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'What belongs to us must be rightfully restored': Yogi '

Punjab Police clear protesters from Shambhu border, detain farmer

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Uttar Pradesh chief minister Yogi Adityanath on Tuesday proclaimed that what belongs to the Hindus must be rightly restored after he said that 54 out of 67 pilgrimage sites were reclaimed in Sambhal district due to the government's efforts. During his address in the assembly, Yogi pulled up the Samajwadi Party for "playing" with India's religious sentiments as he slammed the leader of opposition in the assembly Mata Prasad Pandey for calling him "communal". "There were once 67 pilgrimage sites and 19 wells in Sambhal. Over time, many were lost. But we have now reclaimed 54 of these heritage sites. What belongs to us must be rightfully restored," Yogi said. "Truth is often bitter, but one must have the courage to accept it," he added. UP CM also accused Samajwadi Party of straying away from the values of socialist leader Ram Manohar Lohia. "Ram, Krishna, and Shankar are the guiding ideals of India. As long as Indians revere these three great figures, the country will remain strong. But the SP has no faith in them because it has always tampered with India's religious sentiments," Yogi said. "Lohia had said that a true socialist must remain detached from wealth and lineage. But we all can see how SP has strayed from this principle," he added. This comes days after the authorities intensified efforts to transform Sambhal, believed to be the place where Lord Kalki, the tenth and final incarnation of Lord Vishnu.

Vatika Times

BATHINDA/ PATIALA: Punjab Police on Wednesday detained fasting farmer activist Jagjit Singh Dallewal and Kisan Mazdoor Morcha head Sarvan Singh Pandher as well as other prominent agitators in Mohali when they were returning after attending a meeting with a central govt delegation in Chandigarh and also evicted protesting farmers from the Shambhu and Khanauri borders. The evictions began despite assurances from Punjab ministers about the AAP govt having no plans to disturb farm protesters or the two protest sites at Shambhu and Khanauri. By late Wednesday evening, the two sites had been cleared of protesters. More than 250 protesters were detained from Khanauri, some from Mohali, and 110 from Shambhu, a senior Punjab Police officer said, adding that they were shifted to a marriage hall. Wednesday's meeting was the seventh round of talks between the two sides since Feb 2024 and discussions centred on the main demand for a law guaranteeing MSP for crops. After Wednesday's talks, central ministers have decided to appoint a joint



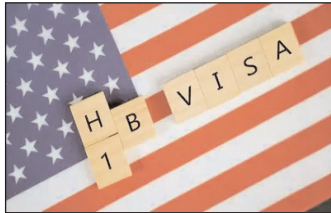
secretary to engage with various stakeholders to delve deeper into the contentious issue of MSP. The next round of meetings is scheduled for May 4. Cops picked up 150 forcefully within minutes, claim farmers. Joint secretary Purna Chand Kishan will be engaging with agriculture experts and farm activists. The development comes after farmers presented compelling data from reputable agencies like Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, Crisil, and RBI. The data highlighted the financial implications of providing MSP. The farmers were proceeding to the Shambhu border from Chandigarh, from where Dallewal and other agitators accompanying him were to head to Khanauri. However, they were picked up right after crossing into Punjab, in Jagatpura area of Mohali.

Dallewal was detained in his ambulance, and others with their vehicles after some resistance from the farmers. Pandher was picked up from his vehicle even though he tried to get away. The farmers were apprehending some kind of action given the heavy police deployment at both protest sites, but they expected it at Shambhu and Khanauri. Punjab police rounded up a few hundred farmers at the Khanauri interstate border late Wednesday evening. The turbans of several farmers were tossed during minor scuffles as they were being put into buses by authorities to clear the protest site. BKU Ekta Sidhupur leader Kulwant Singh claimed that all the belongings and tractor trailers parked on the highway were left behind as police didn't give them time, especially to elderly farmers, to vacate.

Proposed higher wage for H-1B visa holders may hinder hiring of freshers

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Proposed wage mandates for H-1B visa holders, including a requirement to pay at least the median local wage, may hinder US companies from hiring skilled foreign workers, warns an NFAP study. These mandates could force employers to move jobs offshore, particularly affecting recent graduates in science and engineering, and could weaken the US workforce in key technology sectors.



Proposed higher wage for H-1B visa holders may hinder hiring of freshers, scientists and engineers. A new study warns that proposed wage mandates for H-1B visa holders could make it harder for US companies to hire skilled foreign workers, particularly scientists and

engineers. The research, conducted by the National Foundation for American Policy (NFAP), highlights concern over a proposal that would require employers to pay H-1B professionals significantly above current market rates.

Potential impact of wage hikes:

The proposed wage changes, including a requirement to pay at least the "median local wage," could price many skilled foreign graduates

Tesla Autopilot AI engineer Shroff's Angry post for Tim Waltz

Vatika Times

KANPUR: Tesla Autopilot AI engineer Dhaval Shroff's Angry post for Tim Waltz on his 'Tesla joke' gets CEO Elon Musk's reply. A level 3 charging station is seen, Wednesday, March 19, 2025, in Woodstock, Ga. (AP Photo/Mike Stewart) Not just CEO Elon Musk, Tesla's top management too seems quite upset with all the protests and vandalism against the company and its vehicles. This includes Tesla Autopilot AI engineer Dhaval Shroff. Amongst

one of the earliest engineers in the Tesla Full Self Driving team, Dhaval Shroff slammed former vice presidential candidate Tim Walz who made fun of Tesla's falling stock on stage. For those unaware, Tim Walz was Democratic candidate for VP's post and lost in the 2024 elections. During a Tuesday night speech in Wisconsin, Walz said that he frequently checks how Tesla stock is doing to "give me a little boost during the day." "\$225 and dropping," exclaimed Walz, referring to Tesla's closing share price.

Punjab couple made Rs 3,500 crore selling cloud space

NEW DELHI: A couple arrested by ED from Punjab on Friday, who had masterminded a multi-level marketing fraud by duping investors with promises of handsome rental value on purchase of cloud space & leasing it back, has been remanded in ED custody. On Saturday, a special PMLA court in Jalandhar remanded Sukhvinder Singh Kharour to 10 days and Dimple Kharour to five days in ED custody.

Just 2 convictions in 193 cases filed by ED against netas in 10 years

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: There have been just two convictions in 193 cases filed by Enforcement Directorate against political netas in the last 10 years, the finance ministry informed Parliament. Junior finance minister Pankaj Chaudhary said on Tuesday in a written reply in Rajya Sabha that the highest number of cases (32) were filed between April 1, 2022, and March 31, 2023. One conviction came in



2016-2017 while the other was in 2019-2020. "Data of ED cases registered against MPs, MLAs and local administrators, along with their party, state-wise is not maintained," Chaudhary said in his reply. He was responding to a question from Rajya

Sabha MP A A Rahim. The minister said ED was a premier law enforcement agency that was entrusted with administration and enforcement of Prevention of Money Laundering Act, Foreign Exchange Management Act and Fugitive Economic Offenders Act. "ED takes up cases for probe based on credible evidence/material and doesn't distinguish cases based on political affiliations, religion or otherwise," Chaudhary.

Sunita Williams should get Bharat Ratna: Mamata

Vatika Times

KOLKATA: CM Mamata Banerjee on Wednesday said astronaut Sunita Williams should be conferred with Bharat Ratna for the challenges she faced while spending nearly nine months in space. Speaking at the Assembly, Banerjee congratulated the rescue team, praising their commendable efforts in bringing the astronauts back to Earth. "The Assembly would like to thank the team for rescuing Williams and another astronaut who were stranded in space for several months. I congratulate them, as well as Sunita Williams. I think she should be honoured with Bharat Ratna," Banerjee told the House. The CM said she was closely monitoring the situation and was deeply concerned. "I'm interested in space science and was following the developments through various sources of information. I kept track of

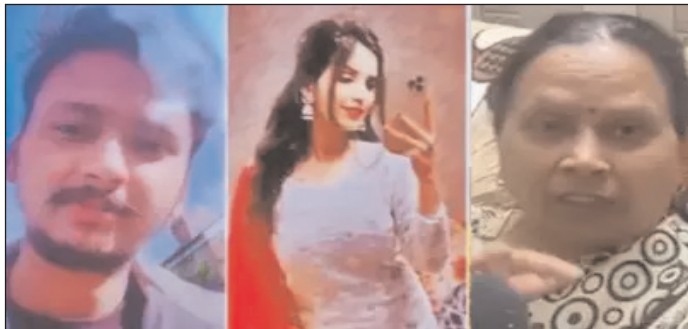


the situation daily and took regular updates," she said. Earlier in a post on X, the CM described Williams as "daughter of India" and hailed the return of space explorers after being stranded for nearly nine months. "Welcome Sunita Williams and Butch Wilmore back to Earth, finally and safely, after so many days. Our daughter of India returns to us, and we are deeply, deeply happy and elated. We are profoundly happy for Butch Wilmore also. Hail their courage, hail their return, hail human glory!" Banerjee wrote in a post on X. It was not just the CM but BJP legislators also celebrated the astronauts' return in the state assembly

Daughters said 'papa is in the drum': Murdered navy merchant Saurabh Rajput's mother reveals

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: The brutal murder of Merchant Navy officer Saurabh Rajput has sent shockwaves through Meerut, with his grieving family demanding the death penalty for his wife, Muskan Rastogi, and her alleged lover, Sahil Shukla. Saurabh's mother, Renu Devi, accused Muskan of killing her husband, locking his body in a room, and then going on a trip as if nothing had happened. Saurabh had been missing since March 4. The horrific crime was exposed when laborers hired to move a heavy drum from the couple's rented house struggled with its weight. When one of them questioned Muskan about its contents, she casually said it was "house junk." However, as



they attempted to shift it, the lid accidentally opened, releasing a foul smell. Suspecting something sinister, the laborers immediately informed the police. According to Saurabh's mother, even their young daughter might have been aware of the crime. "Neighbors told us that she (their daughter) was saying, 'Papa has been kept in the drum.' She might have seen something, or else why would a

child say such a thing?" Renu Devi said. Police investigations revealed that Muskan and Sahil allegedly stabbed Saurabh to death, chopped up his body, and sealed the remains in a drum filled with cement to hide the crime. Muskan's landlord had reportedly asked the couple to vacate the rented house, which is when she and Sahil attempted to shift the body. After the body was discov-

ered, Muskan fled to her mother's house, allegedly to inform them of what had happened. However, Saurabh's mother claims Muskan's family already knew about the murder. "She (Muskan) reached her mother's house, and her mother met a lawyer before they went to court. They were trying to cover things up, but the police caught them," Renu Devi said. Police arrested Muskan and Sahil on Tuesday and presented them before the court on Wednesday. They have been remanded to 14-day judicial custody. Meanwhile, Saurabh's family is devastated, claiming he sacrificed everything for Muskan, only to be betrayed in the most gruesome manner.

MLAs demand CBI probe into 17 unexplained deaths after wedding feast

Vatika Times

JAMMU: Lawmakers in J&K pressed for a CBI probe into the unexplained deaths of 17 villagers at Budhal in Jammu division's Rajouri district, after lab tests revealed traces of multiple toxins in their bodies and food samples. During question hour in the assembly, Budhal MLA Javed Iqbal Choudhary alleged that the deaths were part of a larger conspiracy to destabilise the region. "Different toxins have been found in the samples. It seems they were poisoned with a truckload of toxins," he said. The deaths were reported between last year and Jan 19. Villagers linked the fatalities to a wedding feast on Dec 2. Since then, Budhal has faced a string of funerals, with the deceased belonging

Jaishankar: Countries are now weaponising economic activities

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: Tariffs and sanctions are a reality, whether one likes it or not, amid the weaponisation of any kind of economic activity over the past decade, foreign minister S Jaishankar said Wednesday. As US President Donald Trump threatens to unleash a trade war with his reciprocal tariffs, Jaishankar said there's a less restrained "culture" in international relations today than a decade ago and that's something all countries need to factor in. "Whether we like it or not, they are a reality. Countries use them. In fact, if one looks at last decade, I'd say we have seen pretty much the weaponisation of any kind of capability or economic activity.



NCRB report for 2023 not out yet, coming soon, says Centre

Vatika Times

NEW DELHI: On the delay in the annual publication of accident, suicide and crime data by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) for 2023, Union home ministry informed Rajya Sabha on Wednesday that "data validation for the 2023 report is in the final stage". In a written reply to a question from TMC's Sagarika Ghosh, minister of state (MoS) for home Bandi Sanjay Kumar said NCRB has been continuously publishing 'Crime in India'



(CII), 'Accidental Deaths and Suicides in India' (ADSI) and 'Prison Statistics India' (PSI). "The publications collate data of a calendar year, hence, the process of collection of data is initiated only after the completion of the respective year," he

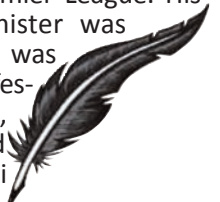
said. The MoS added that data for the reports is collected from 89 data supplying centres, which includes 36 states and UTs, and 53 metropolitan cities. "The 2022 report has been published and data validation for the 2023 report is in final stage... Data submitted by states/UTs is extensively verified/validated at various levels/stages through the inbuilt checks in the software application. In case of discrepancy/inconsistency in data.

Editorial

Query regarding flying "cat-tle class" to Kerala

Ritu Walia

Power is in the words. Language has mystical powers. I enjoy playing with words. Those words are hot. You can be moved to tears by words. You can find humor in words. Moreover, there are few things that can convey the planet and all its inhabitants as vividly and comprehensively as words. During the 2009 austerity drive of the Congress-led UPA administration, Tharoor was embroiled in controversy for his response to a query regarding flying "cattle class" to Kerala. His statement, "Absolutely, in cattle class out of solidarity with all our holy cows!" caused a political storm following his response. Tharoor, an accomplished writer of numerous best-selling books on Indian society and politics, was forced to clarify that he did not want to offend economy class passengers after the Congress party swiftly censured him. After 16 years, Tharoor is now again in trouble for comments he made in an interview. In response to a Malayalam report that he had claimed, "We have many leaders, but many feel that there are no ordinary workers," Tharoor clarified that he had really said, "several workers feel there is an absence of a leader in Kerala's Congress." "You should not think that I have no option to spend my time. I have options," Tharoor added earlier in the interview. I have speeches, books, and invitations to speak all around the globe. Some saw his comments as a covert signal to the highest levels of Congress that he was thinking about other political paths. Amidst the upcoming Assembly elections in the state next year, Tharoor is now facing accusations of "crossing the line" from the top leaders of the Congress's faction-ridden Kerala unit, putting him in the center of a maelstrom. Because of this, Shashi Tharoor has been named this week's ThePrint Newsmaker. Actually, Tharoor's essay praising the new industrial policies of the Left-led Kerala government had already been a hot topic before the interview controversy erupted. Tharoor had stated that, during the course of 18 months last year, Kerala's startup ecosystem was valued at an astounding \$1.7 billion, which is five times higher than the worldwide average for the same time period. While the fact that this change has started happening under an LDF government run by communists is shocking, it is not totally unexpected. "The path to growth and prosperity for their people lies in capitalism, entrepreneurship, and initiative, not in red flags, strikes, and agitations," he said in the post, comparing the Communists in Kerala to their West Bengali counterparts at the turn of the century. While he disagrees that the state's industrial climate has changed generally, Tharoor defended himself by saying that "when something good emerges, even if only in one area, it is petty not to acknowledge it" in response to attacks from Kerala Congress officials over the piece. Tharoor, a former UN diplomat, has had a tumultuous political career with the Congress since his 2009 victory in the Lok Sabha elections from the Thiruvananthapuram constituency. Mostly because he had a habit of saying things that went against the party line. However, he consistently gets himself into problems by more than simply his words. In 2009, as the UPA was implementing its austerity measures, Tharoor and then-External Affairs Minister SM Krishna came under fire from the government for allegedly residing in a five-star hotel in Delhi while their official quarters were still being prepared. Tharoor lost his position in the Manmohan Singh government's council of ministers in 2010 due to the scandal surrounding the sweat equity provided to Sunanda Pushkar, his then-girlfriend and later-wife, by a consortium that owned the Kochi club of the Indian Premier League. His ordination as a junior minister was renewed in 2012. Tharoor was thrust into his gravest professional crisis in January 2014, when Pushkar was discovered dead in a luxurious Delhi



IAS, corporates, nor the media benefit from economic deceleration

Lipi Singh

Circa 1900: Rudyard Kipling wrote Kim, placing the eponymous hero at the centre of the Great Game of espionage between the British Empire and Russia in the 19th century. The book is set after the Second Anglo-Afghan War, which ended in 1881, but before the Third, likely in the period 1893–98. Kim, short for Kimball O'Hara, is an impoverished Irish orphan who lives on the streets of Lahore and works for Mahbub Ali, a Pashtun horse trader. He later befriends an aged Tibetan lama, accompanies him on his journey along the Grand Trunk Road, learns about the Great Game, and is eventually recruited by Mahbub Ali, who works for the British Secret Service in their quest to extend influence in both Afghanistan and Tibet. Whether or not the Great Game—the expression used by British imperialists to describe the perceived expansion of Russian influence in Afghanistan, Central Asia, and Tibet—actually existed, the fact remains that surveys were undertaken, expeditions mounted, spy-masters recruited, and novels written, even as soldiers lost their lives. Taking a cue from Viceroy George Curzon, all pro-establishment papers—from the Civil and Military Gazette of Lahore to The Pioneer of Lucknow, The Statesman of Calcutta (now Kolkata), and The Times of India of Bombay (now Mumbai)—concurred that Tsarist Russia posed a real threat to the jewel in Britain's crown. A hundred and twenty years later, historians remain sceptical of Curzon's assertions. Is the



hue and cry about the Deep State similar to the Great Game? Whether or not it exists, whether it operates in all countries, and whether the 'deep state' of one country is connected with others through the dark web or entrenched corporate interests remains unclear, as the discourse is more ideological than empirical. Sometimes, those who claim to be part of the deep state ascribe to themselves a larger-than-life role in state affairs—for example, AS Dulat and Asad Durrani in their 2018 book The Spy Chronicles: RAW, ISI and the Illusion of Peace. Their claim to be arbiters of one of the most tense and difficult relationships in the region has been widely critiqued by reviewers. The term first gained wide currency in the context of Türkiye as derin devlet, which literally translates to "deep state" in English. In Türkiye, it refers to a non-elected military elite dominating elected governments, especially when they attempt to dismantle the secular foundations of the Republic, established by Mustafa Kemal Pasha after the abolition of the caliphate in 1923. In Pakistan, "deep state" refers to a government controlled by powerful military leaders, as documented by Stephen Cohen in

The Idea of Pakistan and Ishтияq Ahmed in Pakistan: The Garrison State. Elected governments in Pakistan have rarely exercised real control over defense and foreign policy. In the US, Democrats and Republicans accuse each other of controlling the 'deep state.' Democrats claim the pro-Republican arms lobby and military-industrial complex constitute the deep state, while Republicans argue that Ivy League universities promote 'wokeism' and diversity, equity, and inclusion narratives that, according to Donald Trump, undermine America's greatness. Trump has accused the deep state within the Democratic regime of election interference, citing the Freedom Medal awarded to George Soros as evidence. However, skeptics argue that if the deep state were so powerful, how could Daksh Patel dismantle it simply by firing 'interns and associates' whose tenure is co-terminus with that of President Biden? Ultimately, the deep state serves as a convenient scapegoat for anything that goes wrong or for political parties losing popular support. If Republicans and Democrats are battling it out in Washington, India faces a similar scenario, with Left

liberals and Right nationalists accusing each other of leveraging the 'deep state' to gain or retain power. Publications like The Caravan and Organiser Weekly lead these respective narratives. Left liberals claim the RSS is India's deep state, while Right nationalists accuse the Ford Foundation and George Soros' Open Society Foundations of attempting to discredit the democratically elected Modi government. Left liberals find support in the speeches of Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi, while Right nationalists, led by Vice President Dhankhar, minister Kiren Rijiju, and BJP spokespersons like Sambit Patra, vehemently counter these claims. In a pre-budget article for The Indian Express, economist Surjit Bhalla, a former member of the PM's Economic Advisory Council, alleged that India's deep state comprises "major industrialists, senior IAS babus, and their friendly influencers in the media", slowing down economic growth. This claim was firmly repudiated, point by point, by Vivek Kaul in Newslandry, who questioned the logic behind such allegations.

Kaul argued that neither the IAS, corporates, nor the media benefit from economic deceleration. Instead, he pointed out that the real cause of economic slowdown is the compulsion of all political parties—BJP, Congress, and AAP—to allocate budgetary resources to freebies rather than long-term investments in social and physical infrastructure, which are crucial for sustained economic growth. Journalist Josy Joseph, in his book The Silent

Coup: A History of India's Deep State, argues that the deep state is actually led by the IPS. He claims that in the name of combating terrorism in Punjab, Jammu and Kashmir, and the Northeast, as well as 'Left-wing extremism' (LWE) in Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, and Andhra Pradesh, the triumvirate of the NIA, CBI, and ED have consolidated unchecked power, with neither the legislature nor the judiciary exercising adequate oversight. He documents human rights violations of individuals caught in the crosshairs of state action. Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Steve Coll offers another perspective, alleging that India's deep state mainly comprises serving and retired IFS officials. However, if the IAS, IPS, and IFS were truly dominant, why would they have allowed the creation of the Department of Military Affairs under the Chief of Defence Staff, effectively relegating the Defence Secretary (an IAS officer) to a largely ceremonial role? A completely contrarian view is presented by Sandhya Ravishankar, news editor at NDTV Profit. She argues that global NGOs and foreign funding agencies have attempted to damage India's international reputation by supporting anti-CAA protests and farmers' agitations against the farm laws. Quoting the French publication Mediapart, she alleges that the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) received \$47 million from the US Deep State to produce investigative reports targeting governments opposed by Washington—a charge firmly denied by the US Embassy.

The Hindutva Pitch of the BJP

Sanjay Singh

Prime Minister Narendra Modi attacked the opposition, calling members of the party who support "jungle raj" anti-Indian and anti-faith. Furthermore, he said that the state's citizens would hold anybody who insults Maha Kumbh in contempt forever. Political circles were captivated by his attention on Maha Kumbh, which he displayed barely two days before Maha Shivratri, as the event was coming to a close. For what reason did Modi bring up the holy event, which has been going on for almost two months, Was all he was doing was addressing the Opposition's strong criticism of what they saw as poor administration during the world's largest religious gathering, the Maha Kumbh, and the two stampedes that occurred there. Did he want Maha Kumbh to be a part of the National Democratic Alliance's Bihar election platform? It is quite probable that Modi, who had begun the NDA's Bihar election campaign with Chief Minister Nitish Kumar, purposefully brought up the controversy surrounding Maha Kumbh in order to strength-

en the Hindu support among the OBC. Many also saw it as an effort to win over religiously inclined female voters. Meanwhile, political scientists claimed Modi didn't really need to mention Maha Kumbh. In contrast to Uttar Pradesh, religious and communal appeals do not have the same impact on elections in Bihar. A transformative governance agenda has traditionally had a greater impact on the state. Rather than a rising embrace of the Hindutva ideology of the BJP, observers pointed out that Bihar was shifting away from the Rashtriya Janata Dal (RJD) led by Lalu Yadav owing to fears of his previous misrule. North Bihar is still firmly under the control of the NDA, and yatras, which were once used to communalize politics, have not been very successful. The Hindu Swabhimana Yatra, which Union Minister Giriraj Singh attempted last year but was unable to launch, is a prime example. In this context, many questioned whether Modi was in Bihar trying to test the ideological limits of the BJP. "Those who believe in jungle raj hate our heritage and our faith.

The faces of the victims, some of whom appear to be minors

Suman

In 2019 too, the Allahabad High Court had banned the publishing of photos and videos of women at the Kumbh Mela: "The court said no pictures of women bathing or taking a holy dip should be shared. It also warned that action would be taken if the order was broken. This rule applies to both print and visual media." This violation and commodification of women's bodies at the Maha Kumbh represents a betrayal across three interconnected spheres. It's not as if Indian women are unfamiliar with such trespasses—that's our daily reality. But the Kumbh videos expose a particularly perverse intersection of faith, trade, and technology. First, there is the sacred: In a space of spiritual liberation, the crowd provides both cover and target for predators. Elaborate systems, at Indian temples and other places of worship prevent photography to protect idols and deities. Those regulations don't extend to the bodies of women who show up at these sites. Then comes the betrayal by the profane, a carefully constructed marketplace where every assault is catalogued, priced, and traded. What's most chilling about the Kumbh videos is the clinical efficiency of their distribution. The "Megha Demos Group" operated with the precision of a tech startup, complete with a freemium business model. Finally, there is the betrayal by technology,

where algorithms ensure that these offences, achieve digital immortality, forever circulating in the dark corners of the internet. The perpetrators weren't operating from some shadowy underground cave; they used mainstream platforms like Telegram, Instagram, and Facebook. But perhaps the deepest cut comes from how unremarkable this all seems—just another day in a society

where consent remains an alien concept and women's bodies are meant for public consumption and dissemination. Forget voyeurism—this is the industrialisation of image-based sexual abuse that has turned sacred spaces into content farms, and hospital labour rooms into film sets. This is the emergence of a new economic model where violation is normalised and monetised. The accused who traded in these videos, however, present only one part of the equation. The men who run these channels deserve every second of what's coming to them. But let's focus on the culpability of the men who made their business model viable; the ones who actively sought out and paid for this sexual abuse. In an era where consensual sexual content is freely available, these men chose to pay for videos of women at their most vulnerable. The non-consensual nature of these videos isn't a bug, it's the feature. What drives these buyers isn't desire. It's the intoxication of watching women who never consented to be watched, who never imagined their moments of privacy would be relayed for mass entertainment. One can only imagine what consent means for these men in their daily lives—an unwanted intrusion in a fantasy of total dominance. In Uttar Pradesh, this commodification of abuse has a precedent. An Al Jazeera investigation from 2016 revealed that videos of rape were being sold for as little as Rs 20, the price of a packet of pan masala. The faces of the victims, some of whom appear to be minors, are visible in several of the videos. In others, the women are begging their assaulters to spare them, or at least not record them. These distressing clips, euphemistically labelled "local films" or "WhatsApp sex videos" are available at local mobile shops. According to the report, "one man who readily admitted .

Registration, and complaints against waqf boards

Saariq

When the Waqf Amendment Bill 2024 was first tabled in the Lok Sabha on 8 August last year, it triggered fears within the Muslim community, as it was perceived to have been introduced without adequate consultation with stakeholders. After all, the issue of waqfs—Muslim institutions through which property is bequeathed for religious or charitable purposes—is sensitive because it involves socio-religious spaces such as qabristans, masjids, idgahs, and madrasas. As such, the government and Parliament were exhorted to adopt procedures that allayed rather

than stoked the fears of Muslims. In this backdrop, the decision to refer the bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament was welcome. The 31-member committee, drawn from across party lines, received 97,27,772 memoranda overall. There were representations from various ministries and departments—including Minority Affairs, Law and Justice, Railways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Road Transport, and Culture (Archaeological Survey of India)—as well as state waqf boards and experts, ensuring a diversity of opinions. As such, the government and Parliament

were exhorted to adopt procedures that allayed rather than stoked the fears of Muslims. In this backdrop, the decision to refer the bill to a joint committee of both Houses of Parliament was welcome. The 31-member committee, drawn from across party lines, received 97,27,772 memoranda overall. There were representations from various ministries and departments—including Minority Affairs, Law and Justice, Railways, Housing and Urban Affairs, Road Transport, and Culture (Archaeological Survey of India)—as well as state waqf boards and experts, ensuring a diversity

of opinions. It is not entirely correct to state that waqf reforms are being externally foisted. Rather, to a large extent, the demand for waqf reforms has emerged from within the Muslim community also. The Ministry of Minority Affairs received numerous complaints from Muslims on the maladministration of waqf properties, which manifested in voluminous litigations. The ministry's analysis of grievances received from April 2023 found that 148 complaints pertained mostly to encroachments, illegal sales of waqf land, delays in surveys and registration, and complaints against waqf boards.

IWC Chandigarh City Beautiful installed sanitary pad vending machine

Vinod Kumar Chandigarh: IWC Chandigarh City Beautiful installed a sanitary pad vending machine in Maharishi Dayanand Public School, MDAV Bhawan, Dariya, Chandigarh. This social organization made the students aware about menstruation. Sanitary pads are kept in the machine. Students can use it when needed. President Anita Midha while addressing the students said that hygiene should not be ignored during periods. Periods is a process which girls have to go through every month. When teenage girls start menstruating, it is very important for them to take care of themselves. But even today in our society, this is not discussed open-



ly. IWC Chandigarh City Beautiful is spreading awareness in this direction. Vice President Sarvani Dutt said that after using sanitary pads, dispose of them properly. Do not throw it in the toilet. Doing so blocks the sewerage. The Vice Principal of the

school, Dr. Principal Anju Modgil expressed her gratitude to IWC Chandigarh City Beautiful for installing the sanitary pad vending machine. Joint Secretary Kulwinder Kaur and Suman Gupta were also present on this occasion.

One-day sensitization workshop held at KU

Jasbir Singh Duggal Kurukshetra: Haryana State Higher Education Council in collaboration with Kurukshetra University organized a one-day sensitization workshop on "Skill-Based Courses and Micro-Credentials in Higher Education Institutions." Prof. Kailash Chandra Sharma, Chairperson, Haryana State Higher Education Council said that NEP 2020 promotes multidisciplinary education, providing multiple entry and exit options, giving learners more flexibility in their academic journey. This is facilitated through the Academic Bank of Credit (ABC), which enables seamless transfer and recognition of academic achievements, promoting personalized and flexible learning pathways. The policy also emphasizes collaboration with industries to ensure that students develop employable skills in line with the changing demands of the job market. Prof. Rajeev Kumar, Member Secretary,



AICTE said that the traditional model of higher education - which involved lengthy and expensive degrees spanning several years - started changing, and was replaced by shorter, industry-focused programmes. Micro-credentials and skill-based courses provide a solution to this need. These courses can be completed in a short period of time. Prof. Som Nath Sachdeva, Vice Chancellor, Kurukshetra University said that National Education Policy-2020 has been implemented for the first time in the country in the university and related colleges with all its provisions. Skill enhancement courses, vocational courses, project based courses, short term courses and other

employment oriented courses are being run in Kurukshetra University, which have provision for internship. A congratulatory message for the successful organisation of this workshop was received from Haryana Education Minister, Mahipal Dhanda. The Education Minister said that education should not be limited to obtaining degrees only, but should be a medium to prepare the youth for real challenges in life. Prof. Bhimarya Maitri, Director, IIM Nagpur said that the objective of the National Education Policy is to achieve character building, employment oriented education and 17 goals of SDG. NEP-2020 emphasizes on vocational education and skill-based education.

Sena (UBT) recommends Bhaskar Jadhav LoP post in Maharashtra assembly



NEW DELHI: Shiv Sena(UBT) on proposed its MLA Bhaskar Jadhav for the post of opposition leader in the Maharashtra legislative assembly. This comes days after the party staked claim to the post and said that opposition parties had been granted this position in the past, even without meeting the 10% seat threshold. The combined opposition strength in the 288-member assembly stands in nearly 50, he mentioned. The Maharashtra legislature's budget session is set to run from March 3 to 26. "Shiv Sena (UBT) will stake claim to the post of LoP in the Vidhan Sabha. Even if the strength of MLAs is less, there is no law or provision in the Constitution which says that the House should function without the LoP," Raut said. A party with 10 percent of the 288 seats or 29 seats can claim the post. However, all of the MVA parties are at the moment falling short of the mark, as per the legislative rules. Sena (UBT) currently holds 20 assembly seats, with Congress at 16 and the Sharad Pawar-led NCP at 10. Congress leaders have previously indicated that if Sena (UBT) claims the LoP post in the assembly, they may demand the same position in the legislative council. Currently, Ambadas Danve of Sena (UBT) holds the leader of opposition post in the council, but his tenure as an MLC ends.

Will India gain from US tariffs on China, Mexico and Canada? Experts weigh in

New Delhi The US's sweeping tariff hikes on China, Mexico, and Canada could open the floodgates for Indian exporters, creating a golden opportunity to expand their footprint in the American market. Experts say key sectors—including agriculture, engineering, textiles, chemicals, and leather—are poised to reap the benefits. During Trump's first term, India emerged as the fourth-largest winner from Washington's trade war with China, and history may be about to repeat itself. Now, with the Trump administration set to enforce fresh 25% tariffs on imports from Mexico and Canada—alongside a sharp increase in duties



on Chinese imports, doubling them to 20%—India is once again poised to capitalise on shifting trade dynamics. No room left for negotiation with Canada and Mexico on tariffs, says Trump. Will India gain from US tariffs? According to the think tank GTRI, these new trade barriers

present India with an opportunity to tap into alternative sourcing options, particularly from Canada, where key commodities may now be available at more competitive prices, new agency PTI reported. Canada plays a crucial role in supplying essential imports that align with India's high-

demand sectors. Earlier in 2024, the US imported substantial volumes of crude petroleum oil (\$103 billion), refined petroleum oil (\$12.9 billion), and fertilizers (\$3.1 billion) from Canada. Other critical imports included copper cathodes (\$1.3 billion), gold (\$4.3 billion), ethylene polymers (\$2.2 billion), and plastics (\$2.1 billion). India's import requirements are significant across key commodities - \$140.3 billion for crude oil, \$ 42.5 billion for gold, \$2.8 billion for copper, \$2.2 billion for ethylene polymers, \$1.3 billion for plastics, and \$1.3 billion for fertilisers. According to PTI, GTRI founder Ajay Srivastava: "With US tariffs .

At least nine killed, 25 injured after car rams into Pakistan military compound

Bannu Twin blasts hit a military facility in Bannu, northwest Pakistan, after suicide bombers breached the wall. The attack, claimed by Jaish Al-Fursan, was the third militant assault since Ramadan began. The army eliminated further attackers, and operations continue. Previous attacks in Bannu include deadly bombings in November and July. At least nine people were killed, 25 injured in a suicide attack by a military group that drove two explosive-laden cars into a Pakistani army compound on Tuesday,



AFP reported quoting police. "So far at least six civilians have been killed in both attacks, including three children," the official said. The twin suicide bombings targeted the military facility in Bannu, northwest Pakistan, with attackers blowing themselves up to breach the wall, officials said. "After a breach in the wall, five

to six more attackers attempted to enter the cantonment but were eliminated. Operations in the area are still ongoing," Pakistani army said in a statement. The Pakistani Taliban-affiliated group, Jaish Al-Fursan, claimed responsibility for the attack, marking the third militant assault in Pakistan since Ramadan began on Sunday. Jaish Al-Fursan its fighters had killed dozens of security personnel in the latest attack, though the army has not confirmed casualty figures. Bannu has been a frequent target.

'Some people are perpetual cribbers': Gautam hits back at Dubai-only criticism

NEW DELHI: India captain Gautam Gambhir on Tuesday hit back at critics questioning India's Dubai-only schedule in the Champions Trophy after India's four-wicket win over Australia in the first semi-final. "What undue advantage? We practice at ICC Academy, where conditions are different from the stadium. Some people are perpetual cribbers; they need to grow up," he said. Following India's victory, Gambhir remained focused on the ultimate goal. "We've had a flawless campaign, but there's still one more game to go," he told reporters. Go Beyond The Boundary with our YouTube channel. SUBSCRIBE NOW! Virat Kohli once again proved why he is one of the best in ODIs, leading India's chase with a brilliant 84 off 98 balls. His 74th ODI fifty



ensured India successfully chased down 265, finishing at 267-6 with 13 balls to spare. Kohli also became India's highest run-scorer in Champions Trophy history, surpassing Shikhar Dhawan. "Kohli is a phenomenal ODI player, and he plans his innings exceptionally well," Gambhir praised the Indian stalwart. "Steve Smith cannot win a major tournament". Astrologer Lobo's huge prediction ahead of IND vs AUS semi final. Shami (3/48) spearheaded the attack, while Varun Chakravarthy and

Ravindra Jadeja picked up two wickets each to bowl out Australia for 264 in 49.3 overs. Despite Steve Smith's 73 and Alex Carey's 61, Australia struggled to capitalise on strong partnerships. Shami returned to dismiss Smith at a crucial moment, and Axar Patel removed Glenn Maxwell cheaply, derailing Australia's momentum. Kohli and Shreyas Iyer (48) added a crucial 91-run stand, stabilising the innings after early setbacks. Though Iyer and Axar Patel (27) fell, KL Rahul (42) and Hardik Pandya (28) finished the chase in style.

'Peacemaker' US President Donald Trump unleashes trade war

Washington: Americans are bracing to cough up higher prices for food, cars, electronics, home appliances, toys, and footwear among a host of other products after US President Donald Trump, while presenting himself as a peacemaker between Russia and Ukraine, plunged the country into a trade war, with punitive tariffs on imports from its three largest trading partners China, Canada, and Mexico. All three countries retaliated hours after Trump pressed ahead on Tuesday midnight with the 20 to 25 per cent tariffs that he had previously announced, ostensibly to staunch the flow of the opioid fentanyl that is killing thousands of Americans each year, but also to level the playing field in trade that the US President has complained is lop-



sided. Washington has racked up a record trade deficit of \$1.2 trillion, importing for its consumption-addicted people more than it exports to the world. Trump wants major trading partners to either buy more American goods and products or return to the US the manufacturing mojo it has lost over the years. India, a relatively minor US trading partner, has so far escaped being singled out for additional tariffs although Trump has said the US would impose reciprocal duty on every country. The US stock market,

Trump's favorite metric of how well the economy is doing, took a beating, with all three indices, the Dow, Nasdaq, and S&P plunging sharply. Trump has repeatedly claimed tariffs will make the US richer and return manufacturing to the country, while most experts reckon it will also raise prices of many goods and make life difficult for Americans, even as it hurts Washington's major trading partners. The punitive action is also wrecking Washington's convivial ties with its closest neighbors.

Progress in PoK driven by China, not Pakistan: Omar Abdullah

JAMMU: The progress in PoK is superficial and largely driven by Chinese funding with negligible Pakistani contribution, J&K CM Omar Abdullah said Tuesday in the assembly amid a heated debate between National Conference (NC) and opposition BJP over border infrastructure. "We have to accept that while there is limited development in our frontier areas, on the other side, there have been deliberate attempts to showcase progress. However, this so-called development was facilitated by China, not Pakistan," Omar said. His remarks came after NC MLA Saifullah Mir suggested that infrastructure in PoK was better than on the Indian side. BJP's RS Pathania objected, leading to intervention from NC's Nazir Gurezi and Peoples Conference's Sajad Gani Lone, who defended Mir and highlighted the challenges faced by locals, especially in winter. Mir said: "If someone had worn a coat, what is wrong when I say he is having a good coat?" Mocking portrayal of prosperity in PoK, Omar said: "They made people wear coats to create the facade of development. In reality, the pockets of those coats are empty." Urging restraint, Omar said the assembly should not get entangled in unnecessary arguments. "Development should happen wherever needed." Deputy CM Surinder Choudhary assured that the demand for a tunnel in Kupwara's Keran and Jumbund areas would be taken up with the Union highways ministry.



Faridabad's first wellness centre, The Fitness Bar, will offer gym along with jacuzzi, sauna and steam bath

Vatika Times
Faridabad: Bringing a new dimension to the fitness and wellness space in Faridabad, The Fitness Bar has inaugurated its first luxury wellness centre. The centre is the first wellness centre to offer gym along with jacuzzi, sauna and steam bath. Operated by Footomic Group and TFB Group, the centre combines a world-class fitness experience with top-notch wellness services. Mr Bhaarat Aneja, Founder and CEO, TFB Group informed that The Fitness Bar's journey began in 2015 and since then it has established its locations in various areas of Noida, Sector 120, Pratap Vihar, Ghaziabad, Rajnagar, Ghaziabad, Vaishali and Ghaziabad. Now it is ready to offer its services in Faridabad.

The Fitness Bar is founded by experts in the hospitality and fitness fields. The foundation is backed by industry stalwarts like Mr. Yogesh Sharma and Mr. Manish Sharma, Founders of Footomic Group and Mr. Bharat Aneja and Mr. Priyanshu Malik of TFB Group, who

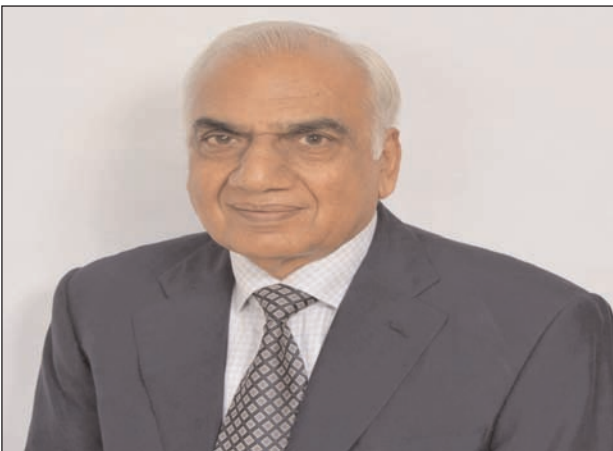


are committed to making luxury wellness accessible to the masses. Speaking to the media, Mr. Manish Sharma, Co-Founder and COO The Fitness Bar said that The Fitness Bar is not just a gym but a complete wellness destination. The Fitness Bar comprises of key amenities like an exclusive Nutrition Station Health Bar for post-workout recovery, Grooming Studio to keep members looking and feeling their best always, Therapy Room for various massages and rejuvenation treatments, Jacuzzi, Sauna and Steam Bath for muscle recovery and relaxation, Yoga Room for mental and physical calm, Weight Training and Cardio section with state-of-the-art

machines, Lockers and Changing Rooms for cleanliness and convenience and Clean and Hygienic Washrooms with the highest hygiene standards. Mr. Shreyansh Jain, Director - Marketing & Sales, The Fitness Bar said that with the successful launch in Faridabad, The Fitness Bar will soon set up its centres in other Tier 1 and Metro cities. This will make premium wellness more accessible across the country and play a vital role in the fitness revolution. The Fitness Bar, offering a unique blend of luxury, wellness and cutting-edge fitness solutions, is committed to the complete transformation of mind, body and spirit. With this launch, it is set to set new benchmarks in the wellness industry.

The government has made efforts to create a favorable environment for traders in the budget: Yogesh Munjal

Journalist Jatin
Gurugram: In the budget presented for the fiscal year 2025-26 by the Chief Minister of the state, Nayab Singh Saini, several important provisions have been included for traders and entrepreneurs. Through these provisions, the Haryana government has attempted to create a favorable environment for traders and entrepreneurs, which will promote economic development in the state. This was stated by Yogesh Munjal, Chairman and Managing Director of Munjal Showa, while responding to the budget. He said that in this budget, with the aim of promoting startups, the government has planned to establish a fund of funds worth ₹2,000 crores, which will also include private investors. This step is crucial for encouraging innovation and entrepreneurship. To accelerate industrial development in the state, the budget also includes the



provision to set up a new Industrial Model Township on 800 acres of land in Ambala city, which will provide new opportunities for traders and industrialists. Furthermore, an old market in every city will be developed as a smart market, and an old alley will be developed as a smart alley. This plan will assist in the modernization and beautification of commercial areas. He noted that to facilitate business activities, the government has announced the purchase of 500 non-AC buses, 150 HVAC buses, and 375 electric buses in the

budget. Additionally, a new metro line will be laid from Millennium City to Cyber City in Gurugram at a cost of ₹5,500 crores, which will help connect commercial centers. He stated that this budget is not only a ladder of interests and upliftment for traders but for all sections of society, with significant announcements made concerning agriculture, education, health, and other issues, through which the pace of development in the state will accelerate. The Chief Minister of the state, Nayab Singh Saini, deserves congratulations for this.



Gujarat Governor Acharya Devvrat met with Vice President Jagdeep Dhankhar



Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: Gujarat Governor and Patron of Gurukul Kurukshetra Acharya Devvrat met with Vice President of India Jagdeep Dhankhar in New Delhi, inquiring about the Vice President's health and well-being while extending his best wishes. The two leaders engaged in a cordial conversation on various topics.

Airbus A350-900s on the Delhi-London Heathrow route on On the route

Delhi: Air India stated that it would begin using Airbus A350-900s on the Delhi-London Heathrow route on On the route, the airline will fly twice daily. The A350-900 will replace the 777-300ER and 787-8 Dreamliner on 14 of 17 weekly flights.

One7sports Elevates Corporate Cricket with an Electrifying BBL Season 2 Finale

Vatika Times
Gurgaon : ONE7 Sports - north India's largest, privately owned sports park, spread across 24 acres of land, strategically located in the heart of Gurgaon City proudly unveiled Big Boys League (BBL) Season 2 in the month of Dec 2024. It is a one-of-a-kind T20 cricket league where corporate professionals swap their boardroom suits for cricket jerseys. This unique platform brings together players from prominent organizations showcasing exceptional cricketing talent from Delhi NCR.



In a nail-biting final showdown of the Big Boys League (BBL) Season 2 - organised by One7 sports, Orange Horses emerged victorious over Black Dogs by 14 runs, claiming the championship title in an electrifying contest that had fans on the edge of their seats. The

high-octane match showcased incredible talent, resilience, and sportsmanship, marking a fitting conclusion to an unforgettable season. The Orange Horses displayed an all-around performance, holding their nerves under pressure to secure the well-

deserved win. Their consistent teamwork and strategic play ensured their dominance in the final match. Each of these exceptional players showcased outstanding skills throughout the tournament, earning accolades for their stellar performances. Speaking on the success of BBL Season 2, Mr. Ajay Chhangani Co-Founder and CEO - ONE7 Sports expressed gratitude to the teams, players, and fans for their unwavering support and enthusiasm. This season has been a testament to the spirit of the game.

IIT should be established in Kurukshetra : Naveen Jindal

MP Jindal raised the demand of establishing IIT in Kurukshetra in Lok Sabha session



Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: Naveen Jindal, a member of parliament from Kurukshetra, Haryana, has urged the central government to establish an Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) in

Kurukshetra. He made this request during the Lok Sabha session, highlighting Haryana's contributions to agriculture, defense, and sports. Jindal emphasized that despite Haryana's impressive performance

in various fields, the state lacks an IIT. He pointed out that neighboring states have already established IITs, and it's essential for Haryana to have one to provide better opportunities for its students.

The proposed IIT in Kurukshetra would not only benefit Haryana but also the entire country. It would provide rural and underprivileged students, especially girls, with access to quality technical education, ultimately strengthening India's knowledge power. Jindal's proposal has received widespread support from the people of Haryana, educators, and industry leaders. They are hopeful that the central government will consider this request and fulfill the dreams of Haryana's youth.

32 teachers participated in a capacity-building program



Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra/ Shahabad: Thirty-two teachers participated in a capacity-building program at Ram Prasad DAV Public School in Shahabad Markanda. The program aimed to update school principals and teachers on the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 for the academic session 2025-26. The chief guest,

Bibandeep Kaur, provided training on the NEP and emphasized its goal of bringing revolutionary changes to the education system, making it globally competitive. She highlighted India's history of being a knowledge hub and the need to make India a global superpower in the field of education. During the training, teachers were intro-

duced to Bloom's Taxonomy, which includes remembering, understanding, applying, analyzing, and evaluating. The school's principal, Dr. Deepinder Kaur Walia, thanked the chief guest and expressed confidence that the program would help teachers enhance their capabilities and provide better education to their students.

Colloquium organised at NIT Kurukshetra by Alumni Cell

Jasbir Singh Duggal
Kurukshetra: The 'Alumni Colloquium' was organized by the Alumni Cell of the National Institute of Technology (NIT) Kurukshetra on March 18, 2025, at the Senate Hall. The event was graced by Prof. B.V. Ramana Reddy, Director, NIT Kurukshetra; Smt. Kavitha Reddy, Prof. Dixit Garg, Dean (Student Welfare); Prof. Pratibha Agarwal, Professor in charge of Alumni Cell, faculty members and enthusiastic students. The event showcased a motivational speech from prominent alumni, Mr. Nilesh Goswami and Mr. Vinay Jain. Mr. Nilesh Goswami is an alumnus of the Electrical Engineering Department (1995-99 Batch), a Former Indian Engineering



Services (IES) Officer Technocrat and a Certified Coach Specializing in Holistic Wellness. He is also a Memory Trainer and Bestselling Author with more than 25 years of experience in various domains. Mr. Vinay Jain is an alumnus of the Electrical Engineering Department (1995-99 Batch), Associate Director and Global Lead for Insurance Policy Administration Product CoE for DXC Technology.

At the outset of the event, Prof. B.V. Ramana Reddy, Director, NIT Kurukshetra discussed the Institute-alumni relations and shared that the Alumni of the Institute have deep feelings for their attachment to the Institute and can be important stakeholders in the development of the Institute. He emphasized the importance of staying connected and supporting the institute's future endeavours. Mr. Nilesh Goswami presented an

inspiring lecture, urging students to cultivate better relationships with themselves, enhance their emotional well-being, strengthen connections with family and peers, and seek appropriate guidance and mentorship. He inspires students to nurture both their hearts and minds to lead fulfilling lives. Additionally, he encourages them to gain perspective, set goals, and pursue them with the necessary encouragement. Mr. Vinay Jain discusses his professional experiences and the challenges he has faced across different engineering sectors and industries. He encourages students to approach emerging technology fields with enthusiasm and resolve.

Regional aviation gets Air India route

Delhi: Air India stated that it would begin using Airbus A350-900s on the Delhi-London Heathrow route on On the route, the airline will fly twice daily. The A350-900 will replace the 777-300ER and 787-8 Dreamliner on 14 of 17 weekly flights. The business claimed in a news statement that the replacement would add 336 weekly seats on the Delhi-London Heathrow route. Flying our flagship A350s and B777s with updated cabin interiors to London Heathrow is a milestone for Air India. It shows our dedication to providing a world-class travel experience and exceeding customer expectations as we upgrade our fleet, said Campbell Wilson, CEO & Managing Director, Air India. The new Airbus planes will enhance 90% of its trips to London Heathrow. Air India began flying the new Boeing 777-300ERs between Mumbai and London Heathrow in 2025.

Spending on gaming in small towns has increased 16 times in the last five years



Delhi: According to a Visa white paper on payments, spending on online gaming increased 16 times in smaller areas between 2019 and 2024. The pattern indicates that digital consumption is becoming more and more prevalent in India's non-metropolitan regions. Spending on digital services, such as gaming, online education, and entertain-

ment, has increased ninefold and sixteen fold since 2019, respectively, among consumers in smaller towns. In smaller towns, the number of consumers spending more than Rs 2 lakh a year with a single card has increased by over four times, while in category A cities, the figure has increased by 1.4 times. This change has led to a 175% increase in total card

expenditure in category C+ cities since 2019 and suggests that affluence is spreading outside of metropolitan areas. According to Niko Partners' India Market Report, the country's video game market is predicted to develop at an annual rate of 11.1%, surpassing \$1 billion in 2025 and reaching a valuation of \$1.4 billion by 2028.

Interglobe Air Transport to elevate Oman Air's presence in India

MUMBAI: Travel solutions provider Interglobe Air Transport Limited has been designated as the exclusive General Sales Agent (GSA) by Oman Air for the entire territory of India. A GSA works as a third-party sales representative for an airline in a country in a region and it handles air ticket and cargo sales, manages operations, develops strategies etc. Apart from Oman Air, Interglobe is the GSA for multiple international airlines including China Eastern, Delta, SAS, LATAM Airlines, Jetstar, the wholly-owned subsidiary of Australian carrier Qantas; Male-based



carrier Manta Air, South African Airways, Turkish Cargo and Virgin Atlantic. "The collaboration will utilise Air Transport's comprehensive network and proficiency to fortify Oman Air's presence and augment customer service across the Indian market," Interglobe stated in a press release issued this week. "Oman Air, distinguished for its exemplary products and services across the Middle East, Indian Subcontinent, Asia, and Europe, presently operates over 90 weekly flights to 10 Indian cities from its hub in Muscat. To strengthen Oman Air's Indian operations, Interglobe Air Transport will provide extensive sales and service.

Gold loans rise 50% in seven months

Delhi: Bank loans against gold jewelry rose 50.4% in the first seven months of the year. Despite single-digit growth in every other personal loan area, credit rose sharply. RBI issued sectoral deployment of bank credit Gold loans totaled Rs 1,02,562 crore in March 2024. Growth was 56% year-over-year, up from

13% in October 2023. NBFCs' move and a preference for secured loans over unsecured ones contributed to the first-seven-month gold loan surge, bankers said. Bank loans to NBFCs fell 0.7% to Rs 1.5 lakh crore in the first seven months. Bankers also said that rising gold prices allow borrowers to repay previous loans

and get higher new ones. Analysts see rising gold loan demand as an indication of financial instability. RBI ordered banks and financial companies to review and fix their gold loan rules and procedures within three months last month. After an examination, evergreening was found to hide bad loans.

Union education minister to head TISS Society, Tata Trusts to have 1 member

MUMBAI: The Union education minister will soon be the chairman of the new Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) Society. The executive council of the premier institute, which will replace the governing board, will be chaired by the vice chancellor and will have four nominees of the education minister and academic representatives from TISS. Tata Trusts, which had two senior members on the governing board, will now have only one member in the society. TISS Society will facilitate the functioning of TISS, while the executive council will have the power of management and administration. The norms are in line with



those of regulatory bodies in central universities. Last year, Centre had decided to bring all institutions that receive over 50% govt funds under its jurisdiction. TISS, a centrally

funded deemed-to-be university, has, therefore, been brought under govt's ambit. The drafting of a new memorandum of agreement (MoA) had been pending for some time. The executive council, as per the proposed MoA, will replace the governing board of the institute. The agreement said the institute will be fully funded by govt. Earlier, the institute was managed by Tata Trusts and the governing board had a nominee of the trust as its chairperson. But, for some time, Tata Trusts has been funding only a few projects, under which there are ad hoc teaching and non-teaching positions in the institute.

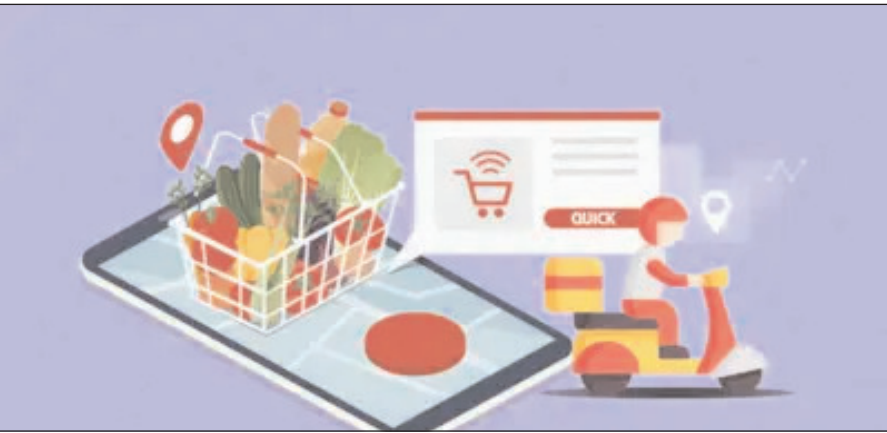
The pleas had sought quashing of the order passed by the special court

NEW DELHI: The Bombay high court on Tuesday stayed a special court's order directing FIR against ex-Sebi chairperson Madhabi Puri Buch and five other officials for alleged stock market fraud and regulatory violations. The stay to remain in place for four weeks. A single bench of Justice Shivkumar Dige said the special court order of March 1 was passed mechanically without going into details and without attributing any specific role to the accused. "Hence, the order is stayed till next date.

Four weeks time is given to the complainant in the case (Sapan Shrivastava) to file his affidavit in reply to the petitions," the HC said, according to news agency PTI. The high court's judgement came on petitions filed by Buch, three current whole-time SEBI directors - Ashwani Bhatia, Ananth Narayan G and Kamlesh Chandra Varshney and two BSE officials - managing director and chief executive officer Ramamurthy and its former chairman and public interest director

Pramod Agarwal. The pleas had sought quashing of the order passed by the special court. directing the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) to register an FIR against them pertaining to certain allegations of fraud committed in 1994 while listing a company on the BSE. The case stems from a complaint by media reporter Sapan Shrivastava, who alleged large-scale financial fraud and regulatory violations during the 1994 listing of a company on the BSE.

Most Indians avoid internet purchasing this holiday due to delivery delays and return hassles



Delhi: FarEye's holiday shopping poll found that not everyone is ready to spend online. Nearly 60% of shoppers would avoid online shopping this holiday season due to shipping delays and return issues. The survey of 1,000 Indians found that 41% plan to shop from e-commerce merchants during the holidays, but nearly 60% do not owing to delivery delays and returns issues. Poor delivery terms are causing 63% of shoppers to leave carts, and 54% predict delays during the holidays. Powered By "Consumers are frustrated with getting their deliveries on time, every time, and don't want to pay extra for returns

or faster delivery," said FarEye co-founder and COO Gautam Kumar.

Your favorite Tupperware is bankrupt.

Delhi: After years of declining sales and rising competition, Tupperware Brands Corp filed for bankruptcy. Tupperware, a public company, filed for Chapter 11 bankruptcy with \$500 million to \$1 billion in assets and \$1 billion to \$10 billion in liabilities. Since 2020, the cookware industry, which dominated food storage for decades, wavered in its viability.

'EC covering up voter list fraud': TMC's fresh charge

NEW DELHI: Trinamool Congress (TMC) leader Saket Gokhale on Tuesday countered the Commission of India (ECI)'s claims, accusing the poll body of "covering up" the alleged voter list fraud instead of accepting it.

The Rajya Sabha MP claimed the ECI was attempting to brazen out the irregularities instead of accepting "their blunder on the duplicate voter ID fraud issue".

Referring to the parts of ECI's handbook for electoral registration officers, Gokhale alleged that the poll body's clarification was "false", which "contradicted their own rules and guidelines. The TMC leader, in point-by-point rebuttal to the ECI, voiced concern over duplication of Voter IDs, or EPIC. The EPIC (Electors Photo



Identity Card) number is a unique identification number assigned to every registered voter in India by the ECI. It is printed on the Voter ID card and serves as proof of identity during elections. Gokhale, in a post on X, questioned the ECI's claim that EPIC with the same numbers were issued to multiple voters due to certain states using the same alphanumeric series. Citing the poll body's handbook, the TMC leader said Functional Unique Serial Number (FUSN) are different for every assembly constituency and that it

was impossible for voters in two different constituencies, even in the same state, to have the same first three letters in their EPIC. "EPIC card numbers are an alphanumeric sequence of 3 letters & 7 digits. The ECI handbook CLEARLY states that the 3 letters, known as a Functional Unique Serial Number (FUSN) are different for EVERY Assembly constituency. Therefore, it is IMPOSSIBLE for voters in 2 different assembly constituencies (even in the same state) to have the SAME first 3 letters on their EPIC.

'It is for development of all sections': Union minister Giriraj praises Bihar Budget

NEW DELHI: Union minister Giriraj Singh on Tuesday praised the Bihar Budget for 2025-26 and said it is for the development of all sections, and added that sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks. "This budget is for the development of all sections... Sports, college, and medical facilities will be available in all blocks. In this budget, scholarships for SC/ST children have been doubled. This budget is a budget for all-around development," Singh told ANI.



Bihar's government on Monday unveiled a whopping Rs 3.17 lakh crore budget for the financial year 2025-26, marking a significant 13.6 per cent increase from the previous year's Rs 2.79 lakh crore allocation. This budget, presented by deputy chief minister and finance minister Samrat Choudhary, holds special significance as it's the ruling government's last budget before the state elections later this year. The substantial hike in budget allocation is expected to bolster various sectors, including infrastructure development, social welfare, human development, and administrative purposes.

Ground planes to fly again in 2 years: SpiceJet to DGCA

Delhi: Business Standard sources reported that SpiceJet informed the Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) that it will spend Rs 400 crore in two years to restore 36 grounded planes. The regulator met with the carrier last Friday to discuss restoring grounded jets. Sources said this followed the airline's Rs 3,000 crore qualifying institutional placement from global investors and mutual funds. The airline did not respond to Business Standard's request for comment. At the QIP, the airline identified 36 grounded aircraft out of 58. This was mostly due to lesser payment defaults, aircraft maintenance financial issues, and component shortages. The airline informed the regulator that seven of the 36 grounded planes would return by year's end, sources added. The remaining 29 aircraft should be



reactivated in 15-21 months. "Overall, the airline anticipates it will take 18-24 months to bring all grounded planes back to service,"source said. SpiceJet announced that it will lease seven planes to improve flying operations immediately while repairing grounded planes. It said the seven leased planes will join the fleet by November 15. Sources say the carrier's grounded jets will undergo Airbus and Boeing-mandated return-to-service (RTS) procedures. The DGCA will allow commercial passenger flights after the RTS process. RTS is the procedure of restarting a grounded aircraft.

Maintenance, repairs, inspections, and regulatory compliance are required.

Change in rules marks discount broker turning point

Delhi: Domestic rating agency Crisil said discount brokerages like Zerodha and Groww will be most affected by recent regulatory changes to curtail investors' derivatives activity. Narayanan claimed derivative trades account for up to 80% of bargain brokers' revenue and under a third of full-service brokerages'. Largest impact, with new customer acquisition .

Govt. lists Ola Electric's 'consumer rights infractions' to ARAI



Delhi: The Ministry of Heavy Industries (MHI) instructed vehicle testing agency ARAI to investigate whether Ola Electric violated consumer rights as a recipient of the government's EV incentive scheme. After the Central Consumer Protection Authority (CCPA) issued Ola Electric a show cause notice for consumer rights violations, misleading advertising, and unfair trade practices, MHI took action. Charges during free service period or warranty, car delivery delays, and service/repair delays are additional cited infractions. Old Electric is a FAME-II and PM E-DRIVE

beneficiary under ARAI's eligibility requirements. Thus, MHI must get your opinions on the issue promptly "The ministry's letter to the testing centre stated. It further stated that under two EV incentive schemes, all OEMs, including Ola Electric, must maintain service centres to address consumer issues and provide warranties. Earlier, Union consumer

affairs secretary and CCPA chief commissioner Nidhi Khare confirmed that the National Consumer Helpline (NCH) has been receiving complaints for about a year. The company didn't answer problems effectively." CCPA can open a "class action" under the Consumer Protection Act if comparable complaints affect a 'class' of customers.'

NHAI orders testing of SMA material

NEW DELHI: Learning from the "rutting" (permanent depressions) at several portions of the Mumbai Expressway's Sohna-Dausa section last year, which attracted huge criticism, the NHAI has directed detailed testing of the stone mastic

asphalt (SMA) material used in other highway projects. Deficiency in the quality of SMA used on this section was identified as one the major reasons for the expressway getting damaged less than two years after its inauguration. Several projects,

including the Delhi-Amritsar-Katra Expressway, have been constructed or are being constructed using 50 mm SMA — a gap-graded hot mix asphalt that contains a large percentage of coarse aggregate (over 70%) and bitumen filler mastic.

Raptee.HV Launches T 30 High-Voltage Electric Motorcycle In India - Details

Delhi : Raptee.HV, the Chennai-based EV startup, launched India's first high-voltage electric motorcycle, which is developed with the technology being used in Electric cars across the world. Called the Raptee T 30, it is the first of its kind to use universal charging standards that are used by cars. In simple words, it uses a CCS2 charging port. The motorcycle is priced at ? 2.39 lakhs, ex-showroom.The Raptee.HV Motorcycle has an IDC Est range of around 200 km and a real-world range of over 150 km on a single charge. The company claims that it can accelerate from 0 to 60 kmph in under 3.5 seconds.The 5.4 kWh battery pack is IP67-rated, and it takes 60 minutes for a 20-80 per cent juice-up via a 3.3 kW charger. Through a fast charger, the same can be done in just 30 minutes. Also, the brand is offering a warranty of 8 years of 80,000 km on the battery pack.The T 30 rides on a set of 17-inch rims with a 110-section tyre on the front and a 150-section tyre at the rear. Moreover, the suspension includes 37 mm USD forks on the front and a telescopic shock absorber at the rear. Braking duties are performed by a 320 mm rotor at the front and a 230 mm disc at the rear.The motorcycle has advanced software features for an enhanced riding experience, including 3 riding modes and a 7-inch LCD instrument cluster. It comes equipped with connected features as well. There are four colours on offer - Horizon Red, Arctic White, Mercury Grey and Eclipse Black.

Tata Consultancy Services mcap cross Rs 15 lakh crore mark as shares soar

NEW DELHI: Shares of Tata Consultancy Services (TCS) jumped 4% on Tuesday, taking its market valuation to above Rs 15 lakh crore mark. he stock of the country's second most valued firm by market valuation jumped 4.05% to settle at Rs 4,133.45 apiece on the BSE.

The Indian Real Estate Sector Expects Equity Investments of Rs 74,815 Crore

Delhi : According to a survey by CBRE South Asia, the real estate sector registered equity investments of \$8.9 billion (Rs 74,815 crore) in the first nine months of 2024, surpassing the increase of \$7.4 billion (Rs 62,210 crore) in 2023 and demonstrating a year-over-year rise of 46%.The Indian real estate market has experienced a massive boom, reaching its highest point since 2018. A significant quarterly equity investment totaling \$2.6 billion (Rs 21,857 crore) between July and September 2024 is highlighted in the report. Mumbai, Bengaluru, and Chennai drove this expansion, contributing 66 percent



of equity inflows in Q3 2024 with their respective subscriptions of \$0.96 billion (Rs 8,070 crore), \$0.40 billion (Rs 3,362 crore), and \$0.34 billion (Rs 2,858 crore).With capital inflows of \$0.31 billion (Rs 2,605 crore), \$0.27 billion (Rs 2,269 crore), and \$0.02 billion (Rs 1,681 crore), respectively, Delhi-NCR,

Pune, and Hyderabad also saw a sizable portion of investments. Domestic investors, especially construction businesses, who accounted for roughly 79% of equity inflows during the July–September quarter, were the main drivers of the increase in investment momentum.

New Income Tax Return e-filing portal in the works? What taxpayers can expect

The Income Tax Department is set to revamp the e-filing ITR portal with substantial changes aimed at making it more user-friendly for taxpayers. Internal circular from the tax department dated October 8, 2024, which is not publicly available, "The operations phase of the existing Integrated e-filing and Centralised Processing Centre (IEC) 2.0 is coming to an end and the process of bringing in a new Project.

The Tata Group is set to expand the fleet of its budget airline, Air India Express, by transferring all-economy configuration planes from its full-service carriers, Air India and Vistara. This move is part of the group's strategy to better compete with Indigo, the market leader in the Indian aviation industry.Sources familiar with the plan told that the first phase will involve the transfer of 17 Airbus A320 Neo aircraft from Air India to Air India Express. mAdditionally, 10 of



Vistara's all-economy A320 Neo aircraft will join Air India Express once the merger between Vistara and Air India is finalized. The entire transfer process is expected to be completed by mid-2025. Experience significant capacity expansion, with the addition of 17 planes from Air India and 15

Boeing 737 Max planes from its own order by the middle of next year. Over the past 10 months, the airline has already added 26 new Boeing 737-8 aircraft to its fleet. The Tata Group is currently restructuring its aviation business, which will result in the consolidation of four airlines into two.

Solar panel maker Waaree Energies is gearing up to float its initial share

Delhi: Solar panel maker Waaree Energies is gearing up to float its initial share sale involving fresh issue of shares worth Rs 3,600 crore. The Mumbai-based company's Initial Public Offering (IPO) will conclude on 23 and the bidding for anchor investors will open for a day on October 18, according to the Red Herring Prospectus (RHP).As per the documents, the IPO is a combination of a fresh issue of equity shares aggregating to Rs 3,600 crore and an Offer For Sale (OFS) of 48 lakh equity shares by a promoter and existing shareholders, according to the Draft Red Herring Prospectus (DRHP). Those selling shares in the OFS are -- promoter Waaree Sustainable Finance Private Ltd and shareholder Chandurkar Investments Private



Ltd. Proceeds from the fresh issue will be used for setting up the 6GW (gigawatt) of Ingot Wafer, Solar Cell and Solar PV module manufacturing facility in Odisha. Besides, a portion will be used for general corporate purposes. Waaree Energies, one of the major players in the solar energy industry in India, is focused on PV module manufacturing with an aggregate installed capacity of 12 GW as of June 30, 2023.It operates five manufacturing facilities. with one factory each,

Globe Civil Projects files draft papers with Sebi for IPO

NEW DELHI: Engineering, procurement and construction company Globe Civil Projects Ltd on Tuesday said it has filed preliminary papers with markets regulator Sebi to raise funds through an initial public offering. The initial public offering (IPO) is entirely a fresh issue of 1.9 crore equity shares with no offer-for-sale component, according to the DRHP filed with Sebi.The company plans to list the shares on BS.

India's first high-speed 280 kmph trains soon! ICF awards contract for new trainsets to BEML

Delhi: India is set to launch its first indigenous high-speed trains, built by BEML with a test speed of 280 kmph. Featuring modern amenities, these trainsets will consist of 8 cars each, costing Rs 27.86 crores per car, and to be delivered by the end of 2026. The rainsets will be the first indigenously designed and manufactured in India, with a test speed of 280 kmph. (AI image) India's first indigenous high-speed train soon! In a big boost for Indian Railways' dreams of offering high-speed rail connectivity, the national transporter has awarded the contract for manufacturing high-speed trainsets to BEML.These trainsets will be the first indigenously designed and manufactured in India, with a test speed of



280 kmph, marking a significant step forward in the country's high-speed rail journey.The trains will feature a fully air-conditioned, Chair Car configuration, offering modern passenger amenities such as reclining and rotatable seats, special provisions for passengers with restricted mobility, and onboard infotainment systems, ensuring a comfortable and enjoyable travel experience. BEML Limited has secured a contract from Integral Coach Factory (ICF), Chennai, for the design, manufacturing, and commis-

sioning of two high-speed trainsets. Each trainset will consist of 8 cars, with a price of Rs 27.86 crores per car, resulting in a total contract value of Rs 866.87 crores. This contract value includes design cost, one-time development cost, non-recurring charges, and a one-time cost for jigs, fixtures, tooling, and testing facilities, which will be utilized for all future high-speed projects in India. BEML's Bengaluru rail coach complex will be responsible for the construction of these trainsets, with a scheduled delivery by the end of 2026.

Gurugram Rate Soars 160%, Housing Prices in Top 10 Cities Soar 88% in 5 Years

Delhi : In the last five years, the average cost of newly constructed residential properties in India's top ten cities has increased by an astounding 88%, per a report released on Monday by real estate data analytics company PropEquity.The greatest increase in prices was seen in Gurugram, where average prices shot up 160% from Rs 7,500 per square foot in 2019 to Rs 19,500 per sq foot in 2024. Mumbai, on the other hand, saw the least gain over the same period, going from Rs 25,820 per sq ft to Rs 35,500 per sq ft, or 37%.Noida (146%), Bengaluru (98%), Hyderabad (81%), Chennai (80%), Pune (73%), Navi Mumbai (69%), Kolkata (68%), Thane (66%), and Mumbai are the next cities in terms of price growth after Gurugram.In the top 10 cities—Bengaluru, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kolkata, Mumbai, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Pune, Noida, and Gurugram—the survey examined 15,000 new launch projects that included flats, floors, and villas.In the past five years, real estate prices have increased dramatically in all major cities. The factors that have contributed to such a steep rise include the massive infrastructure development, the growing interest from NRIs, HNIs/UHNIs, and stock market gainers looking to create wealth and generate income through real estate investment, rising sentiments towards homeownership, and the general shift towards luxury/super luxury homes as a result of rising aspiration and affluence.



UBT will run alone in civic polls amid INDIA rumblings

Delhi: In the wake of the Maha Vikas Aghadi's state assembly loss, crucial constituent Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena (UBT) said it would run in local bodies elections alone, casting doubt on the opposition bloc's cohesiveness. Sanjay Raut, leader of Shiv Sena (UBT), highlighted the absence of possibilities for party workers in an alliance and the right to organizational growth as reasons for running alone. UBT leader Sanjay Raut The Congress was snubbed when the Uddhav Thackeray-led party supported Arvind Kejriwal's AAP in the February 5 Delhi



"The Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) stated the Sena (UBT)'s decision will affect all three MVA alliance constituents"

Assembly elections two days earlier. After Raut's remark, a Congress representative stated the party's central leadership will decide whether Congress will run alone

in local body elections, the timetable of which is unknown. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP (SP) stated the Sena (UBT)'s decision will affect all three MVA alliance constituents.

New prison factories will employ 100 more prisoners

Delhi: The Delhi prison department will modernize and add factories to employ 100 more prisoners. New paper, carpentry, and oil production units are planned by the department. The units will make eco-friendly products like custom-printed paper carry bags, file covers, and stationery, as well as beautifully packaged coconut, sesame, almond, and mustard oils. "The new jail factory units aim to deploy over 100 inmates and emphasize 'earn while studying' A

prison official stated new high-tech equipment will be purchased. Officials say Tihar jail number 2 has six units: carpentry, oil, paper, weaving, tailoring, and baking. Mandoli and other jails have weaving, jute bags, perfume, pickles, confecti carpentry, and underwear facilities. Different facilities employ over 2,500 convicts. Last year, 215 inmates joined jail number 2's industries, mostly for carpentry, followed by bakery and paper.

"We plan to

increase the number of units so that more inmates can receive vocational training," he stated. "This will enable them to start their life anew upon release." Prisoners earned Rs 1.7 crore last year performing various jobs. Top earnings were carpenters at Rs 56.8 lakh and papermakers at Rs 51.7 lakh. Mustard oil production brought in Rs 23.5 lakh, weaving 18.8 lakh, tailoring 12.1 lakh, and maintenance 7.6 lakh. According to officials, skilled laborers get Rs 412 per day,

Mahesh Vishnupant Kothe passed away after a heart attack

KOLHAPUR: Former mayor of Solapur Municipal Corporation and leader of NCP(SP) Mahesh Vishnupant Kothe passed away after a heart attack he suffered after Shahi Snan at Mahakumbh in Ganga river at Prayagraj on Tuesday morning. He was 60 years age. Kothe contested from Solapur

City North assembly but was defeated. Tributes started to pour in after the demise of Kothe who had good relations across party lines. His nephew Devendra Kothe however won, but on BJP ticket from Solapur City Central. According to the relatives, Mahesh Kothe had gone to Prayagraj

to participate in Mahakumbh with his friends. "After bathing at Ganga ghat, he suffered heart attack. He was moved to local hospital, however doctors declared him dead. We approached Uttar Pradesh govt through Maharashtra govt to airlift Kothe and bring his mortal remains to Solapur,"

India's 2025 Lord's Test tickets cost more

Delhi: Despite a lackluster crowd for the Sri Lanka game this season, ticket prices for the Lord's Test between India and England next summer have been raised again. Lord's owner Marylebone Cricket Club was criticized over England-Sri Lanka Test ticket prices this summer. India and England begin their five-match Test series on June 20 with the third game at Lord's on July 10. The cheapest Lord's Test tickets for India are 90 pounds and with restricted views. Fans will pay 120-175 pounds for unrestricted views, per ESPNcricinfo. The restricted-view seats

for last month's Test against Sri Lanka cost 115-140 pounds. Only 9000 fans attended the match on day four, filling one third of the stadium. Home series vs India is the second-biggest draw after Ashes with Australia. After the Sri Lanka Test, England's stand-in captain Ollie Pope was surprised by the low attendance. "It was just like 'jeez, it seems quiet today,'" . "I'm not sure if many expected the game to be over by day four. It was a good day's play, so it's too bad it wasn't packed."A total of 12 venues will be used for the tournament with only two of them on the West Coast.

In North India, short winter doesn't always lead to searing summer

Delhi: Winter has ended early in north India and Delhi is set to be among the three warmest in the last 15 years. So, does the early conclusion of winter indicate a long and scorching summer ahead? Contrary to the general view, data from past years shows that a warm Feb doesn't necessarily lead to a searing summer in north India. Analysed monthly average maximum temperatures in north India since 1971 and picked the 10 warmest months of Feb during this period. In five of these years, the corresponding months of April were indeed warmer or significantly warmer

Following the penance of Akal Takht, Sukhbir resigns as Akali chief.

Delhi: Party officials said that Sukhbir Singh Badal's resignation as party president was accepted by the Shiromani Akali Dal (SAD) working committee. This decision came when Akal Takht Jathedar Giani Raghbir Singh ordered SAD to carry out the December 2 edict about Badal's resignation in early December. The acceptance happened at the party headquarters at a functioning MAHAGUN committee meeting. Badal thanked party leaders and members for their support after his resignation was



accepted. On November 16, 2023, Badal offered his resignation; however, the working committee rejected it, him to change his mind and threatening to resign as a group if he continued. The working committee was expressly directed to accept resignation as party chief in the Akal Takht's December 2 declaration which dealt with religious retribution .

UP will connect Noida airport to Ukhanda and MP via NH-34



Delhi: The Yamuna Expressway industrial development authority (Yeida) will build a link road between the newly built Noida International Airport and National Highway 34 to provide multimodal connectivity before the airport's April opening, following the Uttar Pradesh government's directive. From Gangotri Dham in Uttarakhand to Lakhnadon in Madhya Pradesh, NH-34 passes through Haridwar, Meerut, Bulandshahr, and others. The NHA and Yeida discussed the connecting road's alignment at its Greater Noida office in sector Omega 1. "We discussed this new link in detail and decided to work on it. We've requested NHA to pre-

pare a full project report and discuss it again. After the study and DPR are presented, the alignment, budget, and length will be finalized, said Yeida officer on special duty Shailendra Bhatia. NHA will now conduct site visits to finalize the alignment on the ancient Sikandrabad-Jewar Road, which currently houses Noida International Airport. The connection road meets NH-34 in Sikandrabad. We've warned areas along this historic road to stop unauthorized development. The route is yet undecided because NHA's full project report will determine the exact alignment. NHA must buy land and build the route. We will support NHA

Vijay claims DMK betrayed Tamil Nadu voters

Delhi: TVK president Vijay accused the DMK of deceiving Tamil Nadu voters with false promises after taking power. Vijay mentioned a popular Tamil cinema song, 'Enthanai kalamthan yemarathuvar intha nattile, sontha nattilie' (How long would they fool us in this land, in our own country?) on X. He claimed that numerous DMK officials gave false guarantees before the 2021 assembly elections. His most notable example was DMK functionaries who said they knew how to eliminate the National Eligibility Test (NEET) for medical admissions while campaigning for the 2021 assembly elections. After taking power, they misled people by saying only the Union government could eliminate NEET. Vijay claimed the ruling party's bogus promises



TN proposes tougher sexual offense laws

Delhi: Tamil Nadu introduced two measures to raise sexual crime punishments against women and children and add online offenses. Chief minister MK Stalin tabled the bills for the assembly's final day. "Amendment to the Tamil Nadu Prohibition of Harassment of Women (1998) Bill and Tamil Nadu Criminals

Laws Amendment Bill 2025 to amend Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023, and Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 (Central Act 48 of 2023)," said a senior government official on condition of anonymity. The DMK government is under fire after an outsider trespassed on Chennai's Anna University campus .

would no longer work. Transport minister S S Sivasankar responded to Vijay's remark by saying NEET was launched under late AIADMK general secre-

tary J Jayalalithaa's leadership. "The DMK has since taken up the issue and has been consistently demanding that the Union govt scrap NEET."

Bomb hoax: 'Parents of accused linked to NGO that opposed Afzal's hanging

NEW DELHI: The Delhi Police on Tuesday said it had identified a juvenile who had made hoax bomb threats to schools last year. The cops claimed that the juvenile's parent worked with an organisation that was linked to an NGO having "deep connections" with a political party. The police further claimed that the NGO was the one that had questioned the legitimacy of the hanging of terrorist Afzal Guru, the convict behind the 2001 Parliament attack. "Schools had been receiving (bomb threat) emails continuously, it started around February 14. So, we conducted an in-depth investigation. But due to the usage of VPN etc, it was not easy to get a breakthrough...But we found a technical window regarding the email received on January 8.



Renovated 10,000-acre land near Sangam, 8 permanent ghats

Delhi: At dawn on 'paush purnima', when most of north India will be huddled under warm quilts to brave the Jan chill, over 1 crore devotees will gather at the confluence of Ganga, Yamuna, and Saraswati to take a holy dip and start Maha Kumbh, the world's largest congregation of people. A spiritual retreat will go until February 26. Over 4 crore pilgrims will take the sacred dip in the first two days. Sunday saw over 35 lakh devotees reach Prayagraj. UP CM Yogi Adityanath stated Maha Kumbh "offers a unique experience to understand and witness India's spiritual heritage" Prayagraj has been transformed, with every intersection lit up to greet a sea of people. More than 3 lakh plants and 1 lakh horticulture saplings have been strategically placed to beautify the roads. Welcome signs and LED butterfly lights on power poles illuminated most Sangam routes. While 'kalpvas', the month-long stay of devotees on the Sangam, begins on Monday, the first of the three 'amrit snan', the holy dip by nagas, seers, and akharas, will occur. Over 4 crore people are scheduled to visit in the first two days. The other 'amrit snan' days are 'mauni amavasya' on Jan 29 and 'basant panchami' on Feb 3. Jan 29, the most auspicious day, is scheduled to see around 5 crore holy bathers. On February 12, 'maghi purnima' will conclude 'kalpvas' The largest religious festival ever has been made possible by renovating over 10,000 acres around the Sangam and adding eight permanent ghats to the temporary ones. Over 1.6 lakh tents have been set up to house devotees in the mela region, which is now the state's 76th district and a no-vehicle zone till Tuesday. DM, Maha Kumbh Mela, Vijay Kiran Anand, said devotees will receive flowers on main snan days per the CM's orders. The 'amrit snan' begins at 6.15am with the seers of Shri Panchayati Akhara Mahanirvani and Sri Panchayathi Atal Akhara taking a holy dip at Sangam. Eleven more akharas will follow until 4.20pm. Their scheduling is such that one akhara would reach the Sangam nose, which has been extended by 2 hectares to accommodate 2 lakh more devotees, after the preceding group leaves. Railways would run 10,100 regular and 3,134 special trains to serve pilgrims during Mela for two months. UPSRTC will deploy nearly 7,000 buses, including 350 fair-specific shuttle buses. Pilgrims can easily reach Prayagraj from UP and beyond via this large bus network.



than normal but in the other five, April temperatures were either close to normal (four years) or below normal (one year). These two months were chosen for the analysis because Feb is the last month of winter in north India, while April marks the beginning of full-blown summer conditions in the region. March is usually a month of tran-

sition."There is no direct one-to-one relationship between temperatures in Feb and April. Temperatures in these two months depend on multiple factors, including largescale signals such as presence of El Nino (or La Nina) and synoptic features such as the frequency, intensity and duration of western disturbances," said

Mrutyunjay , director-general of India Meteorological Department. Trends in recent years exemplify the absence of a link between temperatures in Feb and April. In 2023, north India experienced record heat in Feb but April was cooler than normal. Feb that year was the warmest since 1901, with the average maximum temperature 3.5 degrees above the mean during 1971-2024. However, April that year turned out to be the coolest in eight years, with average maximum temperatures nearly 1 degree below the mean during 1971-2024.

Students opposed to the proposed two-stage DUSU elections

Delhi: In an effort to curb the "defacement" of property and the "use of muscle and money power," Delhi University (DU) is contemplating holding student union elections in two stages. However, this proposal has encountered opposition from both students and teachers, who have deemed it as an undemocratic action. At a meeting of the university's highest decision-making body, the executive council EC, the subject was raised. During the meeting, the administration presented a document that suggests restricting voting for the four office-bearers of the Delhi University Students Union DUSU to students who have won union elections at the college or department level. At present, the leaders of DUSU are elected by students directly from more than 50 colleges. Following the court's rebuke of students for vandalizing public



property during last year's elections, DU sent a report to the Delhi High Court, which contained the recommendation. In order to investigate the matter of defacement, the court temporarily halted the counting of votes for approximately two months. The document states that in response, the DU established a reform committee and submitted alternate solutions to the court. Among these options was the two-tier election system, which university officials justified as something to think about in the future rather than a definitive choice. Although no final decision was reached.

Gold's relevance as asset class to rise: CEA

NEW DELHI: Gold will remain relevant for investors as a portfolio diversification mechanism with a likely ascending importance as an asset class in the coming years, CEA V Anantha Nageswaran. He said that gold will remain relevant not only as a store of value, as an ornament for cultural and religious purposes, but also as an important portfolio diversification mechanism "until such a time the world is able to arrive at an international monetary system from the current international monetary non-system".

FM reports 1100 out of 1200 state and national schemes under DBT

Delhi: Direct bank account transfers have been assured for 1,100 out of 1,200 national and state government projects, according to Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman. One hundred hundred out of one thousand two hundred federal and state programs get their funding sent straight to their bank accounts by DBT. She emphasized that the Public Financial Management System is crucial to the improvement of DBT. She said that PFMS has allowed the government to give benefits directly by cutting out middlemen at the 49th Civil Accounts



Day festivities. It was said "Everything is direct payment, so no middlemen, no unborn children getting allowances." All recipients have their funds deposited into accounts that have been biometrically verified. Out of the 1200 national and state schemes, DBT is in charge of 1100. By going

digital, PFMS has made all financial transactions more transparent and efficient, doing away with discrepancies and delays in fund distribution. The Minister of Finance made a point of mentioning that around 250 external systems, such as the Government e-Marketplace, GSTN, PM Kisan, and TIN 2.0, connect with PFMS. Efficient financial transactions and cooperative federalism are both facilitated by full integration. Through the integration of financial systems, the government may enhance the tracking of fund flows and ensure accountability.

EU, India will sign FTA by year-end

Delhi: The sides promised "concrete steps" to finish the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor. The FTA states that the parties would "work as trusted partners to enhance market access and remove trade barriers". Modi and Leyen stressed IMEC. Modi said, "Concrete steps will be taken to take it forward. The

IMEC will promote global trade, sustainable growth, and prosperity. The IMEC was announced at the September 2023 G20 in New Delhi. India, the US, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, and various European nations are involved. The corridor will link India, West Asia, and Europe via train, road, and sea. Lal was asked if

Europe would require lower wine, cheese, and automobile taxes. Leyen traveled to India with 22 EU Commissioners. It emphasizes our value. India and the EU are and space cooperation. The two sides agreed to have "focused discussions" on the military sector and marine domain awareness to strengthen shared assessment.



US Polo targets Rs 3,000 cr in India, boosts marketing

Delhi: Arvind Fashions aims to increase marketing investments for its flagship brand, US Polo, to reach ₹3,000 crore in revenue, up from the current ₹2,000 crore. Over 3% of our corporate budget goes to advertising. This has reached 4% for US Polo and is rising. He noted that US Polo's company was predicted to increase 12-15% due to its strong omnichannel presence, taking advantage of the emerging rapid commerce channel and the square-foot expansion of stores, which can become supply hubs in smaller towns. Like-for-like growth is solid, including virtually double-digit full-price growth. Other categories including kids, women, and footwear are developing faster than the mother brand. Nearly 20% of the brand's revenues are in adjacent categories. "US Polo dominates the domestic market. We will invest in the brand and grow quicker than the market, he stated. Deloitte India and the Retailers Association of India reported in February 2025 that urban and rural families will spend more on discretionary items due to a doubling of per capita income by 2030. The report noted that "the Indian apparel and footwear market was valued at \$78 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach \$106 billion by 2028 at a compounded annual growth rate of 7.5-8%, driven by increasing disposable incomes, rising urbanisation, growing organised retail penetration.



When oil prices drop every month, US stocks go up

Delhi: Wall Street indexes rose in choppy rises as in-line European markets ended flat, continuing their 10-week winning streak. The Federal Reserve is expected to decrease interest rates twice this year, according to U.S. inflation figures. crude prices fell 1%, the first monthly decline since November, as markets braced for fresh levies from Washington and crude exports from Iraq's Kurdistan region. According to a White House source, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy of Ukraine will depart the Oval Office early Friday after a contentious meeting with Trump. Following reports of falling yearly inflation and sluggish consumer spending in the lat-



est statistics tracked by the Federal Reserve, U.S. Treasury rates hit multi-month lows. A drop of 2.93 points, or 0.34%, was recorded by MSCI's global stock index. Crypto values dropped after the Trump boom waned. The U.S. personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index fell from 2.6% in December to 2.5%

last month, according to the Bureau of Economic Analysis, which is part of the Commerce Department. Core personal consumption expenditure, the favored inflation indicator of the Federal Reserve, fell to 2.6% from 2.9% following an upward revision. Inflation of 2% is the target of the central bank.

Manufacturing activity slows to a 14-month low in February

NEW DELHI: Activity in the country's manufacturing sector grew at its slowest pace in 14 months as production and new orders moderated but it still remained robust, a survey showed. The HSBC India Manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) registered a reading of 56.3 in Feb, down from 57.7 in Jan, but still indicative of further improvement in the health of the sector. The 50-point mark separates from contraction in the survey, which is compiled from responses to questionnaires sent to 400 manufacturing firms.

Keep existing FY interest rate at 8.25%: EPFO board

Delhi: The central board of trustees of the Employees Provident Fund Organisation proposed keeping the interest rate at 8.25% for the current financial year. The finance minister must approve this before money is credited to seven crore subscribers. The Employees Provident Fund EPF has high and predictable returns compared to other fixed-income instruments, ensuring savings growth. The finance ministry taxed interest income obtained by people



who pay over Rs 2.5 lakh yearly a few years ago, claiming it would affect only 1% of subscribers. EPFO's 8.25% returns are far greater than PPF's 7.1%. Compounding is available with PPF's Rs 1 lakh annual investment cap. SBI is offering 7.5% on two- to three-year fixed deposits, however the interest income is

taxed and compounding is not available. A 30% taxpayer will receive 5.25% post-tax FD returns. The EPFO board also amended the Employees' Deposit-Linked Insurance EDLI program to provide a minimum payment of Rs 50,000 to EPF members who die without one year of continuous service.

Graduates of state universities are unable to secure employment due to a lack of English ability

Delhi : Using the success stories of Punjab and Karnataka, the NITI Aayog suggests that state public universities work with international language organizations to provide programs for English and foreign language proficiency. The employability of the students who graduate from these institutions is greatly impacted by their "inadequate" skill in the English language. State public universities are essential to reaching the NEP 2020 objectives; they educate more than 80% of all college-aged students and were the focus of a new report from the National Institution of Transforming India Aayog.



NGT requests DPCC report after plea says unlawful dyeing units continue.

Delhi: The applicant, an environmental activist, told the National Green Tribunal that more illegal dyeing facilities were operating in Khyala and Meethapur village in Delhi after the authorities alerted them of their actions. The tribunal ordered the Delhi Pollution Control Committee to act and report in four weeks. In another matter related to such units, a joint committee recommended a campaign to sensitize the public about illegal industrial activity.

Apple will invest \$500bn and employ 20k in the US

Delhi: Apple will invest over \$500bn in the US over the next four years, starting with a Texas advanced manufacturing complex. Over that period, the tech giant intended to add 20,000 positions, with the "vast majority" in R&D, software, and AI. How much the spending accelerates the com-



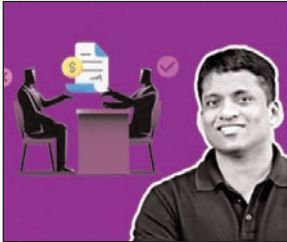
pany's current activity is unclear. The amount includes

supplier and Apple TV production costs, according to Apple. Days after Apple CEO Tim Cook met with President Donald Trump, who has prioritized US business investment, the news was made. It stated that the 250,000-square-foot. Houston factory will construct servers "previously manufactured out-

side the US" to power Apple Intelligence, its AI system. The iPhone maker said it would open in 2026 and employ "thousands". Apple is also boosting its data center capacity in , Arizona, and Nevada and doubling its \$5bn funding for Trump's first-term manufacturing fund to \$10bn.

Byju's loses \$533 million loan fraud case in US court

Delhi: U.S. bankruptcy court rules Riju Ravindran, Byju's parent business Think & Learn, and hedge fund Camshaft Capital guilty of \$533 million fraud and "breach of fiduciary duty." The beleaguered edtech business Byju's Alpha has been found to have engaged in several fraudulent financial transfers and conversions, according to a ruling issued by the Delaware Bankruptcy Court. Byju brother Riju Ravindran was found to have



breached his fiduciary duty as director of Byju's Alpha, according to the court. The court's clear recognition that Riju Ravindran, Camshaft, and Byju's engaged in a worldwide fraud including the theft of \$533 million is something we are grateful

for. In a statement, the lenders hailed this as a major victory in their fight to reclaim the stolen assets that properly belong to them. Byju successfully obtained a \$1.2 billion five-year term loan from Glas Trust through the establishment of his Alpha special purpose financial organization. Having defaulted on its loans, Byju's Alpha was placed under trusteeship in March 2023. A group of 37 banks and other lending.

Mittal's \$976 million Airtel stake sale

Delhi: Sunil Bharti Mittal's business sold \$976 million in India's No.2 wireless carrier to raise funding for new ventures. According to an exchange statement, Bharti Airtel Ltd. founder Indian Continental Investment Ltd. sold 0.84 percent interest or 51 million shares for Rs 8,485 crore (\$976 million), nearly a fourth of which was bought by Bharti Telecom Ltd. Other

investors were not named in the trade at Rs 1660.46 per share, a tiny discount to Monday's finish of Rs 1,675.6. The document said the shares were "allocated only to key marquee long only names, both global and domestic." Mittal is investing in Africa and OneWeb, which merged with Eutelsat in 2023, at the time of the sale. Last year, closely held Bharti Enterprises Ltd.