserve to get the basic facility such as water," he said. Another resident said women from the villagers are being forced to walk on foot for miles on daily basis to fetch water from nearby streams. The villager said each time they approach the authorities from the Jal Shakti (PHE) with their problem, they assure to address the problem. "But except assurances we haven't got anything so far. In fact with each passing day our problems have compounded," said the villager. They have appealed to the administration to look into the matter and to provide them drinking water facility so that we can have a sigh of relief. When Contacted Executive Engineer Jal Shakti (PHE) Kulgam, Nawaz Ahmad acknowledged the issue and said he had already sent the team there, adding that within 2-3 days the area will get full water supply.

## Breaking Taboos, empowering lives to transform J&K by J&K Bank

Top News Report

SRINAGAR, Mar 1: Live for Others - Being Helpful Foundation (LFO-BHF) is proud to announce a significant milestone in their joint initiative with J&K Bank, "Mission R-SAP (Remove Shyness Apply Pads)." This Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) project by J&K Bank which is implemented by Live for Others Being Helpful Foundation aims to provide access to menstrual hygiene by distributing 5,00,000 sanitary napkins and conducting 100 awareness seminars, benefiting 50,000 people across all 20 dis-



tricts of Jammu & Kashmir and remove the taboo regarding menstruation from the society. The 18th district to successfully complete this mission was Srinagar where more than 19,200

sanitary napkins were distributed, complemented by 6 impactful awareness lectures targeted more than 1650 people. The resource persons for these seminars were Ayesha Farhana, Ms.

Hafsa Arshid. These sessions were carried out in different schools including Standard Public School, Srinagar; Greenlight Public School, Srinagar, New Career Convent School, Srinagar; Muslim Public School, Srinagar as well as community sessions at Boatman Colony, Bemina & Barhana Qamarwari were also carried out. "We are thrilled with the progress of 'Mission R-SAP' and the positive impact it's having on women's health and hygiene in J&K" said Vivek Parihar, CEO & Founder of LFO-BHF. LFO-BHF extended

their gratitude to the Director School Education Kashmir, C.E.O Srinagar, Principals of all the participating schools of Srinagar and gratitude also conveyed to J&K Bank for organising this activity with their CSR fund said Shah Aamir, Joint Secretary (National Body). Members who were present in these activities were Afsan Barkat, Maroofa Shah, Urfee Yousuf, Gulnaz, Danish Nabi Kumar, Haadi Hameed, Seema Sheikh Shahid, Humaira Rashid, Saqib Rehman, Dr. Tahir, Rizwana Gulzar Suhaib, Vikas Ali, Ajaz, Ahmed Chopan.

## SPPND GDC Samba organizes EVMS, VVPAT Awareness

Top News Report

SAMBA, Mar 1: The Pravaad Electoral Literacy Club of SPPND Govt. Degree College, Samba organized EVMS and VVPAT Awareness, as part of Two-Week Voters' Awareness Programme. The event was conducted under the aegis of Viksit Bharat@2047. Vikas Anand and Ajay Charak, Nodal Officers, EVMS Awareness Programme (Mobile Demonstration Van) District Samba were the Resource persons for today's event. The demonstration aimed to educate and engage youth in the electoral process, empha-

sizing the importance of active participation in the democratic process. Through interactive sessions, the students were encouraged to understand the significance of their vote and its impact on shaping the future of the Nation. The demonstration received overwhelming participation from students showcasing the eagerness and enthusiasm of the youth to contribute to the electoral process. Prof. (Dr.) Twinkle Suri, Principal of the college appreciated the efforts of the SVEEP team of District Samba in creating awareness among the college students regarding importance of votes in democracy.

## GDC Udhampur organizes Intra College Table Tennis Men Tournament

Top News Report

UDHAMPUR, Mar 1: Department of Physical Education, GDC Udhampur organised an Intra college Table Tennis Tournament (Men) from 29th February, to 1st March, 2024 in the indoor Sports ground of GDC Udhampur. Prof. (Dr.) Romesh Kumar Gupta graced the occasion as chief guest. NCC Cadets escorted the chief guest to the sports ground. Shashi Sharma, Physical Training Instructor accorded hearty welcome to the chief guest. In his welcome address, he elaborated the significance of playing table tennis that enhances the player's brain activity faster than other sports. While addressing the



students, Principal Prof. Romesh Kumar Gupta enumerated the importance of sports in imparting life skills such as discipline, perseverance, teamwork and cooperation. Further participation in Sports helps to build character and personality of individual. He appreciated the efforts of Sports committee for organizing these events that promotes

competitive spirit among students. Around 36 students participated in the tournament from different semesters. The knock out matches were played on 29th February 2024, whereas the semi final and final matches were played on 1st March 2024. The first semi final match was played between Sourav Sharma and Prince Gupta with set score of 3-1 in which

Sourav Sharma beat Prince Gupta with 3 scores. The second semi final match was played between Ayush Gupta and Novam Rajput with 3 scores. The final match was played between Sourav Sharma and Ayush Gupta, in which Sourav Sharma emerged as winner of the Table Tennis Tournament. The winners were honoured with medals and trophies during the felicitation ceremony. The event was organised under the supervision of Dr. Mohinder Pal, Convenor Sports Committee and Mr. Shashi Sharma, Physical Training Instructor. The event was graced by the presence of Prof. Babu Lal Thakur, Dr. Sukh Chain and Dr. Jagjeet Singh.

## Imtiyaz Khan expresses grief over devastation at Jama Lata Nawakadal Srinagar



SRINAGAR, Mar 1: Congress leader and District President Srinagar Imtiyaz Khan visited Jama Lata falling Nawakadal, Expressing grief and sorrow over the devastating fire incident at Jama Lata, which has claimed 4 houses, leaving families shelterless. Imtiyaz Khan has termed this incident as most unfortunate, heart rending and expressed his sympathies to the affected people.

Bashir Ah Banda charred to death, yesterday fire incident in Jama Lata Nawakadal Srinagar. Imtiyaz Khan expressed sympathy with the families who lost their a family member. Khan urged that affected family should be compensated fully, as they all are poor people with a very meagre source of income. District Administration must make assessment of losses and ensure that affected family do not suffer.

## DPS Kathua students recognized at Silver Zone International Olympiad in English Language

Top News Report

KATHUA, Mar 1: The exemplary performance of DPS Kathua students in the Silver Zone International Olympiad of English Language has garnered widespread acclaim, showcasing their exceptional linguistic skills and academic prowess on the global stage. Notably, Nitika Khajuria of Class X secured the distinguished title of State Topper, earning the esteemed Gold Medal of Excellence, while Komal Bandhral of class XII achieved the remarkable feat of State Topper,



receiving the Bronze Medal of Excellence. In addition to the top honours, DPS Kathua students showcased their talent and dedication with 13 students earning the prestigious Gold Medal of Excellence, 11 students securing the Silver

Medal of Excellence, and an additional 13 students being awarded the Bronze Medal of Excellence, underscoring the institution's commitment to nurturing excellence in education. Kanta Andotra, former MLA and Founder Chair-

person, extended her heartfelt congratulations to the students, parents, and teachers for their collective effort and dedication in achieving these outstanding results. Vivek Arora, Principal of DPS Kathua, expressed his appreciation for the victorious students, emphasizing the importance of participation in Olympiads in enhancing academic skills and fostering a spirit of competitiveness. He also commended Ms. Ruchi Sharma, the Olympiad Incharge and Primary Wing Coordinator, for her invaluable guidance and support.

## GDC Kathua organises lecturer on 'Remote sensing and Geomorphology'

Top News Report

KATHUA, Mar 1: Post Graduate Department of Geography, GDC Kathua under the guidance of Principal Dr. Seema Mir has organised a guest lecturer on Topic 'Remote sensing and Geomorphology'. The lecture was delivered by Dr. Nater Singh, Retired Principal, who enlightened the PG Geography students and teachers about remote sensing techniques and its applications. HOD Geology Dr. Sanjay Karlopia, HOD Chemistry Prof. Jagdish Kumar, Prof. Pawan



Kumar, Prof. Jagdish Lal, Dr. Surender Singh,

Dr. Ruby Raina, Dr. Abid, Dr. Raj Kumar, Lecturer

Sartaaj and Jyoti Sharma were also present.

## Looking back at Nazi Paris

*A lesson in history and fashion, this one cuts deep with compelling dramatisation and sews it beautifully with its production and costume design*

Wars don't differentiate between the rich and the poor, the powerful and the downtrodden. But there's the aftermath of it all, equally taxing! On similar lines is the series, *The New Look*, wherein creator Todd A Kessler delivers a story with the backdrop of World War II that weaves together fashion and politics.

Set in the world's fashion capital, Paris, occupied by Nazis for four years (1940-44), it begins by throwing names like Dior, Chanel and Balmain that we know today as luxury fashion brands. But it goes beyond their individual stories to how these fashion designers (Christian Dior, Coco Chanel and Pierre Balmain) survived and thrived during war. And they come out victorious, however hurt. Their ability to create and dream overpowers everything else. As much as this intertwined politics and fashion leaves you surprised, it also makes you repel the dreadful times wherein both choosing sides and staying neutral were difficult tasks to accomplish.

Although Coco Chanel is passed off as ambitious, diplomatic and business-minded woman, yet her portrayal by Juliette Binoche makes her no less than the lead of the series.



The creator's focus is of course on Christian Dior and how and why Dior became a revered name in the world of fashion just after the liberation of France from Nazi occupation. And yet Juliette's character Coco has more layers to shine through the series. And, oh boy, did she look phenomenal!

Actor Ben Mendelsohn as Christian Dior is a soft man who doesn't know how to argue, fight but only knows how to make dresses that own the women wearing it. In fact, the title *The New Look* is about couturier Dior's first ever collection by the same name launched in 1947. Dior's character commands respect even though he speaks less throughout the series. Another highlight of the series is Maisie Williams; yes, you heard it right! *The Game of Thrones'*

Arya Stark sure knows how to be a rebel. And she does it by portraying the role of Catharine Dior, Christian's beloved sister, who is part of the Resistance Army of France and gets caught by the Nazis to be transported to concentration camp. While Maisie's performance rings a bell for it is similar to her *GOT* character, but she sure has what it takes to share screen space with seasoned actors. Dior's collection, '*New Look*', also deeply rooted in his love for his sister Catherine, thus stood for the ultra-femininity he witnessed in women during wars.

John Malkovich as Lucien Lelong leaves an impression. He is far more than an employer and has his workers' back in tough times. The series shows two extreme personalities, Dior and Chanel, the naïve and

the cunning (who went on to become each other's rivals). It's kind men like Lelong who were able to strike the middle path, put food on the table for his workers while he continued designing ball gowns for Nazi women.

The *New Look* beautifully and honestly explains that cruelty was served at both the sides. While Nazis were guilty of killing the innocent and torturing prisoners at concentration camps, FFI (French Forces of the Interior) did no less in rounding up collaborators without proofs and publically shaming people, especially women for 'horizontal collaboration' (sleeping with the enemy — Nazis). The parallel drawn between Catherine Dior as a prisoner at Nazi concentration camp and a French actress Arletty (Joséphine de La Baume), a victim of the wild purge after the liberation by FFI, is uncanny. Both the women were humiliated and their long brunette hair were cut.

Call it a period series or a biographical drama, it paints only Dior in positive light, but it's still a binge-worthy tale of the horrors that were unleashed in Paris. So far, five of the 10 episodes are out and as they release weekly on AppleTV.

## Kate Winslet says to be mistaken for Cate Blanchett is a huge compliment



Actress Kate Winslet finds it a 'huge compliment' to be mistaken for Oscar winner Cate Blanchett.

The 48-year-old actress talked about

movie fans regularly mixing her up with Blanchett. Winslet told at the American Museum of Natural History about being falsely identified as the Tar

actress.

She said, "That happens a lot, yeah."

Talking about if she ever goes along with the mix-up and pretends to fans she is Blanchett, Winslet said, "No, we do, yeah. I say, 'Oh, thank you so much.' And they say, 'Loved you in Elizabeth, and I say, 'Thank you. That's so kind.' And (Cate) gets the same thing, where people will say to her, 'Loved you in *Sense and Sensibility*', or, 'Loved you in *Titanic*'. So, yeah, it happens."

She also shared about how the mix ups are flattering to her.

"To be mistaken for Cate Blanchett is a huge compliment. So, no, I will take it - I will take it."

The actresses appeared on the *Graham Norton Show* last week, where they talked about how they're frequently mistaken for each other.

Blanchett said, "I get it all the time. People will say, 'Is it you? Is it you?' and I say, 'Yes, I think so.' And then they say, 'I loved you in *Titanic*.'"

## Shweta Tiwari's picture of elegance in pink Anarkali set

Actress Shweta Tiwari, who was most recently seen in the web series '*Indian Police Force*' has shared a glimpse of her new ethnic look, melting the fans with her 'limitless' beauty.

The '*Kasautii Zindagii Kay*' fame actress is an avid social media user, and often keeps sharing updates of her personal and professional life on Instagram, where she enjoys 5.2 million followers.

In the new photoshoot, Shweta looked like a vision as she wore a pink Anarkali set.

The heavily golden embroidered suit was paired with a matching dupatta.

She went all glam for the makeup — nude pink lips, pink eyeshadow, black eyeliner, kohl-rimmed eyes,



contoured face, and highlighted cheeks. For jewellery, she opted for only heavy jhumkas.

One fan commented: "Ur beauty has no limits", while another said: "Day by day getting younger".

A user wrote: "Embracing the traditions", while another commented: "Super gorgeous".

Meanwhile, on the professional front, Shweta was seen in a Punjabi film '*Mitran Da Naa Chalda*'.

In the action thriller series '*Indian Police Force*', which is directed by Rohit Shetty and Sushwanth Prakash, she plays the role of Shruti Bakshi, Vikram's (Vivek Oberoi) wife.

This series stars Sidharth Malhotra, Shilpa Shetty Kundra and Vivek Oberoi in the lead.

## Ryan Gosling may perform 'I'm Just Ken' at 96th Oscars, but he's not on official list



Barbie may have been out-awarded by *Oppenheimer*, but

Ryan Gosling ended months of speculation to say he will officially

perform *I'm Just Ken* live at the Oscars.

The actor will sing the Academy Award-nominated song from *Barbie* during the 96th annual ceremony on March 10. The Academy declined to comment.

Whether he would agree to show off his singing chops on the Oscars stage has been a big question ever since both Gosling and the song picked up nominations in January.

In February, Gosling insisted the Academy hadn't yet asked him to perform. "It might be too much of a risk to have me do it," said Gosling, who is up for an acting Oscar for his work as Ken. "I don't know how that would work. But I'm open to it."

## Netflix India announces 2024 slate; 'IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack', 'Heeramandi' part of line-up

*The slate, which was announced here at a star-studded event called 'Next on Netflix', features a mix of movies, web series, unscripted shows and documentaries.*

Streamer Netflix unveiled its upcoming slate for India that features over 22 projects, including a series on the 1999 Kandahar hijack, Sanjay Leela Bhansali's debut web show '*Heeramandi: The Diamond Bazaar*', Imtiaz Ali's film on the slain Punjabi singer Amar Singh Chamkila, and Oscar-nominated documentary '*To Kill A Tiger*'.

The slate, which was announced here at a star-studded event called '*Next on Netflix*', features a mix of movies, web series, unscripted shows and documentaries.

Monika Shergill, vice-president, Content at Netflix India, said the streamer is looking forward to another great year after a successful 2023.

"We swept a multitude of awards, including the Oscar, the International Emmy, Busan award for '*Scoop*'. On the back of a successful 2023, this year is going to be bigger and bolder. That's how we planned it."

"When you have to programme for that large an audience, it's important to programme to a wide taste... Our ambition is to super serve the audiences and to give them all kinds of entertainment," Shergill told agency.

The event was attended by AR Rahman, Diljit Dosanjh, Farhan Akhtar, Sonakshi Sinha, Manisha

Koirala, Richa Chadha, Taapsee Pannu, Kriti Sanon, Vijay Varma, Anubhav Sinha, Aanand L Rai, Imtiaz Ali, Guneet Monga, Yo Yo Honey Singh, Kapil Sharma, and Sunil Grover, among others.

It all started with the introduction of the characters in Bhansali's '*Heeramandi*', featuring Koirala, Sonakshi Sinha, Chadha, Sharmistha Segal, Aditi Rao Hydari, and Sanjeeda Shaikh.

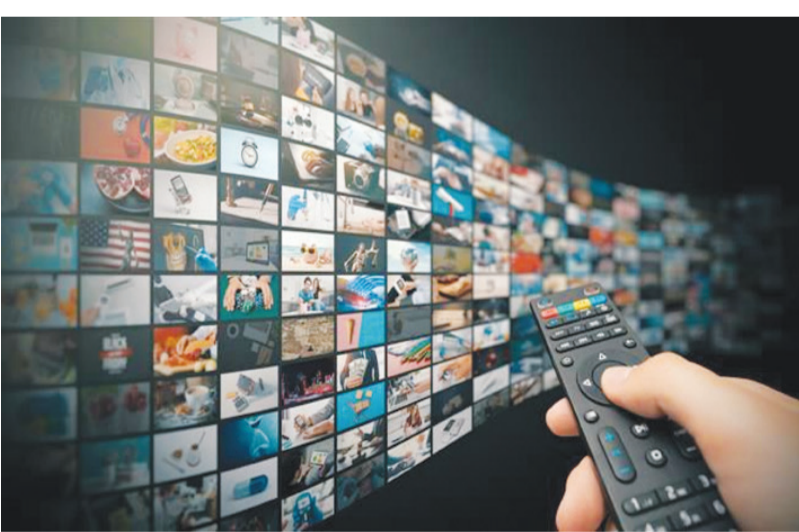
Koirala, who is reuniting with Bhansali after his 1996 feature debut '*Khamoshi: The Musical*', said the team tried to put its best foot forward as they were working with the master filmmaker.

"To be working with Sanjay 25 years after his first film, '*Khamoshi*', it can't get better than '*Heeramandi*'. It's been a humongous journey, I've seen him grow as an artist, as a maestro, as a genius, he is India's best," the actor said at the event.

The streamer is bringing the true story of the December 24, 1999 hijack of the Indian Airlines flight to screen in the form of a series titled '*IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack*'.

The first glimpse of the show, directed and created by Anubhav Sinha, was revealed on Thursday.

Anubhav Sinha, known for films such as '*Mulk*', '*Article 15*' and '*Bheed*', said it was a responsibility to be as authentic as possible



while working on the series.

"Almost everyone remembers a few things about the hijack, and what all happened during the process, but when I started doing research I realised it is a very complex story and a lot of things happened in those seven days and not many people know about it."

"We have put it all in the show... We had to make it factually correct and yet dramatic and engaging," he said at the event.

"*IC 814: The Kandahar Hijack*" stars Vijay Varma, Patralekha, Pankaj Kapur, Naseeruddin Shah, Arvind Swamy, Dia Mirza, Kumud Mishra, Manoj Pahwa, Amrita Puri, and Anupam Tripathi.

Netflix unveiled the first glimpses

of three of its projects with production banner Yash Raj Films' digital arm YRF Entertainment. These titles are: the web series '*Mandala Murders*' and films '*Maharaj*' and '*Vijay 69*'.

The streamer also unveiled the first looks of '*Amar Singh Chamkila*', Kajol and Kriti Sanon-starrer '*Do Patti*', Farhan Akhtar-produced '*Dabba Cartel*', Luv Ranjan's upcoming film '*Wild Wild Punjab*', a documentary on rapper Yo Yo Honey Singh backed by Monga,

comedian Sharma's show '*The Great Indian Kapil Show*', and a docuseries on the cricketing rivalry between India and Pakistan called '*The Greatest Rivalry - India vs Pakistan*'.

Dosanjh, who plays the title role in '*Amar Singh Chamkila*', said he was initially sceptical to be part of Imtiaz Ali's Hindi film as he felt the director wouldn't be able to do justice with the life story of the late Punjabi singer.

Dosanjh said before Ali approached him, he had already been part of a Punjabi film titled '*Jodi*', based on Chamkila and Amarjot. The movie couldn't be released due to the coronavirus pandemic.

However, Dosanjh's perception changed after he heard the script of Ali's movie and was amazed by the director's attention to detail.

"I thought I knew a lot about Chamkile before meeting him (Ali). When I heard his perspective, it was completely different. It was a big thing for us that his story was being said in such a big manner. When sir offered me the film, I surrendered to his vision," he said.

Ali called Chamkila "the son of the soil" who rose to great heights from the grassroots.

Rahman, who has composed the soundtrack of the film along with lyricist Irshad Kamil, said it was his "dream" to compose music for a film that had a connection to Punjabi music.

"It was a long dream of mine to do a Punjabi music film... We had our take for the movie, and made it

like a musical," he said, adding Ali had "completely reinvented" himself with the movie.

Sanon, who is set to make her production debut with '*Do Patti*', said backing the film was a "creatively satisfying" experience.

The actor said post her critically-acclaimed film '*Mimi*', she was keen to explore films that would challenge her.

"There comes a time in the life of an actor when you think 'What next?' I always wanted to be part of films and tell stories in ways other than being an actor on set," said the National Film Award winner.

The event also saw film announcements, including Neeraj Pandey's '*Sikandar Ka Muqaddar*' and '*Murder Mubarak*', featuring Sara Ali Khan and Varma.

The streamer also shared a sneak peek into the next installment of the Taapsee Pannu-starrer movie '*Phir Aayi Haseen Dilruba*'.

Netflix's returning series titles, such as the third seasons of '*Fabulous Lives Vs Bollywood Wives*', '*Jeetendra Kumar-fronted 'Kota Factory*', '*Mismatched*' starring Rohit Saraf and Prajakta Koli, and the second season of '*Khakee: The Bengal Chapter*', created by Pandey, and '*Yeh Kaali Kaali Aankhein*', were also officially featured in the showcase.

## PM Modi Launches Development Projects Worth 35,700 Crore In Jharkhand

PM Modi launched rail, power and coal projects worth over 26,000 crore in Jharkhand.

SINDRI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Prime Minister Narendra Modi today inaugurated and laid the foundation stone for projects worth 35,700 crore in Jharkhand.

Among various projects, he dedicated to the nation the 8,900-crore fertiliser plant of Hindustan Urvarak & Rasayan Ltd in Sindri in Dhanbad district.

The plant will add about 12.7 LMT (lakh metric tonne) per annum of indigenous urea production, benefiting farmers of the country.

This is the third fertiliser plant to be revived in the country,



after such facilities at Gorakhpur and Ramagundam, which were

also dedicated to the nation by the Prime Minister in Decem-

ber 2021 and November 2022 respectively.

India's urea production reached 310 lakh tonne now over 225 lakh tonne in 2014, a significant step towards self-dependence in fertiliser, he said.

PM Modi also launched rail, power and coal projects worth over 26,000 crore in Jharkhand.

"Jharkhand got a gift of projects worth over 35,000 crore. It was Modi's guarantee to revive the Sindri fertiliser plant and it was fulfilled today. With the dedication of this plant to the nation, India will become self-dependent in urea," he added.

## Double engine govt guarantees 'jungle raj' in UP: Rahul Gandhi



NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): The truth of the double engine government in Uttar Pradesh is that it is a "guarantee of jungle raj", Congress leader Rahul Gandhi said on Friday while announcing a statewide protest by party workers against the law and order situation.

"The law and order situation in Uttar Pradesh is the biggest example of how the BJP and Modi media together are indulging in the 'business of lies'," he alleged in a post in Hindi on X.

Highlighting several recent cases of crimes against women, he said the bodies of minor sisters are found hanging from trees at some places.

"Somewhere the audacity of gang rape by BJP members in IIT-BHU campus, and somewhere a woman judge was forced to commit suicide for not getting justice.

"This is the condition of that state whose law and order system is being praised tirelessly," Gandhi said.

He also mentioned the recent murder of a Dalit student returning after appearing for her Class 10 exams in Rampur.

"It is time to come out of the false image created by Modi media and see the truth that the double engine government is the 'guarantee of jungle raj'," the former party president said.

"Uttar Pradesh Congress workers will raise their voice for justice by protesting in every district and every tehsil today against the BJP system and this alliance of criminals," he said.

## ABVP, Left-backed groups clash at JNU; vice-chancellor warns of strict action

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Some students of Jawaharlal Nehru University were injured in a clash between two groups over the selection of election committee members, following which Vice-Chancellor Santishree D Pandit on Friday said strict action would be taken against those involved irrespective of their political affiliation.

The violence occurred in the university's School of Languages building late on Thursday night. Students from both Akhil Bharatiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP) and Left-backed groups have filed police complaints against each other.

The complaints were registered at Vasant Kunj North police station. A university official said some students had been admitted to Safdarjung Hospital. "We received information about the clashes on the campus at 1.15 am. At least four students were injured.

Multiple complaints have been received from both sides. Further inquiry is on," a police officer told agency.

Pandit said the administration would look into the matter and take strict action.

"The JNU (students' union) elections are conducted by students. It is their responsibility to ensure that it is a peaceful democratic process. The Inter-Hostel Administration (IHA) oversees the conduct of the polls. Any complaints by the students' body will be looked into by the IHA. Very strict action will be taken against those found guilty irrespective of their political affiliation," she told agency.

The vice-chancellor also said once the medico-legal cases of students severely injured in the violence are done, the authority concerned will prepare a report and take appropriate action.

Pandit warned the students that any act of violence on campus may lead to deferring the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU) polls further. A video clip of the incident showed a man thrashing students with a stick while in another, a person is seen throwing a bicycle at students. Other videos also purportedly showed individuals being mobbed and beaten up by a group while security personnel of the university tried to rescue them. The ABVP told agency that two students seen in one of the videos beating others with a stick and throwing a bicycle were members of its JNU unit and claimed that they were trying to defend themselves.

On the other hand, Left-backed groups alleged that ABVP members, disgruntled by the selection of the election committee members, attacked JNUSU office-bearers and other students.

## Veteran Congress leader and UP ex-governor Aziz Qureshi dies

BHOPAL, Mar 1 (Agencies): Former Uttar Pradesh governor and senior Congress leader Aziz Qureshi passed away at a hospital here on Friday after a prolonged illness, a family member said.

Qureshi was 83, his nephew Sufian Ali, who looked after him, said.

"He was not keeping well for some time and breathed his last at a private hospital in Bhopal around 11 am," he said.

Qureshi had served as the governor of Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh and Mizoram. He was first elected as an MLA in 1972 from Sehore seat in



Madhya Pradesh and became a Lok Sabha member in 1984, Ali said.

Qureshi was single. His last rites will be performed later this evening, he added.

## 5 injured in fire after suspected cylinder explosion at popular Bengaluru eatery

BENGALURU, Mar 1 (Agencies): Five people suffered injuries in a fire caused by a suspected cylinder explosion at a popular city eatery here on Friday, police said.

While there was no immediate word on the exact number of the injured, police said at least five people had been shifted to hospital.

The explosion at Rameshwaram Cafe at Kundanahalli led to a blaze. Police and Fire personnel have rushed to the spot.



## Mentally disturbed man kills 2 in Palghar, hides in mud pond, arrested

PALGHAR, Mar 1 (Agencies): A mentally unstable man was arrested from Maharashtra's Palghar area on charges of killing two people in the vicinity.

The accused, identified as Kishor Kumar Mandal, had hid in a nearby mud pond after committing the crime.

A video showed officials taking the accused out of the mud pond.

According to the Palghar Police, the man allegedly first killed a senior citizen by attack-



ing him with an axe, in the Koodan village of Boisar area, news agency reported.

He then targeted another individual's residence. When the

disturbance drew attention from the locals, the assailant fled the scene.

The report stated the locals suspected a person with erratic

behaviour had been wandering in the village for the past two days.

Soon after the accused attacked the two persons, the residents raised an alarm, prompting him to flee into the darkness and take cover in a marshy area outside the village.

Upon receiving information about the incident, local police arrived at the scene, and residents joined forces to track down the assailant.

## AAP worker Gurpreet Singh Gopi shot dead in Punjab's Tarn Taran

AMRITSAR, Mar 1 (Agencies): Aam Aadmi Party worker Gurpreet Singh Gopi was shot dead by unidentified assailants in Punjab's Tarn Taran on Friday. The incident happened at the Goindwal Sahib railway crossing.

Videos on social media showed Singh in a car surrounded by locals and police officials, following the incident.

According to news agency agency, Gurpreet Singh alias Gopi Chohla was going to

Kapurthala district for a court matter in his car, when he was shot dead.

As Singh reached the railway crossing between Fatehbad and Goindwal Sahib, the assailants, who had been following him, opened indiscriminate

fire on him and fled from the spot, agency reported.

Police reached the spot as soon as they received information about the incident.

Multiple teams were formed to nab the assailants.

## Supreme Court to hear Gyanvapi committee's plea against Allahabad High Court order on maintainability of temple restoration suits

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): The Supreme Court on Friday agreed to hear an appeal of the Gyanvapi management committee against an Allahabad High Court order which held that lawsuits for "restoration" of a temple where the mosque stands in Varanasi are maintainable.

"We will tag this with the main case," a bench comprising Chief Justice DY Chandrachud and

justices JB Pardiwala and Manoj Misra said.

The plea in the top court was filed by the Anjuman Intezamia Masjid, the committee which manages the affairs of the Gyanvapi mosque.

On December 19 last year, the Allahabad High Court had dismissed pleas challenging the maintainability of a 1991 suit seeking the "restoration" of a temple at the site where the Gyanvapi

mosque stands.

The high court had said that the "religious character" of a disputed place can only be decided by the court.

It had dismissed five related petitions -- on maintainability and also against a survey of the mosque premises -- filed over the years by the mosque committee and the Uttar Pradesh Sunni Central Waqf Board.

## Army chopper makes emergency landing in Rajasthan

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): A Chetak helicopter of the Indian Army made a precautionary landing in Rajasthan's Didwana village on Friday after reporting a technical fault.

The Chetak helicopter en route to Jaipur made a precautionary landing in fields at 10:35 am in village

Didwana (100 kms short of Jaipur) due to Engine Chip Warning light, army officials were quoted as saying by news agency.

No VIP was present on board, they added.

The issue was later rectified, and the chopper was moved towards its destination.



## Ministry of Defence signs Rs 39,125 crore contracts for radars, extended range BrahMos and MiG-29 engines

Aero-engines to be produced by the Koraput Division of Hindustan Aeronautics Limited to sustain the operational capability of the MiG-29 fleet

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): The Ministry of Defence on Friday announced signing of five contracts worth Rs 39,125 crore to procure a new set of high power radars, extended range BrahMos missiles for the Navy and engines for the MiG-29 fighter jets of the Indian Air Force.

The contracts were signed in the presence of Defence Minister Rajnath Singh and Defence Secretary Girdhar Aramane.

Hindustan Aeronautics Limited (HAL) has been contracted for procurement of aero-engines for MiG-29 aircraft at a cost of Rs 5,249.72 crore. These aero-engines will be produced by the Koraput Division of HAL to sustain the operational capability of the MiG-29 fleet. The aero-engines will be manufactured under Transfer of Technology licence from the Russian maker.

"The programme will focus on indigenisation of several high-value critical compo-



nents, which would help increase the indigenous content of future repair and overhaul tasks of RD-33 aero-engines," the Ministry of Defence said.

India has been facing the issue of spares since the Russia-Ukraine war.

Two separate contracts have been inked with Larsen & Toubro Limited -- one for the procurement of Close-in Weapon System (CIWS) and other for the procurement of High-Power Radar (HPR).

The contract for procurement of HPR has also been signed at a cost of Rs 5,700.13 crore. It will replace the existing long-range

radars of IAF with modern active aperture-phased array-based radars with advanced surveillance features. It will significantly enhance the air defence capabilities of IAF with integration of sophisticated sensors capable of detection of small flying targets. It will boost the indigenous radar manufacturing technology as it would be a first-of-its-kind radar built by the private sector in India.

The contract for procurement of CIWS has been signed with Larsen & Toubro Limited at a cost of Rs 7,668.82 crore. CIWS will provide terminal air defence to select locations of the

country. One of the CIWS is shooting down low-flying drones.

Two other contracts have been signed with BrahMos Aerospace Private Limited -- one for the procurement of BrahMos missiles and second for the procurement of ship-borne BrahMos system capable of extended firing ranges.

The 'ship-borne BrahMos system' will come at a cost of Rs 988.07 crore. This system is the Indian Navy's primary weapon for maritime strike operations-fitted onboard various frontline warships. "The system is capable of hitting land or sea targets from extended ranges with pinpoint accuracy at supersonic speeds," The Ministry of Defence said.

The contract for BrahMos missiles comes at a cost of Rs 19,518.65 crore. These missiles would be utilised to meet combat needs and training requirements of the Indian Navy.

## South Korea's Yoon calls for unification, on holiday marking 1919 uprising against colonial Japan

*Yoon and Kim's conflicting comments on unification come after Korean animosities have run high for more than two years, with North Korea ramping up missile tests and South Korea expanding military drills with the US in a tit-for-tat cycle.*

SEOUL, Mar 1 (Agencies): South Korea's president lambasted North Korea on Friday over what he called its repressive rule and vowed to achieve a free, unified Korean Peninsula, weeks after North Korean leader Kim Jong Un rejected the idea of peaceful unification and threatened to occupy the South in the event of war.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol spoke on March 1 Independence Movement Day, a holiday marking a 1919 Korean uprising against Japanese colonial rule.

"Now, we must move toward a free, unified Korean Peninsula," Yoon said in a televised speech. "The North Korean regime relies solely on nuclear weapons and missiles while trapping its 26 million citizens in a quagmire of misery and despair."

"Unification is precisely what is needed to expand the universal values of freedom and human rights," Yoon said. "Our unification efforts must become a source of hope and a beacon of light for the people of North Korea."

Yoon and Kim's conflicting comments on unification come after Korean animosities have run high for more than two years, with North Korea ramping up missile tests and South



Korea expanding military drills with the US in a tit-for-tat cycle.

For most of the 70 years since the end of the 1950-53 Korean War, unification was a prized goal of leaders in both Koreas, which are divided by the world's most heavily fortified border. But the prospects for unifying the the rich, democratic South and the nominally socialist, authoritarian and poor North any time soon are extremely dim, observers say.

Despite extensive U.S.-led sanctions and its own economic mismanagement, North Korea has appeared politically stable. Exchange programs between the Koreas have been dormant since Kim's high-stakes nuclear diplomacy with then-President Donald Trump collapsed in 2019.

In a speech in January, Kim vowed to rewrite the constitution to remove the long-running state goal of a peaceful Korean unification and cement South Korea as an "invariable principal enemy." He said the new constitution must specify North Korea would annex and subjugate the South if another war breaks out. The sudden abandonment of unification took observers by surprise.

Many experts say Kim likely aimed to take the initiative in dealings with the South while trying to diminish South Korean cultural influence and bolster his family's rule at home.

During Friday's speech, Yoon called Kim's vow of enmity "truly deplorable." He earlier said Kim's speech showed the "anti-national and anti-historical

nature of the North Korean government.

Yoon's speech didn't touch on the abuses of the Japanese colonial rulers in Korea, which left painful memories and have long been a source of tension between the two countries.

"On a holiday commemorating Korea's resistance against Japanese colonialism a century ago, Yoon touted his administration's improved relations with Tokyo," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha University in Seoul. "He emphasized that the independence movement will only be complete once the northern and southern halves of the Korean Peninsula are finally unified and free."

Since taking office in 2022, Yoon has worked to beef up South Korea's military alliance with the U.S. and resolve historical disputes with Japan, aiming to forge a stronger Seoul-Washington-Tokyo partnership against North Korea's nuclear threats.

"Now, Korea and Japan are working together to overcome the painful past," Yoon said. "Sharing the values of freedom, human rights and the rule of law, our two countries have become partners in the pursuit of common interests for global peace and prosperity."

## Facebook parent Meta to stop deals funding Australian journalism



SYDNEY, Mar 1 (Agencies): Facebook parent Meta announced Friday it would no longer pay Australian media companies for news, prompting a government warning that the firm was in "dereliction" of past promises.

Extending a global retreat from news content, Meta said it would scrap the Facebook News tab in Australia and would not renew deals with news publishers worth hundreds of millions of dollars.

"People don't come to Facebook for news and political content," the firm said, explaining the move.

The decision had been on the cards but will come as a hammer blow for Australian news outlets already struggling to stay afloat. Meta had previously

announced it would not renew content deals with news publishers in the United States, Britain, France and Germany.

The social media giant had been pushed into paying for news by governments hoping to level the media playing field and support struggling news firms.

Media companies around the world have seen a decline in revenues for years, with advertisers flocking to popular digital platforms like Google and Facebook to reach consumers.

Three years ago, Meta's promise to pay news outlets prompted the Australian government to water down legislation governing online platforms and their relationships with the news media.

On Friday, Communications Minister Michelle Rowland expressed anger at Meta's announcement and suggested the government may take retaliatory measures.

"Meta's decision to no longer pay for news content in a number of jurisdictions represents a dereliction of its commitment to the sustainability of Australian news media," Rowland said.

"The decision removes a significant source of revenue for Australian news media businesses. Australian news publishers deserve fair compensation for the content they provide."

Rowland said the government would "work through all available options" to address the issue, in consultation with the country's communications regulator. The government was "committed to promoting a strong, sustainable and diverse media sector given its vital importance to our democracy and social cohesion", she said.

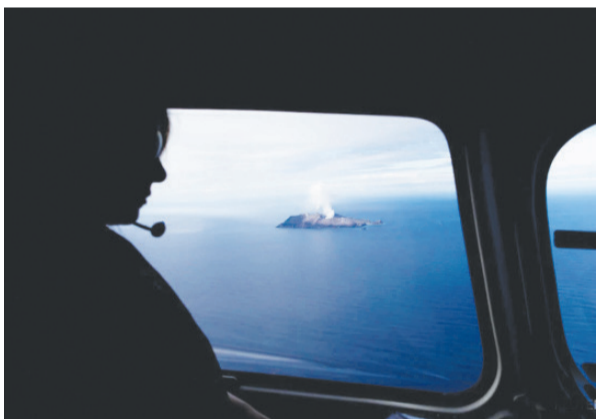
## New Zealand Volcano Disaster Victims Awarded \$6 Million Damages

WELLINGTON, Mar 1 (Agencies): The victims and families affected by the 2019 New Zealand volcano disaster, which claimed 22 lives, were awarded total damages of NZ\$10 million (US\$6 million) on Friday.

The sum must be paid by five companies that transported 47 tourists to the volcanic island in December 2019, the day it erupted. Many of the 25 survivors suffered terrible burns.

In addition to paying out reparations, the islands' owners, Whakaari Management Limited, along with White Island Tours and helicopter firm Volcanic Air Safaris, who ran tourist trips to the volcano, were also fined.

At Auckland District Court, Judge Evange-



los Thomas said the total damages were "no more than a token recognition" of the victims' suffering.

The group had been "physically, mentally and emotionally" traumatised by the disaster, he said, with many still bearing the physical scars.

"Your stories have been heartbreaking and inspiring, it has been a humbling privilege to

hear them," Thomas told the victims in court.

He said the exact reparation amounts would be adjusted in some cases, especially in instances where victims had lost parents.

He said each of the five companies sentenced had failed in their duties to assess and mitigate risk. "That failure exposed others to risk of serious injury and death," he added.

## Iran begins voting in first parliament election since 2022 Mahsa Amini protests as questions over turnout loom

DUBAI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Iran began voting Friday in its first parliamentary elections since the mass 2022 protests over its mandatory hijab laws after the death of Mahsa Amini, with questions looming over just how many people will turn out for the poll.

Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, 84, will cast one of the first votes in an election that also will see new members elected to the country's Assembly of Experts. The panel of clerics, who serve an eight-year term, is mandated to select a new supreme leader if Khamenei steps down or dies, giving their role increased importance with Khamenei's age.

Some 15,000 candidates are vying for a seat in the 290-member parliament, formally known as the Islamic Consultative Assembly. Terms run for four years, and five seats are reserved for Iran's religious minorities.

Under the law, the parliament has oversight over the executive branch, votes on treaties



and handles other issues. In practice, absolute power in Iran rests with its supreme leader.

Hard-liners have controlled the parliament for the past two decades — with chants of "Death to America" often heard from the floor.

Under Parliament Speaker Mohammad Bagher Qalibaf, a former Revolutionary Guard general who supported a violent crackdown on Iranian university students in 1999, the legislature pushed forward a bill in 2020 that greatly curtailed Tehran's cooperation with the United Nations nuclear watchdog, the International Atomic Energy

Agency.

That followed then-President Donald Trump's unilateral withdrawal of America from Iran's nuclear deal with world powers in 2018 — an act that sparked years of tensions in the Middle East and saw Iran enrich enough uranium at record-breaking purity to have enough fuel for "several" nuclear weapons if it chose.

More recently, the parliament has focused on issues surrounding Iran's mandatory head covering, or hijab, for women after the 2022 death of 22-year-old Amini in police cus-

tody, which sparked nationwide protests.

The protests quickly escalated into calls to overthrow Iran's clerical rulers. A subsequent security crackdown killed over 500 people, with more than 22,000 detained.

Calls for an election boycott have spread in recent weeks, including from imprisoned Nobel Peace Prize laureate Narges Mohammadi, a women's rights activist, who called them a "sham."

The boycott calls have put the government under renewed pressure — since its 1979 Islamic Revolution, Iran's theocracy has based its legitimacy in part on turnout in elections.

The state-owned polling center ISPA hadn't put out election data prior to the vote until Thursday, something highly unusual as their figures typically get released much earlier. Its polling, based on a survey of 5,121 voting-age people, predicted a turnout of 23.5% in the capital, Tehran, and 38.5% nationally. It said the margin of error in the poll was 2%.

## Left-wing firebrand wins UK by-election dominated by Israel-Hamas war

*Galloway, long accused by critics of stoking community tensions, put the Gaza conflict front and centre of his campaign in Rochdale, which has a 30 percent Muslim population.*

ROCHDALE (UNITED KINGDOM), Mar 1 (Agencies): Controversial left-wing firebrand George Galloway was elected to the UK parliament on Friday after tapping into anger over the Israel-Hamas war in a chaotic by-election marred by anti-Semitism allegations.

Galloway, 69, first became an MP in 1987 and will return to the House of Commons for the first time since 2015 after winning the seat of Rochdale, in the north of England, by nearly 6,000 votes.

The turbulent vote saw the main opposition

Labour party withdraw its candidate, Azhar Ali, after he touted a conspiracy theory that Israel had allowed Hamas to carry out its deadly attack on October 7.

Galloway, long accused by critics of stoking community tensions, put the Gaza conflict front and centre of his campaign in Rochdale, which has a 30 percent Muslim population.

"Keir Starmer, this is for Gaza," Galloway, leader of the fringe Workers Party of Great Britain, said in his victory speech, referring

to the Labour party's leader.

"You have paid, and you will pay, a high price for the role that you have played in enabling, encouraging and covering for the catastrophe presently going on in occupied Palestine in the Gaza Strip," he added.

The Scottish-born Galloway, nicknamed "Gorgeous George", has had a long and chequered political career, in which he has represented several parties, including Labour.

He sparked controversy in the 1990s when he visited then-Iraq leader



Saddam Hussein, telling him: "Sir, I salute your courage, your strength, your indefatigability."

Galloway gained international notoriety in 2005 when he was called to testify over Iraq in the US Senate.

He had earlier been expelled from Labour over his stance on the war.

His majority of 5,697 votes in Rochdale amounted to 18.3 percent of the total, on a turnout of 39.7 percent.

The surprise runner-up was David Tully, a local businessman and independent candidate. It is very rare for none of the main parties to finish in first and second place.

The by-election was triggered by the death of veteran Labour MP Tony Lloyd.

"Inflammatory" A Labour spokesperson said: "We deeply regret that the Labour party was unable to field a candidate in this by-election and apologise to the people of Rochdale. George Galloway only won because Labour did not stand. "Rochdale deserved

the chance to vote for an MP that would bring communities together and deliver for working people. George Galloway is only interested in stoking fear and division."

"As an MP he will be a damaging force in our communities and public life," the spokesperson added.

Galloway last represented a seat in Bradford in the north of England from 2012 to 2015. Between 2005 and 2010 he was a Respect Party MP for a constituency in east London.

A spokesperson for the charity Campaign

Against Antisemitism said Galloway has "an atrocious record of baiting the Jewish community".

"Given his historic inflammatory rhetoric and the current situation faced by the Jewish community in this country, we are extremely concerned by how he may use the platform of the House of Commons in the remaining months of this parliament."

Labour are well ahead of Prime Minister Rishi Sunak's ruling Conservatives in opinion polls ahead of a general election due later this year.







## BCCI to conduct women's red-ball tournament in Pune from March 28

**Women's red-ball cricket will return to India's domestic calendar after four years when the BCCI conducts a Senior Inter Zonal Multi-Day Trophy in Pune from March 28.**

NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Women's red-ball cricket will return to India's domestic calendar after four years when the BCCI conducts a Senior Inter Zonal Multi-Day Trophy in Pune from March 28, the board announced on Friday.

The move comes after the Indian women's team's return to Test cricket. The side has played Tests against Australia and England in the recent years. Domestic red ball cricket for women was last held in 2018.

"It is a welcome step taken by BCCI. The national team has started playing Test cricket again and we need the next generation of cricketers to play



red ball cricket at the domestic level," former India pacer Amita Sharma told agency.

"I would also want red ball to be played at the state level and not just zonal level. Back in the

day we had both those events," she added.

The Maharashtra Cricket Association will be hosting the tournament which will feature six teams, representing East,

West, North, South, Central, and North-East zones.

They will be competing in a series of five matches to be played across three days each, which is a day more than the two-day games played in the 2018 season.

The tournament will begin right after the ongoing Women's Premier League, which ends on March 17.

It will start with the quarter-finals between East Zone and North East Zone and West Zone and Central Zone on March 28 with the semifinals slated on April 3.

The final is scheduled for April 9.

## NZ vs AUS: Lyon, Green put Australia in commanding position on Day 2

WELLINGTON, Mar 1 (Agencies): Australia ended Day 2 with a 217-run lead over New Zealand following outstanding displays from all-rounder Cameron Green and veteran spinner Nathan Lyon.

The Aussies ended the day at 13 for 2, leading New Zealand by 217 runs. The visitors started Day 2 at 279 for 9 and went on to add another 104 runs on the board. Green, who had completed his century on Day 1, formed a record-breaking partnership with Josh Hazlewood.

The two players formed a 116-run partnership, making it Australia's highest for the 10th wicket, overcoming the previous record set by Jason Gillespie and Glenn McGrath in 2004.

Their brilliant stand helped Australia post 387 runs in their first innings, with Green

remaining unbeaten on 174 runs off 275 balls, while Hazlewood chipped in with a neat 62-ball 22.

The day turned from bad to worse for the Kiwis as Australian bowlers piled the pressure in Wellington. The Australian bowlers, led by the experienced Lyon, capitalized on the momentum built by their batters. Lyon bamboozled the New Zealand batting lineup, claiming four wickets while giving away 43 runs in 8.1 overs. His control over line and length, combined with the turn he extracted from the pitch, proved too much for the Kiwi batters.

Lyon's performance helped him go past the legendary Courtney Walsh to become 7th-highest wicket-taker in Test cricket. The right-arm spinner has now claimed 521 wickets



in 128 Test matches. With this performance, Lyon has now become the fifth all-time leading wicket-taker in Tests, only behind legends like Muttiah Muralitharan, Shane Warne, James Anderson, Glenn McGrath, Stuart Broad and Anil Kumble.

A significant moment of the day came when New Zealand's captain, Kane Williamson, found

himself run out following a mix-up with teammate Will Young. Glenn Phillips helped the Kiwis recover with a 70-ball 71, having come in to bat when they were reeling at 29 for 5.

His knock, aided by a quick 42 from Matt Henry took New Zealand's first innings score to 179. Tim Southee then claimed quick wickets of Steve Smith and

Usman Khawaja as the Aussies ended Day 2 at 13 for 2. As the day concluded, the match was finely poised, with Australia having established a strong position thanks to Green's batting heroics and Lyon's bowling mastery. The run-out of Williamson added an extra layer of intrigue to the contest, setting the stage for an enthralling Day 3.

## OTD in 2003: Sachin Tendulkar 98 sets up India's win over Pakistan in World Cup



NEW DELHI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Batting maestro Sachin Tendulkar, on this day 21 years ago, played a classic 98-run knock to lead India to a remarkable victory over arch-rivals Pakistan, marking their fourth consecutive World Cup win against the rival team.

Pakistan opted to bat first and set India a target of 274 runs, thanks to contributions from their lineup, including a notable 101 from Saeed Anwar. Pakistan got off to a good start with opener Anwar, who went on to score a brilliant century (101) and Younis Khan, who added a valuable 32, as they posted a competitive 273/7 in a high-pressure match.

Despite the pressure of a World Cup clash against their arch-rivals, the Indian team responded with remark-

able poise. Tendulkar, opening the batting for India, unleashed an array of shots that not only countered the Pakistani bowlers but also set the tone for the chase. His innings included twelve boundaries and a six, showcasing his class and aggression.

Tendulkar's knock was pivotal as it came against a formidable bowling attack comprising Wasim Akram, Waqar Younis, and Shoaib Akhtar, amongst others. His duel with Akhtar, in particular, was a highlight of the match, with Tendulkar dominating the fast bowler in a manner that shifted the momentum firmly in India's favor. Despite falling short of a century, his 98 runs laid the foundation for India's successful chase, which they completed with six wickets in hand and 26

balls to spare. India had never chased more than 222 in a World Cup before, but Sachin Tendulkar's knock against Pakistan was simply incredible, allowing India to win by six wickets with 26 balls remaining. The Master Blaster was named Player of the Match. Tendulkar dominated Pakistan's pace trio of Wasim Akram, Shoaib Akhtar, and Waqar Younis, guiding India to a stunning victory over Pakistan for the fourth time in five World Cup matches. Sachin Tendulkar's 98 off 75 balls will be remembered as one of the best World Cup innings of all time.

Speaking at the India Today Conclave 2023, Sachin recalled having a "sleepless night" before the match against Pakistan due to outside noise. "I had a sleepless night before the match because you know India and Pakistan is always a big game. When people got to know they had started talking about it, saying 'this game India have to win no matter what happens in other matches'. So, I said what do you mean? There was that pressure, expectations were there," Tendulkar said.

## Lionel Messi And Inter Miami Face Florida Major League Soccer Derby Test

**Lionel Messi and Inter Miami face an early season derby test when they host Florida rivals Orlando City in Major League Soccer on Saturday.**

LONDON, Mar 1 (Agencies): Lionel Messi and Inter Miami face an early season derby test when they host Florida rivals Orlando City in Major League Soccer on Saturday. Messi's stoppage time equalizer in Sunday's 1-1 draw at the Los Angeles Galaxy ensured that Miami remain unbeaten after opening their campaign with a 2-0 win at home to Real Salt Lake. Despite the results, Miami failed to impress with their veteran-laden squad struggling for large stretches of the game in LA.

Uruguayan striker Luis Suarez looks well short of match fitness while Spanish midfielder Sergio Busquets, who has been dealing with an ankle injury, has also been less than his best.

"We started well, with the result we wanted. On Sunday we wanted to win, but the tie was just. It was not our best game," Busquets said.

"At the start of a season, it's always difficult. We still have to get adjusted, await injured players to recuperate, hopefully we can play well this Saturday at home in the Clasico."

Busquets said that Suarez, the 37-year-old Uruguayan and former Barcelona and Liverpool striker, needs to be given some time to get up to speed after joining the club from Brazilian team Gremio, for whom he scored 17 goals last season.

"It's a new league. We all need a period of adaptation," the Spaniard said. "Not just him, but all of us as a team. We are changing, fixing



things, some things left to improve."

Orlando represent the toughest opponent of the campaign so far for Gerardo 'Tata' Martino's men and not just because they will be fired up for a local derby.

Orlando finished second in the Eastern Conference last season and while they went out to eventual MLS Cup winners Columbus in the conference semifinals, they are among the favorites for the title this season.

Colombian coach Oscar Pareja has added some experience and quality to his team in the off-season, an indication that he is going for a 'win now' approach to the campaign.

Luis Muriel, a 32-year-old Colombian winger, has joined the Lions from Serie A club Atalanta, ending his 14-year spell in European football.

Uruguayan midfielder Nicolas Lodeiro, a standout with Seattle Sounders, has also joined Orlando along with Slovenian defender David Brekalo.

along with Busquets and Spanish fullback Jordi Alba.

Pareja attacked the referees in that game for not handing a second yellow card to Messi, describing the game, amid peak 'Messi mania' as a "circus".

Another in-state derby on Saturday sees the improved Galaxy head to northern California to take on the San Jose Earthquakes.

The Galaxy, bolstered by the offseason addition of Ghanaian winger Joseph Paintsil and Brazilian wide-man Gabriel Pec, and with Spanish midfielder Riqui Puig and Serbian striker Dejan Joveljic, look a much more threatening opponent than in their disappointing 2023 campaign, where they failed to make the playoffs.

Defending champions Columbus Crew visit Minnesota United, who announced on Monday that they had appointed Eric Ramsay as their new coach.

The 32-year-old Welshman was part of Erik ten Hag's staff at Manchester United and will look to improve on Minnesota's 11th place finish in the West under Adrian Heath last term.

## Shreyas Iyer in spotlight as Mumbai take on Tamil Nadu in Ranji Trophy semifinal

MUMBAI, Mar 1 (Agencies): Out-of-favour India batter Shreyas Iyer will be motivated to prove a point and serve a timely reminder of his skillset as he gets back to domestic action when the record 41-time champions Mumbai take on Tamil Nadu in the Ranji Trophy semifinal here on Saturday.

Dropped from the Indian Test side and discarded from BCCI's list of contracted players after he did not make himself available for the Ranji Trophy quarterfinal due to groin and back trouble, Iyer has recovered completely to join Mumbai for the key clash.

Iyer would be key in Mumbai's scheme of things specially against Tamil Nadu's quality spin bowling, which has been one of their key weapons this season.

Skipper R Sai Kishore (47 wickets) and fellow left-arm spinner S Ajith Ram (41) are perched atop the list of highest wicket-takers, against whom Iyer and Co. will have a great opportunity to make a strong statement.

The semifinal promises to be an enthralling battle between Tamil Nadu's persistent and disciplined bowlers and their batters who have piled up big runs this season versus Mumbai's all-round strength.

Mumbai have made it to the semifinals riding on timely performances from different players barring skipper Ajinkya



Rahane, who has just one fifty to show from six matches.

None of the Mumbai bowlers has even made it to the top 10 in the list of wicket-takers - Mohit Avasthi (32) is at 13th - yet they find themselves in the final four with their bowlers sharing the workload quite well.

Both Mumbai and Tamil Nadu are coming off impressive wins at the quarterfinal stage.

Young Musheer Khan's unbeaten 203 allowed Mumbai a slender lead which swelled to an insurmountable 605 courtesy a historic show from tailenders Tanush Kotian and Tushar Deshpande against Baroda.

Tamil Nadu stopped defending champions Saurashtra.

A standout feature in Tamil Nadu's impressive run this year has been the fact that they have bowled out each of their opponents twice in all Ranji matches

this season irrespective of the outcome.

Both Mumbai and Tamil Nadu have lost only one match each.

While Tamil Nadu only rose to find their best form after an away defeat to Gujarat in their season-opener, Mumbai's narrow loss to Uttar Pradesh only proved to be a minor blip.

It remains to be seen if N Jagadeesan (821 runs) recovers his form which helped him register consecutive scores of 245 not out and 321 earlier in the tournament. The right-hander has not crossed fifty in his last seven innings.

However, Baba Indrajith's (686 runs) enviable consistency has done wonders for Tamil Nadu, with the 29-year-old being on a run-making spree with scores of 80, 187, 98 and 48 in last three matches.

Tamil Nadu have also been strengthened by the inclusion of

all-rounder Washington Sundar, who has been released from the Indian Test side.

On what is expected to be a batting-friendly surface, Mumbai's deep batting line-up with Prithvi Shaw and Bhupen Lalwani at the top and all-rounder Shardul Thakur and even Shams Mulani in the lower-order, the hosts will fancy putting up a big score.

For Tamil Nadu, it would be imperative to keep working with their strengths -- if Jagadeesan, Indrajith and Pradosh Ranjan Paul form the fulcrum of their batting, seamer Sandeep Warrior has provided adequate support to the spin duo of Sai Kishore and Ajith.

Squads: Mumbai: Ajinkya Rahane (c), Shreyas Iyer, Prithvi Shaw, Bhupen Lalwani, Amogh Bhatkal, Musheer Khan, Prasad Pawar (wk), Hardik Tamore (wk), Shardul Thakur, Shams Mulani, Tanush Kotian, Aditya Dhumal, Tushar Deshpande, Mohit Avasthi, Royston Dias, Dhawal Kulkarni.

Tamil Nadu: R Sai Kishore (c), Pradosh Ranjan Paul (vc), Baba Indrajith, Narayan Jagadeesan (wk), Suresh Lokeshwar (wk), Sai Sudharsan, Vijay Shankar, Vimal Khumar, Balasubramanian Sachin, Washington Sundar, Sandeep Warrior, Trilok Nag, T Natarajan, Mohammed, Mohammed, S Ajith Ram.

Match starts 9:30am IST.

